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QUARTERLY

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CONNECTICUT
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A FANTASY

(SCENE: The interior of a peasant cottage, quite small. A fireplace back center. A window on the left, near a door. Before the fire, toward the window, an armchair. Before the fire on the other side, a trundle-bed. Part of a large bed is seen beyond the trundle-bed. A light blue coverlet is thrown over it. There are shelves to the right and left of the fireplace, with pans and dishes that glimmer in the light. Above the fireplace is a mantelpiece with a clock and candlesticks. The old woman is standing by the window as the curtain rises. The young woman is hovering over the trundle-bed. Both wear dark, simple clothing. The old woman has a white apron.)

Throughout, the fire dies down steadily until, toward the end, there are only a few glowing embers.)

The Young Woman, bending over the trundle-bed: She has not moved nor made a sound for over an hour now.

The Old Woman, at the window: I do not see any sign of him yet, and it is already getting dark.

Y. W.: Only yesterday she was playing outside the door there.

O. W., *hobbling to the armchair:* The wind is rising, too. Why does he not return?

Y. W.: She said that a lady in a scarlet gown played with her there. A lady with long black hair.

O. W.: What time did the child's father go?

Y. W.: At noon. But it is a long walk to the hut of the Herb Woman.

O. W.: It is dark outside now. And it grows colder indoors.

Y. W.: I will put more wood on the fire. I will light a candle.

O. W.: Do not light the candle! Do not light the candle! Leave the fire as it is.

Y. W.: I will put another coverlet over her, lightly. She seems to be sleeping now.

O. W.: What is the noise I hear?

Y. W.: It is the wind rattling the casement.

O. W.: I thought there was someone knocking.

Y. W.: It is only the wind. I am sure she is sleeping now.

O. W.: Her father should be here.

Y. W.: He will come soon. He will bring the Herb Woman herself, or a remedy.

O. W.: It grows colder and darker. But do not stir the fire. Do not light the candle.

Y. W.: Children have strange fancies. She said the lady in the scarlet gown promised to come again to play with her.

O. W.: What is the noise I hear again?

Y. W.: It is the wind rattling the casement.

O. W.: I thought there was someone knocking.

Y. W.: It is the wind. It has awakened her. She is moaning again.

O. W.: I can hear someone knocking.

Y. W.: It is the wind, I tell you. How it frightens her. She is sobbing now.

O. W.: Bar the door! Bar the door!

Y. W.: The door is not barred. Her father will come soon.

O. W.: Ah, someone is knocking. Someone is knocking at the door, I tell you.

Y. W.: The wind is blowing very hard. It seems to terrify her. She is awake now. She is sobbing.

O. W.: I am sure I hear someone knocking. Listen!

(At this moment a clock on the mantel strikes seven. As it does so, there is a long wail from the child in the trundle-bed. It rises to a shrill scream and dies away in a choking sob. Both women bend toward the bed. Then the wind is heard rather plainly. The door on the left opens noiselessly. A gust of wind blows through the room. The fire, which has been dying down, flares up, casting grotesque shadows over the room. The dishes and pans shine brightly for a moment. Then the room is dim again. Inside the closed door stands a bent figure in a long grey cloak.)

O. W.: Who are you? Who are you?

Y. W.: It is the Herb Woman. Did you bring a remedy?

(The figure in grey advances toward the trundle-bed.)

O. W.: Who are you? Your back is bent, yet you walk as lightly and swiftly as a young maid.

Y. W.: She is very old. Do not mind her.

O. W.: And where is the child's father? Why did he not come with you?

Y. W.: She was well yesterday. It was only this morning that she seemed ill. Now she has sobbed and moaned all afternoon. She has grown pale and thin in a few hours.

The Figure in Grey: Bring me water in a cup.

O. W.: Your voice is young, also.

(The young woman goes off at right and returns immediately with a cup. The figure in grey bends over the child.)

Y. W.: The wind seemed to frighten her, too.

O. W.: It is late, so late. Why does not the child's father come?

Y. W.: She has not cried since you came in.

The Figure in Grey, handing her the cup: She will not cry any more.

Y. W.: You are kind and good. How shall I pay you? What shall I give you?

The Figure in Grey: You can give me nothing. But I will take this pretty coverlet. She will not need it.

Y. W.: The fire is almost dead, though. I will fetch wood. (*She goes out, right.*)

O. W.: Why do you fold the coverlet that way? Turn so that I can see you.

(*The Figure in Grey bends over the child's bed.*) I know you are not old. Your cloak is dark, but beneath it your gown is red. How tall you are, when you straighten up that way! And under your hood your hair is long and black. Who are you? And why do you carry the coverlet that way, as if - - as if - -

(*The Figure in Grey passes swiftly out of the door.*)

O. W.: What are you carrying in the coverlet? What are you carrying in the coverlet? I must see - - (*She raises herself painfully.*) I am so old and lame. (*She hobbles over to the trundle-bed.*)

O. W.: O-o-h!

(The young woman enters suddenly from the right with an armful of wood.)

Y. W.: She has left the door open. I will close it.

O. W.: What did she carry away in the coverlet - -

Y. W., *at the door*: What are you saying? Why are you kneeling by the child's bed? *(Coming closer to the old woman.)* Why are you praying - - - ?

O. W.: Oh - - Oh - -

Y. W.: Ah, what did she carry in the coverlet? *(Running to the door.)*
Come back! Oh - - Oh - -

(The father enters the door.)

The Father: I have brought the remedy What are you saying? Why are you lying there?

Y. W. and O. W. together: Oh - - Oh - -

The Father: The child! *(He starts toward the child's bed, then stops, understanding. He stands between the old woman and his wife, very still. It has grown steadily darker in the room. There is the sound of weeping from the young woman, and the muttered prayers of the old woman. A draught blows through the open door, but it does not revive the fire which is now almost completely dead. The three persons are the vaguest of outlined shapes as the curtain falls.)*

LOIS TAYLOR, '31

THREE SISTERS

“THE trouble with Abby,” said Iris, “is that she has always been too good.”

Gwen looked clever. “You don’t, I hope, attribute your success to your—er—delinquency,” she said.

“Well, no. But Abby annoys me. I don’t mind people being good unless they’re too obvious. And she is. And was even when we were children.”

“But she isn’t smug. She doesn’t say ‘I am very good. I am better than you.’ But let’s not talk about Abby,” Gwen said. “We’ll only get into a metaphysical discussion or something. We’ve come on our annual pilgrimage in the cause of sisterly affection, and that’s that. Let’s talk about you. What have you been doing? You haven’t sent me anything but that wire in three months.”

“Sorry I haven’t written, Gwen. I think of you often.”

“I hope so. I think of you. In fact, I’ve been working up a story about you just lately.”

“About me?” Iris sat up on the bed where she had been lying, looking startled and slightly pleased.

“Well, about the basic you. The woman doesn’t look like you. But she’s the kind of person who hurls her beauty at you, forces you to acknowledge it. You always think she’s much prettier than she really is. Her force of mind does for her anything which nature neglected.”

Iris glanced at the long red-gold hair which hung over her bare white arms and said, "Gwen, you horrid thing, you don't mean it. Am I like that? Do I hurl my beauty?"

"Yes, you do. You don't mean to. But you do. It's your gift, being beautiful and making everyone realize it. You're the Helen of Troy type. Pass me a cigarette, will you?"

Iris obeyed. Gwen lighted her cigarette and went on. "You can't help being beautiful any more than I can help writing bum novels. It's the way we are. I'm getting to believe in fate and predestination and things."

Iris yawned. "It's too late to talk about things like that, and I'm too tired. It kills me to travel. You'd think I'd get used to it at my age—and besides, this room is enough to wear one out. Look at it—*look* at it."

"I'm looking at it," Gwen said. "It's a room in a second rate hotel in a small city. But, Iris, don't forget how thrilled we used to be in high school when we came to gala affairs in the shiny ball-room. Remember?"

"Remember! I'm afraid I began my awful career there. It was fun, wasn't it. Remember our first evening dresses? Mine was light green, I remember."

"Yes. I thought it was gorgeous. Mine came a year later—pink. I always look as if I had the jaundice in pink."

"Well—I almost had blue, and I look as if I were anæmic in blue. Abby had blue, didn't she?—I believe I felt more grown up then than I ever will again. But there was something rather lovely about those days, and those nice awful boys with their slick hair."

"Heavens, Iris, I hope you aren't one of those women who think the peak of life comes in the teens!"

"I'm not. But I hadn't thought of it for a long time. It's fun."

"Personally I'm looking forward to the blessed fifties. Kirk and I are going to be so used to one another then that we won't be a bother to each other, and Kirk II will be grown up and a grandfather, and I will retire into a suite of rooms in the large country house which we will then own, and produce—not junk, not messes of cleverness, or sloppy little sketches, or written-in-a-hurry novels, but literature."

"Why Gwen, you talk as if your stuff was rotten."

"Isn't it?"

"Of course not. You know very well—Why, think of your reviews. Look at the way your books sell. And women's clubs study them. And all that sort of thing."

"Remember, my dear, that this is a decadent age as far as literature is concerned. If the decadent people in it laud my books that doesn't prove anything, does it? No, seriously, Iris, I've never yet written anything I wanted to."

"Never?"

"No. It's been like running after something and never quite catching it. I get praised for doing a lot of running, but nobody realizes I didn't get the thing I was running after." Gwen rose, and began to pace up and down the room, her hands in the pockets of her striped bathrobe.

"But Gwen, why worry about that? I should think you had enough success as it is."

"It isn't the success. It's just the satisfaction. After I turn out something I feel as if I had sat down to a meal and found it all sawdust. I'm hungry when I get through. Oh, why talk in metaphors? You know what I mean. Don't you? Or don't you?"

"I think maybe I understand, Gwen, although of course I'm not clever—"

"Clever! Don't you dare say that word at me, Iris. All my life I've been 'clever.' Clever in high school, because I was two years ahead of my class and graduated with honors; because I wrote nasty little things for the school magazine; because I held down a newspaper job when I was only seventeen. Clever! Horrid word! What does it mean? Nothing but a kind of quickness, a superficiality."

"But Gwen, you are—well really, Gwen. You have brains—and talent—and things."

"Brains! Abby deserves more credit on that score than I do. She never got the marks in school that I did. But the way that kid used to plug—night after night, while you and I were dashing around having a good time.—Oh God!"

"Gwen, what's wrong with you tonight?"

"I don't know. It's a mood. I feel—vile."

"I'm sure you're tired."

"Tired? No, I never get tired."

"But you are."

"Well, maybe I am. No—I think it's coming back to this horrible town. When I think of the way I struggled to get out of it—"

"At least," Iris said thoughtfully, "you were more noble about it than I. You worked your way out of it. But I married out of it." She paused. "Sometimes, Gwen, I think that's the only reason I married Ken. I—sometimes I do."

Gwen whirled around sharply. "Iris, there isn't anything wrong between you and Ken, is there?"

Iris laughed nervously. "Of course not. I just think that once in awhile, when I feel—as you do now. I think we all rather question our own actions sometimes."

"I know I do. But in this case, if we hadn't taken the step we would have been stuck here yet."

"Like Abby."

"Like Abby."

"How does she stand it!" Iris cried. "Every time after I come I spend weeks afterwards wondering."

"I don't think she minds so much. But I've brought her a good-looking hand-bag from Saks to help her endure it."

"A hand-bag! She'd much rather have a three-piece overstuffed parlor set."

"Well, I know. But I could hardly bring one in my bag. What did you bring her?"

"Half a dozen salad forks."

"You are good. She'll love that. She'll use them when those horrible women come in to sew and eat in the afternoon. What did you get for the baby? I got the loveliest fuzzy blue bunny. Do you want to see it?"

"Don't bother. I got him some things to wear." Iris yawned. "I simply must sleep," she said. "You, too, Gwen. You've got the most awful circles under your eyes."

"Have I? That's nothing out of the way. It seems as if I always have them now, no matter how early I go to bed. Do you know, I think I worry in my sleep about the things I ought to write—the good things, you know." She laughed sharply, to conceal her seriousness.

"Well," said Iris. "I don't want any circles. I'm going to sleep now. Coming?"

"I may as well—there's nothing to stay up for."

The next noon Gwen and Iris lunched at what they affirmed was the only place in town where real food could be procured. It was one of those unadorned restaurants with paper napkins and spoons in a glass on the table. They would both have preferred a less utilitarian background, but they never planned to have a meal at Abby's. Iris always said, "I simply cannot bring myself to eat at Abby's. She always serves such good substantial meals. And then of course Herbert lets his knife hang off his plate, and sort of bends over his food, and I feel as if I'm going to scream in a minute."

They sat at a corner table, Iris in black relieved by scallops of red hair, carmine lips, and exquisite beige gloves, and Gwen in something green. Together they looked like a photograph from "Vogue." Unaware that the fifteen-dollar a week stenographers stared at them, they sat waiting for their order.

"Gwen," Iris said, when the food came, "You've still got black circles. I believe you do worry in your sleep. Whether it's about books or not . . ."

"It is. There isn't another thing in my life. Really, Iris, when I come to think of it, no one's so free from troubles as I. Just to have Kirk, and Kirk II . . ."

At the mention of Gwen's husband Iris frowned. She sat breaking a piece of toast into bits. "Gwen," she said, "I've simply got to tell somebody."

"What? What, Iris? What's wrong?"

"Oh Gwen, I don't know what to do. I—Gwen, I don't think I love Ken any more. I think I just married him to get away from this place. He was just a—a refuge."

"But Iris, surely you've had time to decide before this—eight years."

"Well of course there were times before this when I felt this way. But I thought it was because—you know—he got on my nerves—little things he did—the way he rattled the paper when he read it—and cleared his throat. You know. But now—Oh Gwen, what shall I do? I don't want to go back to him."

"But surely, Iris, you don't want to leave your husband just because he clears his throat."

"Don't be facetious, Gwen. I'm serious. It's just—well—I don't love him any more."

"How do you know you don't?"

"Oh, Gwen, you don't understand. I just—don't."

"Then there's a reason, Iris. Women don't stop loving their husbands overnight when they've been married eight years. When I stayed with

you and Ken last year there wasn't a thing wrong. I think I would have noticed it if there had been."

"Well, then, Gwen, there's—Oh, I can't tell you. It's too complicated." She pushed back her chair and gathered up her gloves.

"But Iris—tell me. It isn't fair to break off like that without telling me. What is it?"

"Oh, it's no use. I'd better not tell you, Gwen. It will only muddle things up. Not but what you'd understand, or at least try to help. But—I just can't talk about it. I'm all muddled up in my mind."

"Iris, tell me one thing. There isn't—well, have you found someone besides Ken?"

Iris rose. "Maybe you've guessed it," she said. "Let's not talk about it. I'm sorry I brought it up. But I felt I had to."

Gwen said nothing more, and silently they paid their checks and went out onto Main Street.

"Let's walk to Abby's," Gwen said. "It isn't far, and it will give her time enough to get her dishes done."

"All right," Iris said. "I just thought! It's Saturday!"

"Well, yes."

"Herbert will be home."

"Of course. That's great. He's a perfect study in something or other. I'm going to analyze him and put him in a story."

"He won't go into anything but that awful shop where he makes guns, and his own house."

"Oh—he might fit into a story. He's a good provider and a loving father."

"But he hasn't any chin. And he toes in. I know all about Herbert."

"Maybe you don't. Maybe he makes modernistic drawings in the evening—or carves things in Ivory soap."

"I doubt it!"

"So do I."

They laughed, and walked on. After traversing the gray length of Main Street, with its dingy four-story buildings, they turned off onto a street that had once been respectable, not to say fashionable. Scattered among the wooden houses were a few of brick and stone, columned or fan-lighted, with surrounding lawns. Now, however, there was not a house that did not need paint. Tucked away between some of them were dubious little grocery and candy stores. Washing hung on side-porches. Baby carriages stood before door-ways. Here and there was an empty window with a sign, "Rooms for rent," or "Nice tenement for rent."

"This is a very interesting street," Gwen remarked.

"It's horrid," Iris said. "It's the next thing to a slum."

"Not quite, my dear. Nice people still live here."

They approached a shabby brown house set flush with the sidewalk. Once meant to house a large family, it has been converted into four odd little apartments. Beyond the white curtains at the bay window two of the rooms of Abby's home could be seen. The living-room was visible in all its details. Herbert was leaning back in a chair smoking a cigarette and listening to a victrola as it churned off "Sweet Mystery of Life." As Gwen pressed the bell he rose and turned off the victrola. When he opened the

door he said, "Well, well, well," and shook hands vigorously. He wore a blue striped shirt, but no collar. His sleeves were rolled up. "Well, well," he repeated, "a couple of strangers you are. Come on in, come on in, Abby will come in a minute. She's in the kitchen."

Gwen and Iris sat down in wooden rocking chairs, and Herbert re-seated himself beside the victrola. "Well," he said, "You're looking great. Just great! How did you find the old town? Pretty good, eh?"

Abby came in, and her sisters rose to kiss her. "Well," she panted, "I'm glad to see you—it's been a whole year—my hands are still damp—I was just doing up the dishes—how well you look—what a good-looking suit, Gwen." She wiped her hands on her blue print apron and stood smiling at her sisters. Had her hair been more red than sandy, her eyes more grey than blue, her figure more slender than stocky, she would have looked like Iris.

"Well, Abby," Gwen said, "You don't look as if there was anything wrong with you."

"I should say not," Iris said. "You're positively beaming."

"How's the baby?" Gwen asked.

"Fine. He's asleep now."

"Asleep—through all this noise?"

"Yes. He doesn't hear it. I'll take him up later, and you can see him. I'll just leave my apron in the kitchen."

She went out, untying her apron. In a moment she came back and sat down beside Herbert. "Tell us all the news," she said. "We're dying to hear."

Iris chattered on about her affairs, where she had been, where she was going. Gwen said little. She was thinking how well Abby and Herbert fitted into their living room, Herbert in his blue-striped shirt, his hair slightly rumpled, leaning forward and listening attentively, and Abby in her crisp housedress, her hands in her lap, her face eager and smiling. The spotless curtains of coarse lace, the square of cheap rug, the stand of begonias and geraniums at the window, the horsehair sofa with two silk cushions on it, the end table from the department store on which sat three books and a flowery box of chocolates, the miscellaneous chairs, all wove into a unified picture. The room smelled slightly of food, but it was a warm, wholesome smell.

Herbert took a package of cigarettes from his pocket, drew one out, and then, remembering, offered it to Gwen and Iris, and struck a match for them. Abby ran into the kitchen and brought them a dish to knock their ashes into. Herbert had a standing ash tray.

"You're all smoking," Abby said, "I'll have a treat too." She opened the flowery candy box, passed it around, was refused, selected a chocolate. She bit into it like a child, half smiling at the momentary delight.

"How about some more music?" Herbert asked, picking up a record.

"He's crazy about music," Abby said. "All Saturday afternoon he sits and plays that victrola. Evenings, too. He buys a new record every week."

Herbert put on "When the Organ Played at Twilight." When it was finished, Gwen held her breath and wondered if the next would be "The Last Rose of Summer" or "The Lost Chord." "If it were the St. Louis Blues," she thought, "you wouldn't mind." It was a waltz ballad, entitled

"If Love Were All." When it was over Abby said, "Come into the bedroom if you want to see the baby."

Gwen and Iris followed her into the next room. In the neat, almost bare bedroom, with its pink and white curtains and pink and white bedspread the baby slept in his crib. He had kicked off his blanket. As he slept he breathed all over his little body in deep rhythmic ripples. His reddish hair was clustered in damp curls on his forehead.

"He's sweet," Iris whispered.

"Adorable," Gwen added.

"Isn't he big?" Abby asked. "I started giving him cod-liver oil a while ago. I thought he needed it, and they say it's wonderful. Did you give it to Kirk, Gwen?"

"I don't remember."

"It's full of vitamins, you know. He's gained so much. And not a sign of a cold all winter. He's always been rather susceptible to colds, you know. The doctor thinks his tonsils may be a little inflamed, but we can see to that later if there's anything in it." She tiptoed to the closet. "Let me show you what I finished yesterday," she said.

She drew out a dark green dress touched at the neck with lace. "The material was on sale for a dollar twenty-eight a yard, and I only had to get three and a half yards, so you see it was a pretty cheap dress. I thought it would go with a hat I got awhile ago. That was another bargain—five ninety-five marked down to three ninety-eight." She displayed the hat.

"Put it on," Iris said.

Abby did so, squatting before the mirror. "Stunning," said Iris. "You are clever," Gwen said, "I wish I could sew. You always were handy with your needle."

"I like to sew," Abby said. "It's so much more fun making things than going and getting them ready-made."

The baby woke and blinked. "The darling," Gwen said, "He's awake. May I pick him up, Abby?"

"Of course. I'll put on his romper and we'll take him out to daddy."

"Let me put on his romper," Gwen said. "There, honey, now we'll go out and get the lovely blue bunny auntie has brought you."

They went into the living-room. When Herbert saw his son he held out his arms. "Here comes the old fella to see his old man!" he cried. "Well, well! What a big boy. Gained while he slept. This kid," he said to Gwen as he took the baby, "is the champion heavy-weight of the neighborhood. See your auties? Pretty snappy dames! Oops!" he tossed the baby in the air, caught him again. Then he sat down with the child on his knee. "Now we'll have a fight for the benefit of your aunties." He pretended to pummel the child with his fists. "Hit the old man one!" he cried. "Ha! Ha!" he said. "He busted his old man one in the beeza." Abby took up her work-basket. "I hope you don't mind if I sew," she said. "I'm having the club in next week, and I want to get this set done by then." She set to work cross-stitching a small napkin with a design stamped on it.

The conversation went on, about the baby's health, about Abby's health, about Herbert's health, and about Iris' husband and Gwen's husband. Suddenly there seemed nothing to say. Gwen caught Iris looking at her watch.

"Abby," she said, "do you mind if we run along? I'm taking the five-ten, and I have a few things to do before I go."

"Yes," Iris said, "I think we'd better be running along."

"Well, I hate to see you go," Abby said, "but I suppose if you must. . . We hardly ever get to see each other—"

"You must come down to New York soon," Gwen said. "You must."

"Well, I don't know." Abby glanced at her husband and her baby.

"Oh you must. We can arrange it all later when we write."

"It does seem a shame we can't have more time together," Iris said. "If you do come to New York, Abby, I'll run up and we'll have a nice little reunion."

"And the old man will stay home and wash the dishes," Herbert said cheerfully.

"Well, of course," Iris said, "we wish you could get away too . . ."

"No thanks! I'll get my vacation when Abby goes away." He grinned and winked at the same time.

"Horrid thing!" said Abby, smiling at him.

Gwen and Iris presented their presents as unobtrusively as possible, kissed Abby and the baby, shook hands with Herbert, and got out the door with many farewells.

In the street Iris turned to Gwen. "Gwen! It makes me sick! That shoddy little home—and the bargain hat—and that foolish husband—and she's contented with it, contented. Like a cow."

Gwen drew her coat about her. The sun was going down, and it was colder. "Iris," she said, "don't say that. Don't you see? Don't you understand?" She paused. "Oh God! Why weren't we born cows too!"

DOROTHY SIMPSON, '31

SONNET

The rain is falling, falling soft tonight,
Down from the wood-brown eaves onto the ground;
We are together in a lamp's clear light,
And smile content to hear its constant sound.
Content . . . the light shines with a steady ray;
Your eyes are steady on the book you hold.
My fingers hold a book, yet my eyes stray
To seek yours, bent upon a page's fold,
And I am glad to see their steadiness,
To hear the pattering rain and that low swish
Of pages turning in the quietness
That stills this room and my unanswered wish.
To see us here tonight, who else could guess
All that our future holds of loneliness?

ALMA BENNETT, '33

SONNET

We are quite unremembered by the lane;
 And all the leaves have other interests now;
 Not one, lone, single, solitary cow
 Of those that loved approval in the rain
 That afternoon, cares if we come again
 (I saw it in their eyes); there is no bough
 Faithful to us; the golden-rod, I vow,
 Has promiscuity on her like a stain.

I have gone back, my dear,—inevitably
 As criminal to the crime—and all my fears
 Were justified: the one fidelity
 Was mine, the tears were all my tears.
 Faithless as you, that lane's inconstancy
 Will keep me out of love and lanes for years.
 MARY Q. HESS, '31

TWO NOTABLE SINNERS

MOLL FLANDERS by *Daniel Defoe*

and

MADAME BOVARY by *Gustave Flaubert*

THERE are certain issues to be avoided in discussing matters that deal with bad women. One of these is the meaning of the words "good" and "bad," and another is whether or not goodness and badness, their nature having been decided upon, have anything to do with a woman's being interesting. There are other issues, but they must be avoided even to the point of not being mentioned. As to the first, in this paper, the terms good and bad will be used conventionally and very vaguely because the writer, being deficient in moral sense, is unable to assign the true and exact meaning to them although she is sure that the conventional connotation is not all it should be. As to the second—whether or not goodness and badness have anything to do with a woman's being interesting—the writer, never having outgrown the adolescent belief that it is easier for bad women to be diverting than for good women, is convinced that it has. There is one qualification to this, the circumstance where all persons are evil but one. This one person has the advantage of being novel and of attaining an originality which good people seldom achieve, there being so many of them. A good example, although not a feminine one, is Alyosha of "The Brothers Karamazov," a saint in a monotonous wilderness of sinners. It is only fair to give warning that this prejudiced view is bound to swing things in favor of the sinners.

Two notable sinners are Defoe's "Moll Flanders" and Flaubert's "Madame Bovary." To read the two books with comparison and contrast in

mind is to realize that the two women are antithetic in their manner of sinning and thereby typical of the ages in which they sinned. And it is to realize, also, how sinning changes with eras and persons. In some periods, this one, for instance, it is easy to be gracefully and successfully bad because of modern conveniences, mechanical and moral, dedicated to that end. In the age of *Moll Flanders* it was hard to sin with grace and delicacy because coarseness was in vogue. In the age of *Madame Bovary* it was difficult among the bourgeoisie, for they made sin awkward by their realism. One had to be a romantic in those days.

Moll Flanders, living in an age of coarse gestures and of calling spades shovels, views her existence from her earliest years with great gusto and matter-of-factness. Like all Defoe's heroes and heroines she is animated by a practical spirit, by a thoroughgoing policy of subordinating means to ends. Having no sentimentality in her, she views herself, her acquaintances, and her life with a straightforward, uncompromising gaze, and being equally lacking in imagination and a sense of the romantic, she sees nothing through a glass darkly but everything in the hard white light of a hard-boiled day. It is true that sometimes she speaks sentimentally, but that is Defoe speaking for her, laying conventional phrases on her tongue like little pills for a moral stomach-ache that bothers him a lot, but of which she is scarcely aware. And it is true that she speaks of love, but it is not romantic love that she means but lust or, more often, a good business proposition. Moll Flanders is, like most of Defoe's characters and like Defoe himself, a hard-headed person of business who drives excellent bargains and counts pounds like the beads of a rosary. She is motivated by a desire for physical well-being, for the assurance that her tomorrows will find her with presentable clothes on her back and money in her stocking. To this end she sacrifices everything—her lovers, her husbands, her children, and herself, not to mention those legions of innocent bystanders who are relieved of watches, bundles, pocketbooks, and all other articles not padlocked to their persons.

Daughter of a thief and a harlot who had as few scruples about deserting her child as Moll has later about deserting her own offspring, Moll is brought up in a haphazard way and finally lands as a semi-charity guest in a family negligible except that it contains two young men. Moll, having no conception of the honour due other people while accepting their hospitality, allows herself to be seduced by the elder brother while the family is at church. At this time she is quite young, but she does not betray the possession of any romantic illusions common to adolescence. On the contrary, she sees herself not as the victim of a grand passion, not as the mistress to a romantic lover, not as a wronged woman. She sees herself from the beginning as a harlot. In reply to the elder brother's evasive and effusive mouthings as to his loyalty, respect for her, and so on, she retorts, "Your dear whore!" Here is no retreat from reality, no self-justification, no veiling of the sordid to make it softer to the eyes. Moll Flanders sees the sharp outlines of things as they are. There is not that sensitiveness, that delicacy in her nature which would find the sordid disconcerting even in a sordid age. Her emotional fiber is tough. She is an instrument made for rough, albeit lively, tunes. Although she succumbs to brain-fever upon being deserted by this first lover, it is not from unrequited love but from

the fear that her future will be uncertain and the realization that a source of wealth is slipping through her fingers. When she is first given pecuniary reward, she remarks, "I was more confounded with the money than I was before with the love, and began to be so elevated that I scarce knew the ground I stood on."

Having failed with the elder brother and successfully quieted the suspicions of the family, Moll marries the younger brother who sincerely loves her. Although it occurs to her that the younger brother is being badly hoodwinked, since she prefers the elder brother—and for what good reason!—it does not bother her sufficiently to interrupt her plans. She lives with him until he dies, conveniently enough, when she starts out in search of a new source of revenue, light-heartedly leaving her offspring with her mother-in-law. In this, as in all previous man-hunting expeditions and in those to come, she is full of self-confidence, of wary, shrewd methods, of fondness for herself and satisfaction with her calling. As she blithely puts it, "I had a most unbounded stock of vanity and pride, and but a very little stock of virtue."

From this point on, her life is a continual succession of men, of accumulation of money, loss of money, accumulation again. For the most part she is successful in her enterprises due to this same vanity, and to her ruthlessness, and to her philosophy which seems to be, "Since I am a harlot I might as well make it pay." There flows through her a steady current of good-humored satisfaction with herself which makes her chuckle equally over mishaps and successes.

Her career is necessarily divided into two parts: as long as she retains physical attractiveness she plies the oldest profession; when her beauty deserts her she turns thief. At the end of the first volume, which marks the end of her earlier career, when she has married her last husband, having three others extant—the linen-draper, the Lancashire husband, and her brother in Virginia—she sums up herself as she was at the age of forty-two in this wise: "Then it occurred to me, 'What an abominable creature am I! And how is this innocent gentleman going to be abused by me! How little does he think, that having divorced a whore, he is throwing himself into the arms of another! That he is going to marry one that has lain with two brothers, and has had three children by her own brother! . . . One that has lain with thirteen men and has had a child since he saw me.'" This deprecation of self is as feeble and superficial as the ready-made phrases she uses to simulate repentance. She is aware of her shortcomings, but she makes no effort to change, blaming her character on unpropitious circumstances, and she does not lose any sleep over her low condition. When she becomes frightened, she contemplates penitence, but not for long. Spasms of compunction shoot across her wily designs like rockets—vivid and quickly gone. When fits of uncontrollable panic attack her now and then after a narrow escape, she thinks of the horrors of Newgate Prison and of hell, but hers is a quick recovery. Her repentance is a matter of momentary fear. Defoe has her express herself sentimentally at these times, but it is doubtful if she feels sentimentally. She uses the made-to-order phrases, and the reader feels that Defoe is prodding her from behind all the time, and that she is repeating his suggestions whispered surreptitiously in her ear. It is almost impossible to believe that a

woman of Moll Flander's type would spend any time moralizing, preaching repentance, advising young women. Aware of her own sins—yes. Bothered about them except when at irregular intervals she is afraid—no.

The character of Moll Flanders achieves consistency in spite of the moral tags with which Defoe fills her speech. The reader has a strong conviction that this moralizing is a bone thrown to those who might object to the subject-matter of the book. Moll has no illusions about herself. She is aware of the sordidness of her life, and she is also aware of her inability to rise to a higher level. She never consoles herself with thinking that she is a lady in reduced circumstances. This is because she feels no crying urge for consolation. In her heart of hearts, she likes her life of risks and dare-deviltry. When she is caught she is afraid. When she escapes she forgets her fear easily.

The only thing that jeopardizes the consistency of her character is the self-analysis with which Defoe credits her. That she is capable of looking within herself, weighing her own qualities, watching her own reactions to such an extent is necessary to the autobiographic style of the book. The reader, however, is prone to feel at times that she has been endowed with a far greater ability for self-criticism than is to be expected in a woman of her extrovertic characteristics. She is self-centered and selfish, intelligent and shrewd; but it would seem that these qualities would normally be directed outside herself, and that she would spend much less time examining her mental and emotional life than is the case. This is not a serious fault, the necessity for it being obvious and excusable; and the use of the first person accentuates the vividness of the portrayal.

Moll Flanders, that strangely mixed compound of craft and impulse, selfishness and oblique generosity (she casts bread upon the waters only when she already sees loaves floating in her direction) is a fascinating figure. Whether she would be interesting if not bad I seriously doubt because in herself she is not an original creature, has no intriguing depths of nature and no surface brilliancy. I am adolescent enough to believe that she achieves fascination by virtue of her vices. That she devotes herself to crime is her salvation as a personality. Her sins are not new but they run the gamut of crime; and that one individual could crowd such variety and multiplicity of wrong-doing into one lifetime, though a long one, is a thing to wonder at, and is sufficient, were there nothing else to recommend her, to establish her as one of the most interesting women of fiction. She has no grace, but neither had her times.

Madame Bovary is the antithesis of Moll Flanders. Moll, the realist, the practical, hard-headed business woman, blunt and crude, was a product of her age. And Emma Bovary, the romanticist, the impractical dreamer, the contractor of debts, she who fled from reality is a product of hers, of the early days of the Empire when sin was approached with graceful circumlocutions, and indulged in as if it were something else, and accompanied by fine gestures.

Far more complex than Moll, who was a straightforward, frank, simple creature after all, is Madame Bovary. She is that strange contradictory creature in whom the flesh and the devil are strong but unrecognized. Her needs and desires are of the world, but are denied as such and are tricked out in the trappings of the spirit. Her loves are lusts, even

the love she sublimates into religious fervor, so that her desire for faith approaches blasphemy—"Where could she have learnt this corruption almost incorporeal in the strength of its profanity and dissimulation?"

Wherever she has learned it, Madame Bovary is corrupt without ever knowing it. Such a one lives all her life in a dream of herself, and never once is her sleep broken by a real sense of things. She sees herself always as one walking in beauty, first as the saint, the bride of the Church, the self-sacrificing sister of mercy, then as the wife, recipient of a great love and experiencing a greater. And, after this has failed, she plays the part of victim of a mighty passion, of a figure in a romance. To the end of her days she never sees herself truly—as a selfish, weak creature without a sense of decency or of responsibility or of shame. Her exalted self-esteem is an excuse for everything: she deserved better, she was fashioned for greater things, for wealth and social prestige, and for a love worthy of her fine and ardent nature.

Madame Bovary's is a clear case of rationalization, of retreat from reality as a means of defense. Unable to adjust herself to her environment, unwilling or unable to drive herself to an acceptance of things as they are, she withdraws to a far country of her own imaginings. She makes her dreams a compensation for all that she cannot wrest from life. In the sense that she is abnormal she is pathetic; and, in view of the fact that she is never sordid in her own eyes, she is not without grace.

Her imagination is one of the keenest to be found anywhere. Whatever she does she imagines something better, and to replace what she cannot do she contrives elaborate dreams. The extravagance of her ideas, the remoteness from actuality, and the splendor of her thoughts of what life and love should be verge on madness and betray decided neuroticism. She expects of life a thousand-fold more than she is capable of experiencing. "Love," she thought, "must come suddenly, with great outbursts and lightnings,—a hurricane of the skies, which falls upon life, revolutionizes it, roots up the will like a leaf, and sweeps the whole heart into the abyss."

Immediately after her marriage to Charles she tries to make him fit her dreams—"the disturbance caused by the presence of this man had sufficed to make her believe that she at last felt that wondrous passion which till then, like a great bird with rose-coloured wings, hung in the splendour of the skies of poesy; and now she could not think that the calm in which she lived was the happiness she had dreamed." She cannot face situations, and so she evades them—evades paying her bills, evades living when life at last presents too great a problem.

Moll Flanders has courage. She sees what she is up against and begins planning on how to manage it; and, once having formulated a plan, attempts to carry it through. Madame Bovary is a coward. Rather than make an effort, she dismisses the problem and relieves her dissatisfaction by thinking of a state of things where such problems do not exist. Thus, when she finds her love for Leon and his for her palling, she has not the courage to make up her mind to leave him, and she imagines, by way of escape "another man fashioned out of her most ardent memories, of her finest reading, her strongest lusts, and at last he became so real, so tangible, that she palpitated wondering, without, however, the power to imagine him clearly, so lost was he, like a god, beneath the abundance of his

attributes. He dwelt in that azure land where silk ladders hang from balconies under the breath of flowers, in the light of the moon. She felt him near her; he was coming, and would carry her right away in a kiss. Then she fell back exhausted, for these transports of vague love wearied her more than great debauchery."

From this it can be seen that Madame Bovary is acutely romantic, and that even in her most romantic imaginings she is closer to lust than to love. This is one source of her conflict, this civil war between her decidedly animal nature and her desire for romance. To avoid struggle, she confuses sensuality with the delights of the heart and exalts her emotions to the level which she supposes is that of ideal love. As a matter of fact, she has no conception of real love, of love involving sacrifice, self-abnegation—hence her neglect of, and lack of tenderness for, her child, her total blindness to the devotion and goodness of her stupid husband who deserves at her hands at least compassion and kindness.

Emma is not unlike Ibsen's Hedda Gabler in her self-absorption, in her longing for excitement, in her inability to attain any nobleness of thought or emotion. Unlike Hedda, however, she is incapable of coldly acknowledging boredom. Both women are selfish, sacrificing others to their own ends. Both see themselves in various poses and roles, and are unaware of their moral degeneracy. Both are cowards, evading issues in their own fashion, which is the same fashion—death—when the problem is insurmountable. And both have taken unto themselves husbands so stupid that the neuroticism of their wives is quite comprehensible.

There is something child-like in Emma's delusion that ideal love must have luxury for a background and that happiness is a matter of location. "Did not love, like Indian plants, need a special soil, a particular temperature?" She is also the child in her attitude of irresponsibility. She and Moll Flanders are similar in this. Both leave their children behind when more exciting things present themselves. Moll separates herself farther geographically from her offspring, but spiritually she is no more distant than Emma who, though her little girl lives in the same house, is almost unaware of her existence except when she is annoyed by the child. Both women betray a terrible coldness and ruthlessness in this respect.

Madame Bovary gains in power as a character because Flaubert has written a masterpiece of realism with a romantic heroine. Had Emma been a realist herself, the book would not be the great thing it is because the commonplace, trivial incidents would have remained trivial. The romantic Emma, however, makes us see true things as she saw them—in a perspective of strange untruth, in the vermillion light of romantic, impossible dreams. And the contrast that is presented to the reader—life at its most mediocre, dull, and sordid and the life Emma imagines, extravagant, luxuriously lovely, and which she tries to fit herself into, ignoring the other—this contrast makes the book a masterpiece and Emma memorable.

There is this vital difference, then, between Moll Flanders and Madame Bovary. The first, commonplace in herself, is made interesting by the life she stumbles into. Given enough money and a satisfactory husband, Moll would never have covered herself with the glory of multitudinous sins. For money and security are all she really wants. And once respec-

table she would not be worth reading about. But Madame Bovary, given all the gilt trappings that money could buy and all the ways of love, would be dissatisfied in spite of them. Because she has what Moll Flanders has not—romantic imagination. And wherever she would be, whatever would be the immediate reality, would be dull to her. "The nearer things were, moreover, the more her thoughts turned away from them. All her immediate surroundings, the wearisome country, the middle-class imbeciles, the mediocrity of existence, seemed to her exceptional, a peculiar chance that had caught hold of her, while beyond stretched as far as eye could see an immense land of joys and passions." She would always want what she did not have, and the unattainable, were it poverty, had she been wealthy, would still have drawn her out of her life into her dreams. Madame Bovary is interesting in herself. Her surroundings are as negligible to the reader as they are to her. Given any environment, it would be the better environment she would imagine that would interest the reader. Madame Bovary could withstand, as Moll Flanders could not, the hard test of respectability because in her eyes it would assume a new romantic aspect. But she is, nevertheless, in the eyes of this adolescent, the better for being bad.

MARY Q. HESS, '31

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