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The Champ

By Thomas McGuire

I STEPPED down from the train and squinted at the overhanging sign: *Greensville, Pop. 2700.* The hills of Vermont completely surrounded the miniature city and seemed to hold in the rustic atmosphere.

I happily settled in the back seat of a battered taxi and relaxed. The cabbie was a friendly, loquacious fellow, the kind who knows everyone and everything that happens in a town.

"Planning to stay in town long, Mister?"

"No, I just stopped by to see a couple of old friends—Doc Boone and Swede Larsen. You know them?"

"Oh sure, everybody knows the Doc and Swede. Real fine guys." He nodded emphatically. "Yessir, real fine." We rode on for a while, chatting pleasantly. Finally the old car can-canned up the winding, dusty hill to Doc Boone's place.

"Well, give my regards to Doc and Swede," the driver said as he laboriously shifted gears. "I'll be back for you at seven o'clock."

"That will be swell. I'll be seeing you." I thanked him.

"Howie, you old son-of-a-gun! What brings you way up to this neck of the woods?" yelled Doc. He rushed down from the porch and vigorously pumped my hand.

"Doc! How are you?" Doc certainly had aged since I had last seen him. "I came up to see you and the Swede. Where is he? How is he?"

"Hey, wait a minute, will you, Howie? He's fine. Doing a little roadwork right now, but he ought to—here he comes now."

Around the turn in the road a familiar red sweatshirt bobbed against the green background. A deep-chested figure methodically jogged our way.

"It must be costing you quite a bit to keep this place up, Doc."

"Nothing is too good for the champ, Howie. Swede deserves the best."

"Howie!" boomed the Swede. "You're a sight for sore eyes." When he wasn't wearing his bridge, Swede grinned like a little kid, and his tousled hair added to the picture now.

"Here, Swede, put this on before you catch cold," clucked the

motherly Doc as he threw a robe over Swede's shoulders.

"That's Doc for you, Howie." Swede rammed me in the ribs and winked his eye. "Always worried about his mealticket."

"You know you're only kidding, Swede," put in Doc.

We slowly walked to the huge, airy gymnasium. Swede warmed up lightly on the big bag—dancing around it, peppering it with lightning jabs.

"Hey, Howie, get this. Remember how the Bomber bothered me last time with his uppercut?" Sure I remembered. The Bomber had cut Swede up like chicken fricassee for fourteen rounds until the champ finally caught and flattened him. "Well, watch this!" The Swede shifted to the left and moved in. He was a study in grace. The resounding right hook made me wince just to watch it.

"That's really something, champ," I said in open admiration. "That one whistled." Swede beamed happily.

"What do you say we go up to the house and eat?" suggested Doc.

"That's fine with me, Doc," said Swede.

"I could use a little chow myself, Doc. Do you still cook those delicious steaks?"

"Haven't lost my touch at all, Howie," grinned Doc.

Seated at the dinner table we laughed a little, talked a little, reminisced a little. Swede looked older with his bridge in, and the silver tips around his temples told a familiar story. It was getting late—almost time for the cabbie to return. I stood up and looked around the room at the familiar pictures and trophies.

"Say, How," said Swede, greatly concerned, "you're getting a little flabby, aren't you?" He pushed his finger deep into my stomach. "Haven't you been working out lately?"

"Uh . . . no," I said, somewhat embarrassed, "I haven't been over to the gym in quite some time."

"That can cut years off your life, Howie. Look at me. I don't fight the Bomber again for two months, until July 4, but I'm in condition."

"I know, champ, you're in the pink."

"And Howie, if you want to make a few easy bucks—well, I'm sure I'll take him."

"Sure, Swede, sure. You know I'm not a betting man, but if I do, those greenies will be riding on you."

"You don't have your tickets for the fight yet, do you? Hey Doc, fix Howie up with a pair of seats down front so he won't have to turn his neck."

The impatient honk of the taxi called to me. "I guess I'll have to be going now," I said. "Thanks for everything, Doc, and you too, Swede."

"Thank *you,* Howie," said Doc meaningfully, "it's sure done Swede and me good to see you again."

I regretfully walked down the neat cinder path and got into the cab. We drove for about ten minutes in absolute silence. Then the cabbie asked, "How long has he been like that? Swede, I mean."

"Ten years. It will be ten years this fourth of July that Swede fought the Bomber."

To Wordsworth

By Robert DeSan

Time pulls the reins against reluctant man,
Returning him to dust from life's first hour,
And even those who stood secure in power
Now evidence that no one balks on time's ban.
The soul, from which man draws his warmth, uncaged
Must leave cold clay. Works, too, must die, though willed
To future men. (New eras want new gild
To hide the flaws, their ephemeral age.)
Yet even though a century did pass,
And your mortal self wastes beneath the grass,
Your work lives on—immortalized by you,
Defying cold time to collect his due.
Wordsworth, with Nature as a bride, you sired
Immortal works with your own soul inspired.

The Enigma of Charles Dickens

By Fred Fisher

CHARLES DICKENS is composed of two very diverse elements: his creative genius and his literary shortcomings. By all the criteria of literary criticism he should find himself listed somewhere among the minor novelists of his era, and yet such an eminent authority as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch has ranked him among the greatest of English writers, second only to Shakespeare himself. There is probably no other author in English literature who has presented such a controversial, two-sided nature. For the last seventy-odd years astute critics have condemned him for his mawkish sentiment; his ridiculous melodrama; his plots, which are either non-existent or unnecessarily complicated; and his characters, which rank close to mere cartoon caricatures; and yet—all this is a great testimony to Dickens' greatness—these very critics frequently read him themselves for the sheer pleasure he affords them. It is probably safe to say that no other author in literary history is read and enjoyed by so many different classes of people and by so many people of different tastes and degrees of education. He is popular among college professors and chambermaids; he provides entertainment for the "light reader" and basic philosophies for the more profound; he satisfies the lover of melodrama and delights the devotee of rough, hearty satire: these and a hundred other types all fly to Dickens as to a magnet.

But why is it that Dickens, with all his obvious faults, has attained such a pinnacle of popularity? Judging his works according to the strict Aristotelian principles of great literature, the critic is somewhat nonplused to find in them little resemblance at all to the tenets which "the Philosopher" set forth in his *Poetics.* Aristotle would shudder at Dickens' maudlin sentimentality and his obvious effort to jerk another tear from his reader. Aristotle would rend his pallium if he were to observe Dickens' complete disregard for the all-important plot and his almost childish way of toying with unnecessary characters. Dickens' plots are either so indistinct as to be practically non-existent, or else they are a labyrinth of complicated relationships and unsolved questions; he spends little

energy in the development of his major characters, and will introduce dozens of delightful but extraneous ones. In short, Dickens has achieved literary greatness although he has violated almost all the tangible tenets for that greatness. It is evident, then, that Dickens possesses some extra quality which distinguishes him from his technical peers.

That quality of Dickens which sets him outside of the pale Aristotelian principles is his vast creative genius. Hs ability to create for us such a myriad of real human brings has been surpassed by no other author in our literature. And this creative genius puts Dickens' critics at a decided disadvantage. We can imagine how we would have developed this character or that, but the only drawback of it all is that we couldn't have developed the character at all. Mr. Chesterton, commenting on young Mr. Guppy of *Bleak House,* observes, "Not one of us could have invented Mr. Guppy. But even if we could have stolen him from Dickens, we would still have to confront the fact that Dickens would have been able to invent another quite inconceivable character to take his place." You will find in Dickens almost any type of individual you desire: thief, drunkard, schoolteacher, jailer, or what have you. Dickens has pulled them out of his literary hat and has made them come to life. He has created an imaginary, yet real, world, and has populated it with a panorama of characters for our enjoyment.

What is this other world, this "Dickensland," which he has created? Mr. George Saintsbury calls it, "A combination of the strictest realism of detail with a fairy-like unrealism of general atmosphere." Dickens has taken the scenes and people from lower class Victorian London and has let his imagination present them to us. His novels may have the most realistic settings; they may concern housewives, waifs, and magistrates of his contemporary London. But when the housewives, waifs, and magistrates are subjected to Dickens' fantastic imagination, they take on a fairy-like unrealism. Tempered by his imagination, these people step forth transformed and distorted: their eyes gleam from cavernous sockets, their noses are long and sharp, and their legs stretched out to grotesque spindles. For Dickens was fascinated by the grotesque, by dwarfs and giants, by decaying old buildings, and by names such as Twist, Bumble, and Chuzzlewit. This is how he modified his material; by accentuating its characteristic peculiarities to a fantastic

degree. It might be thought that this would lead to an unrealistic dream world. And yet it is his peculiar genius which has made this "Dickensland" as substantial in the mind of the reader as it is imaginative.

With an eagle eye, he has seized upon these very details which are necessary to make this world spring into life for us. The London slums which set the scene for *Oliver Twist* are not actual slums of Dickens' day; they have taken on a mystic appearance in the imagination of Dickens. And yet, who can truthfully say that these slums do not appear real and substantial to the reader? Again, the character of Fagin is grotesque and fantastic; he is more of a fairy tale ogre out to ensnare little boys. But the courtroom scene in *Oliver Twist* is as realistic as any portrayed by Dostoievski. Dickens makes that scene come to life by isolating certain details. By mentioning the common, prosaic details of everyday life, he convinces us of the concrete reality of that scene. The scenes in which Fagin appears are so real that we believe him to be real too.

This imagination which Dickens uses in creating his characters has led many people to condemn him on the grounds that he is exaggerated. Dickens definitely is exaggerated—he intends to be. Lord David Cecil, in discussing this point, says, "It would be as sensible to criticize a gothic gargoyle on the grounds that it is an exaggerated representation of the human face." Dickens means to be exaggerated. And this, so far from detracting from his vitality, adds to it. For exaggeration is a sign that his imagination is working. A prime example of a Dickens character which is presented without exaggeration is Oliver Twist. Oliver is meant to be "innocence personified," and is presented in a plain unimaginative manner. He turns out to be as hopeless and lifeless a character as was ever conceived.

Universality is probably the dominant quality in all of the characters in "Dickensland." He has created for us a panorama of characters presenting almost all types and traits. These characters are not intellectually conceived—we don't see their inner motivations and desires; but rather we are given their individuating traits. In these characters we do see the universality of mankind. We see in "Dickensland" the hypocrite, the coward, the egotist, the henpecked husband, and scores of others. And the beauty of such superficial and general characterization is that we can often see

the perfect counterpart of these characters in real life—who of us is not acquainted with a Mr. Bumble? Tolstoy expressed this when he said, "All Dickens characters are my personal friends. I am constantly comparing them with living persons, and living persons with them."

One reason for the appeal we sense in this superficial characterization is that it is the very same in which we meet people in real life. How many of our acquaintances do we actually come to know? Very few, if by knowing one means getting below the surface and seeing that person's hidden conflicts, desires, and so forth. In Dickens, then, we come to know the characters in this "real life" manner. Contrast this with the mode in which we become acquainted with Othello. We learn so much about Othello's inner self that he becomes an individual to us—we ourselves, because of our limited knowledge of our acquaintances, will rarely come to know an Othello in everyday life. And, with all due respect to Othello, there is a certain amount of pleasure which we derive from these shallow, general characters as they parade before our mind's eye. We see them superficially for what they are and we unconsciously associate many of them with our own acquaintances. In this respect, reading a Dickens' novel is somewhat like attending a cocktail party where you meet—only on the surface—a great number of people. Although you never come to know their inner selves, you derive a great amount of pleasure from merely meeting them.

There is one set of characters which Dickens found impossible to draw as convincing individuals. This group is comprised of people in the upper class; Dickens has been criticized many times for the waxen lifelessness of these characters—and this is a sound criticism. The reason why these characters are not convincing is that in developing them Dickens was working outside the scope of his creative imagination. Every author, however, talented, has a definite range in which he excels. Hardy, for example, may write of other scenes and subjects, but only when he writes of rural Wessex is his work living in the fullest sense—this is his range. Dickens didn't know any aristocrats or intellectuals and so he should not have written about them. But he did, and in doing so he fell into literary mortal sin.

But in the main, Dickens' characters are convincing as real people. Another reason, besides their universality, for their popu-

larity is the dialogue by which we come to know them. Just as Shakespeare did, Dickens lets them talk themselves into existence. Dozens of characters make but a brief appearance in "Dickensland" and yet, like the Porter in *Macbeth,* they instantly talk themselves into immortality.

Dickens also has a great knack for "tagging" his characters. These "tags" may be physical like Monk's ape-like arms or the white coat of the gentleman on the parish board. It may be a speech "tag" like Scrooge's "Bah, Humbug!" or it may take the form of a characteristic action, such as Fagin's habit of rubbing his hands together. Such little details are meaningless in themselves, but they all help to make a character come alive on a printed page.

Dickens' claim to literary immortality lies, then, in his characterizations. However many faults you may find in the techniques of his writing, there is no escaping the fact that on the strength of his creative genius alone he deserves a high place among English authors. The vast number of characters which he has created will live on and will bring pleasure to as many readers as discover them. Dickens' creative fertility in drawing real and durable characters exacts this comparison by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch: "If it comes to the mere wonderwork of genius—the creation of men and women on a page of paper, who are actually more real to us than our daily acquaintances, as companionable in a crowd as even our best selected friends, as individual as the most eccentric we know, yet as universal as humanity itself, I do not see what English writer we can choose to put second to Shakespeare save Charles Dickens."

"CARGOES": A History of Progress

By Robert Curry

CARGOES

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

—John Masefield

WE have before us a copy of John Masefield's fine poem, *Cargoes.* The poem is short, but in its few short lines it presents so vivid a picture that we can see the history of shipping and trade pass before our eyes. Let's sit back and relax. Let the words of each line conjure up for us the pages of a great epic, a saga of three successive cultures.

Behold on the becalmed surface of the red sea a great five-decked galley cutting slowly through the blue water to the steady beat of the four tiers of oars manned by sweating, straining, galley slaves. The quiet is broken only by the gentle splash of the oars on the water and the steady thump of a mallet keeping time for the oarsmen. We hear the hiss and crack of a whip as it lashes out to bite the back of some tiring slave. The great purple sails hang lifeless, but still in readiness for the expected lazy wind from the Arabian desert. On deck under a canopy of scarlet and silver sits the prosperous and corpulent merchant of Nineveh. His large body is clothed

in the richest silks, and he sips from a golden cup of choice white wine from the hold. Indeed this great merchant returning from the distant port of Ophir appears to be a reigning king of some wealthy land.

The leisure of the merchant is in striking contrast to the labor of the slaves. So are the dreams of the two classes in great contrast. The merchant's dreams are of the wealth he will gain. The tired slaves dream only of the brief, but much longed-for rest that will be theirs when they reach their forced home in Palestine.

And what of the cargo which rests in the hold of this floating hell? The ivory which was traded from some native African chieftain for a casket of gaudy beads will be used to adorn the new gold and ivory palace of Jezebel, queen of Judaea. The great apes will be used as novelties for sports, games, and hunting to amuse the guests of the mighty king of Babylon. Their hair will be set afire to provoke great laughter at the sight of these tortured beasts trying to rid themselves of this horror coat. Others will be set free in the king's hunting grounds and then searched out in the chase. The beauteous peacocks will grace the gardens of the kings and compete with the royalty for grandeur. The choice of pieces of sandalwood and cedarwood will find their way into the shops of great cabinetmakers to be carved and gilded into lavish furnishings for the palaces of the wealthy. The intoxicating white wines shall find their way into shops to be bought dearly by the rich for their banquet tables.

Behold as the centuries pass, the stately ships still move on. Now a Spanish galleon returns from the newly conquered lands of Mexico and Peru. The ship with its full-blown sails dips and rises with the sparkling waves as it passes the green and inviting islands of the Caribbean. From the deck the captain in his stiff, hot, brocaded garments stops in his watch for enemy ships to wonder at the beauty of the white sand beaches that are fringed with the feathery green of the swaying palms. His meditation is not long, for he must keep a close watch for enemy ships. The cargo in his hold is too valuable to fall back into the hands of the country from which it was first stolen. What a prize to take back to his most Christian majesty, Charles the Fifth! The diamonds were indeed some of the finest that the captain had ever captured from the Portuguese foe. How they would grace the persons of their majes-

ties! See how the emeralds and amethysts lay in glittering profusion in the great chests! What bloodshed and destruction had been necessary to take this great loot from the heathens of the new country! How the pagans resisted the taking of these stones from their altars!

The hold also contains loot from the ship of a careless English captain. The glitter of the topazes and gold Portuguese coins, which had been taken from the Portuguese by the English, now mix with the splendor of the other cargo.

Behold again as time progresses how the splendor of the ship has passed. The ship is no longer a slow, graceful galleon, but a bulky British coaster cutting steadily through the tossing Channel against a lusty wind that only the devilish month of March could produce. The dirty steamer is conquering the winds and waters that had once destroyed a whole fleet of Spanish galleons when the Virgin Queen ruled England. The ship is no longer purple-sailed or gayly carved, but grim with soot and caked with salt from the tossing spray.

Gaze at the cargo that lies in the hold. What had once been jewels for the glory of kings is now coal to blacken the skies. Ivory and gold are now replaced by road-rails and pig-lead to spin an iron web over the once green and pleasant hills. Once it had been the cry of the tormented ape, now the sound that shatters the quiet of the night is the maddened beast they call the train. Where are the kingly luxuries of old? Now the fine woods that once were inlaid with gold and jewels become wood fit only for the fires of the factories and fuel of the poor. Where are the great wine shops? Now they are shops that will sell to the poor and ragged the iron-ware and dull tin trays from which the slaves of Solomon would not dine.

Editor's note: The literature of the last half century has been greatly affected by the symbolistic movement. E. M. Forster stands prominently among the modern novelists who have employed symbolism in their composition. In the following article Mr. Trese gives a highly perceptive exposition of the more important symbolic elements in Forster's famous novel, A Passage to India.

ECHOES

By Patrick Trese

"THE sky settles everything——" writes E. M. Forster in the first chapter of *A Passage to India,* and it is perhaps significant that in the last lines of his novel it is the sky which says of the friendliness of Fielding and Dr. Aziz, "No, not there." What might well be an accident of composition points up the presence of many small ironic echoes and the recurrence of several natural symbols throughout the work.

"I think you ought not to walk about at night alone, Mrs. Moore. There are bad characters about and leopards may come across from the Marabar Hills. Snakes also . . ."

"But you walk about yourself."

"Oh, I am used to it."

"Used to snakes?"

They both laughed. "I'm a doctor," he said. "Snakes don't dare bite me."

Thus spoke Dr. Aziz and Mrs. Moore as they sat together, Indian and Englishwoman, slipping on their shoes outside the Mosque within whose cool peacefulness Mrs. Moore had expressed her feeling of the unity of all religions. "God is here," she had told Aziz. Later she was to tell her other son, Ronny, that "God has put us on earth to be pleasant to each other. God . . . is . . . love." This phrase was to reappear at the birth of the god Krishna on one of his silver dishes, engraved in English to indicate the universality of the god, "God si Love" due to an unfortunate slip of the draughtsman. But the figure of the snakes, present when Mrs.

Moore finds India forcing upon her the idea of the universality of religions, appears again at the Marabar Caves where she falls victim to a strange psychic experience which thrusts upon her consciousness a feeling of the futility of all religion. Although the echo of the cave is dominant, the figure of the snakes is present writhing around within the figure of the echo.

> There are some exquisite echoes in India; there is the whisper around the dome at Bijapur; there are the long, solid sentences that voyage through the air at Mandu, and return unbroken to their creator. The echo in a Marabar Cave is not like these, it is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. "Boum" is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or "bou-oum," or "ou-boum,"—utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "boum." Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once, an overlapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently.

At the Mosque, religion and the possible presence of snakes draw Mrs. Moore and Aziz close together, but at the Caves after the devastating effects of the "snake composed of small snakes" Mrs. Moore loses all interest:

> She tried to go on with her letter, reminding herself that she was only an elderly woman who had got up too early in the morning and journeyed too far, that the despair creeping over her was merely her despair, her personal weakness, and that even if she got a sunstroke and went mad the rest of the world would go on. But suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its Divine words from "Let there be Light" to "It is finished" only amounted to "boum." Then she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, and she realized that she didn't want to write to her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even God. She sat motionless

with horror . . . For a time she thought, "I am going to be ill," to comfort herself, then she surrendered to the vision. She lost all interest, even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words she had spoken to him no longer hers but the air's.

There are many exquisite echoes in *A Passage to India;* there is the ironic incident of Dr. Aziz' collar-stud, "a gold stud, which was part of a set that his brother had brought him from Europe." He had given it to Fielding in an act of self-sacrifice, praying that his own collar would not spring up at the back during the tea. Later Ronny remarks: "Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness of the race." Yet this "inattention to detail" causes the Englishman Fielding to miss the train to the Marabar Caves, and what must be called much more than mere "inattention to detail" on the part of Adela Quested destroys the career of Aziz and damages the prestige of the English contingent at Chandrapore.

The wasp must not be forgotten; it is the wasp which seems to bridge the unbridgeable gulf between English and Indian. The wasp—is it wasp as wasp? or this wasp?—settles first on the tip of the peg on which Mrs. Moore had intended to hang her coat. "Pretty dear," Mrs. Moore says to the wasp which is not awakened, but which appears again in the thoughts of the young Mr. Sorely who admits that the "mercy of God, being infinite, may well embrace all mammals. And the wasps? He became uneasy during the descent to wasps, and was apt to change the subject." More significantly the wasp appears in the consciousness of Professor Godbole at the birth of the god.

Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days. Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness, not reconstruction. His senses grew thinner, he remembered a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone. He loved the wasps equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God.

And again:

> He had, with increasing vividness, again seen Mrs. Moore, and round her faintly clinging forms of trouble. He was a Brahman, she Christian, but it made no difference whether she was a trick of his memory or a telephone appeal. It was his duty, as it was his desire, to place himself in the position of the God and to love her and to place himself in her position and to say to the God, "Come, come, come, come." This was all he could do. How inadequate! But each according to his own capacities, and he knew that his own were small. "One old Englishwoman and one little wasp," he thought, as he stepped out of the temple into the grey of a pouring wet morning. "It does not seem much, still it is more than I am myself."

The echo of the Marabar Cave occurs again and again in the mind of Mrs. Moore and in the consciousness of Adela Quested. Yet there is the stronger echo of Mrs. Moore herself. There is the chant "Esmiss Esmoor" outside the courtroom. Does Forster mean to say that Mrs. Moore is the universal mother? or the symbol of universal love? Is the echo of Mrs. Moore—the conservation of her kindness, love, and understanding—the only way in which the gulfs and chasms of human existence can be bridged? or can they be bridged at all? With all this dualism unresolved, Forster leaves us. And *A Passage to India* is a superior novel precisely because these questions remain unanswered; they have, at least, been asked.

'Twixt the Cup and the Lip

By Kevin Tobin

MURDER, to a man of my intelligence, is essentially a simple process. One must merely cause some vital organ of the frail human body to cease its function. Life quickly departs. A wise man, like myself, performs this little task only when necessary because certain pressure groups, which happen to be in power during this age, would stop this sort of activity. In their pious ignorance, they consider the act of murder detrimental to their struggling little society. As I said before, to murder is simple—or should be; but I do recall one instance when what should have been a simple little murder caused me no end of trouble. It happened during a bleak January several years ago.

A certain business acquaintance of mine had placed himself in a position in which he could circumvent my excellently laid plans, plans which, if they were successful, would have made me richer by at least a quarter of a million dollars. My associate was well aware that it was in his power to block completely a key move in my design, and he made it clear to me that he considered his good will in the matter worthy of some slight gift on my part. Just a little gift! Why, greed had motivated this man in everything he had done since I had known him! But this final disgusting display of cupidity was conspiring to bring his life to its end. The distaste which I had felt for him flamed now into a fire of hate such as I had thought I would never feel for any man. Pink-cheeked, effeminate, the man had not a friend in the world. I was but one of many who despised his ingratiating, favor-seeking catering when dealing with superiors. I tried to make this person withdraw his threat, but he was adamant. You can see what I had to do.

I invited the victim to my bachelor's apartment to partake of a fine Sunday dinner. He knew well my reputation as an amateur chef and so, when I promised him an unusual treat, he accepted with pleasure. The outward purpose of the little dinner was to speak of the size of my "gift." From my collection of rare delicacies I chose an obscure recipe for chicken. Many hours were spent that afternoon on the meal. The chicken I prepared with consummate care, following the directions minutely except for the addition of one little extra ingredient of my own.

I had finished everything and had been relaxing in my parlor for about half an hour when my friend arrived, breezing in with his usual airy manner. No sooner had I hung up his hat and coat than he expressed his anxiety to taste the treat which I had prepared for him. I, too, was somewhat anxious, and so with a smile I led him to the prepared table. I confess that I could hardly conceal my impatience as he slowly piled his plate to a mountainous height. Then the idiot made a great show of picking out a radish and a pickle and a stalk of celery. Next the celery had to be salted and a bite taken. These little preliminaries accomplished, he at last turned his attention to his towering plate. First a taste of the peas, followed by a taste of the mashed potatoes and then—slowly, with the expression of a man about to enjoy a rare treat, he lifted a morsel of the chicken to his lips. My heart almost stopped.

Suddenly he was seized with a tremendous burst of coughing. He threw the meat on the table. He grasped his throat. Something was wrong! This poison was supposed to react hours later like indigestion and leave no trace. How could it have taken effect so quickly? His coughing continued, and his face turned a terrible blue. Then, just as suddenly, he relaxed, gasping for breath. He had choked on a bone.

His throat was raw and he could hardly speak. He was unable to eat, and so, after sitting awhile—during which time I inwardly cursed my ill fortune—he left. The time, the pains which I had spent in preparing him so fine a meal for his last had been wasted. I wandered back to the dining room feeling dreadfully let-down and dined that night on potatoes and peas.

The matter of the gift, however, was still unsettled, and we soon arranged to speak of the amount over dinner at a nearby restaurant. The meal, which was not chicken, was about half eaten when he excused himself to make a phone call. The booth which he entered was turned away from the table and almost completely hidden behind a potted palm. The instant he closed the door I drew a small envelope from my breast pocket. Glancing about to be sure that I was unobserved, I emptied the powdery, white contents of the envelope into his waiting wine glass. No sooner had I replaced the empty envelope in my pocket than the phone booth door swung open. Its opening started my spine to tingle.

He seated himself and we resumed our meal. By way of suggestion I constantly sipped my wine, but he never touched his glass. The meal done, we sat for some time smoking and conversing. I even agreed to make him my partner, for what had I to lose? During all this time he made no move toward the wine. I began to worry. Had he somehow seen me from the booth? But no, I told myself, he couldn't have seen. Still, I felt myself growing more and more uneasy, less able to meet his glance. Finally, when I could stand it no longer, I rose to leave. In a good-natured manner I pointed to his full glass of wine.

"Haven't you forgotten your wine?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" he replied. "I've given up alcoholic drinks. They can do terrible things to your health, you know."

Ah! How little do we know the truth of our own statements!

When we left the restaurant I began to experience the pangs of frustrated anger. This simple little murder was becoming difficult! That night I sat late in my rooms, pondering long and deeply, searching my mind for some perfect method of ending this fortunate fool's inconvenient existence. Before dawn I had discovered it.

The next afternoon I carefully dusted five little sticks of gum with the white powder, replacing each stick in its folder, and then slipping all five back into the pack. I slept restlessly that night. Impatience to finish this wretch who had twice escaped my logical planning gnawed at me like a hungry worm. The next morning I rose wearily, but with a feeling of exhilarating anticipation. About noon I met him in the third floor corridor of our office building. We spoke for a few minutes about business matters, though I scarcely paid any attention to the words that passed between us. Then, with a show of casualness which I did not feel, I drew the pack of gum from my pocket. I held it out to him. Smiling, I said:

"Have a stick?"

"Thank you," he replied. "I will."