

A LETTER TO A FRIEND*

Dear George:

Here is the "letter" I promised you,—autobiography. No fiction, even in names. Stark realism abhors such feeble disguises. If this is published I may, however, preserve a decent semblance of anonymity. I have never before told anyone the complete story. I felt incapable of putting parts of it into words. So, until now, I always shrank from the effort of writing down matters that almost defy expression. Direct address will make the attempt easier, applying also to others who sat with me twenty years ago, when, in a single instant, Coincidence turned my world upside down. The events are as vivid in my memory as if they took place only yesterday. But if I am in error about any personal reference, I trust that you, or anyone else concerned to whom I may submit a copy of this document, will correct me on that point, both in fairness to himself and in the interest of accuracy.

I believe that my story belongs with the authentic varieties of religious experience. Externals, however trivial, are significant as the objective switches or guide-rails of a train of inner phenomena. The difficulty lies in distinguishing between illusion and reality, between mystical experience and abnormal psychology. The line of demarcation is not definite, as the doctors will testify. Science itself must keep an open mind or be untrue to its professed methods. . . . Well, here goes.—

You remember we began our Junior year at College in 1906. My religious faith, at that time, was superficially orthodox, deepening under the intellectual and spiritual stimulus of Princeton: "*Dei sub numine viget.*"

As you may recall, the challenge to unthinking faith had come,

*George Looms, author and publicist, to whom the following was addressed, died December 24, 1926, in Denver, Colorado.

not as an attack on our catechetical teachings and church doctrines, but as the statement of a problem by John Grier Hibben, then Professor of Logic and Philosophy. That was in our Sophomore year. What follows may seem merely academic, but is important for background.

Dr. Hibben briefly outlined the main types of philosophic thought, touching upon Idealism, Materialism, Monism, Dualism, and finally the Evolutionary doctrine. Explaining Evolution, Hibben said that Man was supposed to derive from a parent animal stock. The anthropoid apes descended on one side and Man ascended on the other. Hibben touched upon Darwin's theories of natural and sexual selection, and then mentioned Hugo DeVries' new discovery of *Mutations*, based upon experiments with the evening primrose. This theory, the lecturer said, suggested the appearance of new species as sudden mutations or "sports". When the creative process had reached the "point of saturation" it might thrust forth a new species, not merely a variety of the old slightly modified by gradual processes of natural selection. Dr. Hibben's position is well known. The difference between Man and animals, he contends, is a difference in *kind* rather than *degree*. To us he suggested that the divine spark of intelligence or reason may have appeared in the animal stock somewhere along the anthropoid line, thus making for the infinite potentiality of man as contrasted with the brute creation.

He reached the conclusion, however, that Religion and Evolution were not yet reconciled, and, as you may remember, left us with the problem that has focussed in the conflict between Fundamentalists and Modernists.

.

That summer I forgot philosophy in favor of philogyny. In this case, one girl. I first met her when we went to High School. She entered Cornell in 1906. There was an "understanding" between us but no formal engagement.

I was bitten by the "cave-man" theory of "the masterful male" and Roosevelt's *Strenuous Life*. This combination seemed to work, but was always something of a strain. I wrote a thing for the "Nassua Lit." One stanza ran:

"So if you're true to Fortune when she seems least true to you
 The goddess will not pass you when she picks the loyal few,
 But to be among the favored you must bend her to your will,
 For the goddess is of women, and they love a master still."

The verse form may be unfashionable, the sentiment passé, but the Nietzschean idea behind it represented then an intense conviction—The Will to Success. (I was very inexperienced.) Don't skip this with a smile. It's illuminating.

As the books have it, I was in love—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Romance! Your novels show that you realize the stimulating influence of sex upon religious emotionalism—the susceptibility of adolescence to mystic beauty, the eternal Song of Solomon. This was true in my case—the usual romantic idealization—a mental condition often bordering on the ecstatic—a plunge into work with intense energy. “Do it *Now*—100% Efficiency”.

The H. P. E. curriculum was so coordinated that I seemed to be growing in power every day. Subconsciously I felt that all my activities, physical, mental and spiritual, were bearing me toward some portentous result, hidden in the future. So acute was this feeling that it was like a premonition of splendid achievement, not disaster.

Obviously that condition was evidence of over-fatigue. Working at top speed, my brain tissues were storing up the poisons of auto-intoxication. I had no feeling of exhaustion. Instead, driving along by sheer will power, I generated the exhilaration of accomplishment.

In short, I was approaching a crisis like Robert Louis Stevenson's classic breakdown (*Memories and Portraits*).

I ran cross-country, as you know, and drained my nervous vitality training for the Varsity team. For I did more work than the coach prescribed. I was preparing syllabi in three different lecture courses, contributing to the “Tiger” and “Lit” and running for class office. My letters to Ithaca might be abridged to: “I must see you soon. You must come down for the Yale game.”

My roommate—(You knew Alex)—will be a pivotal figure in this narrative. Alex had told me that when Woodrow Wilson was chosen President of Princeton, Henry van Dyke was passed by because he was considered unsound in Christian doctrine. This story may have been “Seminole” gossip, because Dr. van Dyke later assured me that he had never been a candidate—that he was a writer, not an executive, and intimated that he would not accept a college presidency “on a gold plate”. The rumor, however, left an impression that had no little influence on my subsequent actions.

A point where my memory differs from Alec's version relates to

the evening of November 1. Alex afterward believed that I was up most of the night brooding over the Bible. He was doubtless sincerely convinced that this was so. As a matter of fact, I seldom read the Bible, and never opened it that night. In the character of Tiger lampoonist, inspired by the tirades of our track coach who filled me with excitable detestation of W. R. Hearst and Tammany Hall, I was composing some lines of satirical verse on the political situation in New York State. The satire I thought good enough to mail to several New York papers, but I don't believe it was published. It may have been libellous, but I have since seen worse things in print about William Randolph Hearst. I may have gone to bed about two o'clock. I slept profoundly, mentally exhausted, not overstrained to the point of insomnia.

That brings us to the morning of Friday, November 2nd., when you and I met at 8 A. M. with the Class in European History for Professor Coney's lecture in Dickinson 2. . . . Old Dickinson Hall has since burned down, and Coney is dead. But whatever became of "Joe Gish"?

Like the black poodle in Goethe's *Faust* that dog introduced elements so unreal—so fantastic—into my experience that my own account would scarcely be credited without corroboration.

Every Princeton man of that period remembers Joe Gish. Wasn't he a brindle bull terrier?—Ugly as Sin, crazy but perfectly harmless. Named after the fictitious freshman who "won" the cannon-rush for his class every year.

You may agree that Joe Gish, the dog, wasn't mad in the usual sense. Call it pyromania. He was literally a fire-eater. In scriptural days his obsession would have been termed "demoniac possession," subject to exorcization. In the 16th Century his owner might have been hanged as witch or wizard. You know how the "simple students" burned newspapers on the campus or dropped "fresh fire" from the windows, and poor old Joe went perfectly insane. He had none of the usual animal dread of fire, but gallantly charged the blazing enemy, pawing and chewing the flames until his mouth and tongue were scorched raw. Then you saw him wander around the campus, licking the cold metal of the fences and fire plugs to cool his blistered tongue and chops—slavering all over the ground. A tortured hell-hound; to paraphrase Jonathan Edwards, a sinner in the hands of his thoughtless gods.

Joe frequented our classes, usually well behaved. But did you

notice that, during the last week in October, he was unusually keyed up—on edge? I recalled his strange actions afterwards. Several times during those previous lectures he ran under my seat, brushing against my legs with his hair bristling on his back, as he growled or rumbled in guttural tones. The boys were usually pretty noisy, applauding and stamping their feet whenever the lecturer became emphatic or flowery. I was too busy taking notes to pay much attention to Joe. If I thought about his nervousness at all I put it down to one of his fire-fed aberrations, not to any possible affinity between my own mental condition and his increasing excitement.

On that Friday morning I was seated next to you, among the Ls, somewhere in the middle of the class. There may have been a hundred of us,—I don't remember the number, but of six or seven long lines we sat in the middle row. My seat was next to an aisle on the right hand side of the room looking toward the front. The aisle was at my left and you were on my right. The inner vestibule door had been left open by late arrivals, but the outer door was closed.

I was writing as usual—in a mixture of shorthand and long-hand—following the professor through the triple mazes of King, Nobles, Church, Papacy, Feudal Lords, Crown. The lecturer seemed to be going around in a circle, striving desperately to give meaning to the chaos of mediaeval Europe. At his more emphatic tones or gestures the class broke into loud applause. Meanwhile I took notes mechanically, while my mind functioned casually on irrelevant matters—cross-country, the Yale game, the girl, then religion.

Some reference to the Mediaeval Church suggested Hibben's conclusions the year before: "Science and Religion have not been reconciled." My mind, over-stimulated, acted directly, ignoring possible difficulties. "Why," I thought, "doesn't somebody do it, then? These scholars—all these preachers and people who have studied philosophy and science and theology—why don't they get somewhere?" My impatience was fervent as a prayer. . . .

My mind reached back to what afterwards became the crux of the Tennessee Evolution case—the origin of Man. Dr. Hibben's outline emerged—"The animal—the parent stock of man—intelligence introduced—the divine spark—by mutation—infinite potentiality—the human intellect reaches a point of saturation—what next? (Someone has said that we haven't developed our intellectual capacity over that of the Greeks of the Age of Pericles.)"

Then, like an answer to my "prayer", my own mind took the inevitable step—"Out of Man, another Great Mutation—Christ—the Incarnation of Divine Love—perhaps the Virgin Birth". At that time I had never heard the term "Superman". Hibben hadn't mentioned Nietzsche.

At any rate I wasn't thinking in terms of the Nietzschean Superman, but of his antithesis. Of course I didn't know that Gilbert Chesterton and others had suggested the same idea. I didn't know that Tennyson had anticipated the idea, mystically, in the 103rd. Canto—the key-canto—of *In Memoriam*. I was ignorant of the bio-genetic theory, which, by analogy at least, would have backed up my line of reasoning. It was before the time of Bergson's *Creative Evolution*. And I hadn't heard of Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*.

To me the Superman was an original idea, reconciling my orthodoxy with a smattering of science and philosophy. I had asked for "reconciliation". And I got it, with the force of inspiration.

I stopped my mechanical note-taking. The idea had come in a flash. But it ought to be discussed with someone. Hibben could probably help me. Then, as Alex had said, Henry van Dyke had wrestled with the problem of the divinity of Christ. These two men, both Christian ministers, one a philosopher, the other an eminent writer, ought to be able to set me straight. Help Princeton reconcile Science and Religion. *That* ought to be done, Hibben had implied. Why not? I ought to see Hibben—perhaps in a few days—when he is not too busy and I can find him at home. And Henry van Dyke too—just casually. But I *will* see Hibben. . . .

At that precise moment, Joe Gish, who was lurking quietly in the aisle right beside me—had been there unnoticed, I think during most of the short period of time that had elapsed,—just at the instant when I came to a willed decision, Joe broke into a terrific barking. The tones were horrible,—sepulchral. To me the noise was devilish and unholy. The room resounded with the racket. You all heard it and surely remember how that dog dashed down the aisle toward the door, still barking and yelping horribly. Poised in reflection, pen in hand, I was completely unsettled by that hellish noise. The coincidence appalled me. The tension immediately became electric. The atmosphere was stifling, unbearable. I couldn't sit through the hour—couldn't follow the lecture—might as well see Hibben right away. I closed my notebook, stuck it in my right hand pocket, my

fountain pen in my breast pocket.

Then, as I started to rise, a peculiar sensation—possibly a nervous spasm like epilepsy—ran through me. Just as if some tremendous spirit, expanding within my breast, were bursting out of me, half lifting me from my seat, surging up from inside my body to my mouth, and wrenching me toward the right instead of the aisle on the left. I felt my mouth twisted by this internal force as it seemed to leap forth and leave me. Did you notice the distortion of my features, or not? Joe had stopped barking and yelping and was now alternately whining abjectly in terror and plunging at the outer door with terrific force, using his head as a battering ram as if there were SOMETHING in the room that had driven him into panic terror.

My own convulsion lasted but an instant. The next moment, in action, I was a center of calm like the core of a spiritual cyclone. I turned to the left to follow the dog to the door. As my glance fell on the two-thirds of the class seated beyond the aisle, I noted a phenomenon—or was it an illusion? The front rows sat applauding the lecturer, moved by a common impulse. I could see their hands meeting sharply, their grinning faces upturned toward the rostrum where the professor, nervously strident, gyrated dizzily in an effort to hold their attention above the disturbance. The noise of clapping and stamping was loud and spontaneous.

But the line along which I gazed, and the two or three rows behind, sat braced back, silent and rigid, their immobile hands whitely gripping the desk-arm chairs, faces staring straight ahead with tense, strained chalkiness, like corpses in a mist. No sound but the dog's fearful whining and plunging came from my left. As I saw and heard it the class was parted in the middle, as hair is parted by opposing movements of the comb. Each group was moved to an antithetical homogeneous mental or emotional state at the same instant, and apparently by the same cause. There may, of course, be some natural explanation of the cleavage. A remark by the professor was often the signal for universal and thunderous applause. The dog's outburst and my sudden salience, almost coincidental, might account for the death-like amazement of those in the rear. But the line of demarcation went exactly through the point whence Joe had first leaped barking and yelping from the aisle beside my seat. I was astounded. I had never known of anything like it, coming on top of my train of ideas and the dog's instant terror.

Something else to tell Hibben and van Dyke! What could it *mean?* But for me the cause was less vital than the consequences.

I turned sharply, and strode down the aisle with a peculiar sense of amazement combined with exhilaration.

The dog was now silently lunging at the door. Like Chaucer's Miller, he used his head as a battering ram, regardless of hurt. No sound but those crashing impacts. With each plunge, the door-knob rattled and the panels creaked, and Joe's claws scratched the floor as he bounced back and dropped down to gather himself for the next frenzied leap.

As I reached the vestibule a loud deep voice, that did not seem to be my own, burst out of me: "*Down! Get down you . . .*" The dog crouched back and groveled on the floor at my feet. I turned the knob and pulled the door open toward me. Joe crawled out silently on his belly and wormed his way down the hollowed slate steps like a chastened puppy. To me he moved like some grotesque mottled reptile. There was a subtle suggestion of frustrated diabolism about him—like a whiff of brimstone to the nostrils of my imagination.

I closed the door behind me on a roar of applause. The whole class was back of that—probably giving me a hand for putting out the dog. The scene within must have jerked back to normal. Well, I didn't care. . . . I had other things on my mind.

Professor Coney died several years later. I never learned how the scene looked to him, or how it appeared to the eyes and ears of anyone else. Perhaps you will check up on my observations. Alex told me that you immediately began taking notes for the syllabus.

My bewildered mind was nevertheless functioning like lightning. Unabashed, though the heavens fall, the human intellect will always seek causes—always probe the cryptic meaning of life—ever seek to rationalize the apparently irrational. Psychologists know that the deepest mental characteristics may be revealed by abnormality. And even the sensitive normal mind, under great stress and strain, may be stimulated to an intensity of thought that produces new ideas, or discoveries.

Thinking intensely, my mind at white heat, I postponed my intention to see Jack Hibben. First I had to think this out. The strange phenomenon that had manifested itself to my eyes and ears, coincidental with my train of thought, suggested some kind of *revelation*.

I had no delusions, no hallucinations—unless what I had seen and heard in Dickinson 2, could not be substantiated by the testimony of perhaps a hundred men. I heard no Voices,—with the force of a mandate. God did not talk to me familiarly, as He does to the ordinary fanatic.

I was simply a much perplexed and upset youth seeking enlightenment. Like a flash, by verbal association, the idea of revelation that leaped into my mind suggested the *Book of Revelation*. I had a "hunch" that I might find an answer there. The idea was what our college slang called a "hunch", what Science calls the "method of trial and error". I took my gray cap out of my pocket, pulled it on, and turned down the path to Brown Hall. Reaching my room I found my little pocket Testament.

Some very devout people might be more impressed if I stated that Heaven-guided fingers opened the volume to certain texts of the *Apocalypse* and I got an answer immediately. Such was not the case. The method of accident is used to prove almost anything from texts selected by random opening of the Bible. Romantic fiction employs the same device.

I knew about the *Apocalypse*, but I had never read a single chapter consecutively. The idea of "revelation" seemed to apply equally to the intellectual enlightenment of my evolutionary thinking and to the peculiar sense-perceptions of my experience in the lecture room. Therefor I turned deliberately to the *Book of Revelation* to solve a problem in eschatology as I might have turned to an authority on Biology or Mathematics to throw light on some problem in those subjects.

I leafed rapidly through the first chapter. The oriental imagery was tremendously impressive, read for the first time. It was clear that the Spirit of Christ was speaking in a vision to St. John.

At that time, I knew nothing about scholarly research into the influence of the Hebrew apocalypses—*The Apocalypses of Ezra* and the *Secrets of Enoch*; nothing of Bishop Lowth's book on the *Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*; or the tendency of recent Higher Critics like Wenley and Jastrow to rationalize everything in the Bible.

What I could understand of the first chapter had no message for me. But in Chapter III my straining attention was fixed on verses such as:

"Angel of the Church in Philadelphia" . . . "Behold I have

set before you an open door and no one can close it". . . . (I lived in Philadelphia!)

"He that hath eyes to see and ears to hear—let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

These texts were profoundly impressive—arresting. Then I came to ii. 17, "*To him that overcometh I shall give a white stone and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*"

Now consider the name of the girl uppermost in my thoughts—the "White" of her disyllabic surname—her middle name (also a family name), "CHRISTINE." The names leaped into the text like electric sparks from a surcharged battery. Given the events and ideas charging the battery, the text and my mind were like positive and negative poles. It was inevitable that the spark should flash across—the contact split the darkness like lightning. "CHRISTINE—a feminine savior—the second coming of the Spirit of Christ in Woman"—(The suffix after "White" in her last name, I thought, must mean "stone".)

Of course I knew little then about the origin of names,—nothing about St. Christina, the Christian martyr of the Third century A. D., the Roman patrician, patron saint of Venice and the Adriatic states, pierced by arrows when she rose to the surface of Lake Bolsena with a millstone around her neck. Her fame shone dimly in the Church beside the glory of the Virgin.

It may be easy to scoff at the preposterous, not so easy to draw the line between what is impossible and what is merely rare or improbable, between material miracles of thaumaturgy and spiritual miracles of regeneration, inspiration, revelation.

Perhaps only those who have idealized one woman with an unalterable transcendent devotion will understand this apotheosis of womanhood: the loved one as a symbol of divinity.

Objectively, of course, even the symbolism lacked all sense of proportion, as applied to a particular spiritual text. The chances were a billion to one against it. But then the odds were still greater than that against the infinite God of an illimitable universe taking any special interest in this atom of star-dust that we call the World, or in human beings as individuals. Yet the almost universal experience of mankind—our whole habit of religious thought—the idea of intimate communion of Man with God—refuses to accept this as a stupendous improbability. If we have any normal

religious faith, it must lack a logical sense of proportion. So the objective absurdity recedes into a vague doubt beside the transcendental evidence of the Inner Light. To me the poetic quality of this inner certitude was absolutely convincing, largely because of my heightened perceptions.

William James has written:

“As a matter of psychological fact, mystical states of a well-pronounced and emphatic sort *are* usually authoritative over those who have them. They have been “there” and know. It is vain for rationalism to grumble about this. If the mystical truth that comes to a man proves to be a force that he can live by, what mandate have we of the majority to order him to live in another way? We can throw him into a prison or a madhouse, but we cannot change his mind.

We commonly attach it only the more stubbornly to its beliefs. It mocks our utmost efforts as a matter of fact, and in point of logic it absolutely escapes our jurisdiction. Our own more ‘rational’ beliefs are based on evidence exactly similar in nature to that which mystics quote for theirs. Our senses, namely, have assured us of fact; but mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them as any sensations ever were for us. The records show that even though the five senses be in abeyance in them, . . . they are face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist.

The mystic is, in short, *invulnerable*, and must be left, whether we relish it or not, in undisturbed enjoyment of his creed.” (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, chapter on “Mysticism”.)

But even to me the idea was not entirely subjective. There were objective and logical elements. There was the simple complementary logic of the sexual opposite. Assuming the validity of prophecy and granting the premises of Revelation, if the name of Christ (the Speaker) was masculine, the new name, symbolizing the new manifestation of that Spirit, I thought, must be feminine. This was the inevitable corollary. There could be no other mystical reason for a “new name”.

I found a picture of “Christine”—a little kodak blue print—inserted it in the Testament to mark the place, and put the book in my pocket. I kept it with me day and night. At times it was my only hold on reality.

PART II.

THE SEARCH FOR THE OTHER WISE MAN

Before visiting van Dyke and Hibben, I wrote a brief note addressed carefully and in full to the original of the picture, at Sage College, Ithaca. The note contained one sentence: "Read Revelation ii. 17 and *keep your nerve.*" (Subconsciously, my own need!) It never occurred to me that what was perfectly clear to my preternatural intensity of thought, would be a dense and insoluble mystery to a college freshman, interested in biology, sororities, fraternity dances, and football. I had blundered in thinking that such a message could do anything but mystify a normal, healthy American girl. She was denied the approach that had prepared me for the idea.

I left my room and mailed the note (special delivery, I think) at the Post-office on Nassau Street.

But a more dangerous idea crept in, as the next step in my thinking. "What if she *knew?*—knew Herself—and the Name?" Then the letter was superfluous, or at best only a message that I had penetrated the heart of her mystery. She began to loom in proportions magnified by absence and by her connection with that scriptural text. The name (as a given name or surname not at all peculiar to any single individual) nevertheless, in my narrow emotional intensity, made her colossal, sublimely divine. The idea was tremendously *personal*. But it did not go so far as to vest her with powers of telepathy or divination; otherwise my next move would have been inconsistent. Goddess or woman, she was a problem to be mastered. I had intended having her down for the Yale game. But this was more important. She must come immediately . . . She should explain . . . help me.

My mind was now moving too fast for letters. The Western Union was next to the Post-Office. So the telegram that I sent was phrased as either or both of two things—a command to the girl and an appeal to the "divinity" for aid and enlightenment. It read simply, "Come at once".

When I had signed my name and paid the charge I started for Bayard Lane. First I tried Henry van Dyke, at Avalon, probably because I knew exactly where he lived. Dr. van Dyke was not at home. I left a message that I would call later. I found that Dr. Hibben lived just across the street. But I decided to wait until lunch time, realizing that they both were busy that morning.

I walked out past the Cleveland home along the wagon road that continued Bayard Lane into the country. It was a dull November day at the end of Indian summer. A haze was on the hills and gossamer threads floated in the cool air. There may have been blasting up somewhere near the Washington house at Rocky Hill. I heard constant reverberations like thunder from the horizon. I can understand the superstition of ancient Rome about "thunder on the left". For to me the rumbling was a portent of the gods. All the landscape, barren and sere and hazy to the distant hills, seemed nevertheless sentient and bursting with import—as if the end of Time had come and a new heaven and earth were to be born. I was "wandering between two worlds", the dead world of actuality and the unseen spiritual world, quickened with the promise of imminent rebirth. Masefield has expressed this mystic feeling so well in the *Everlasting Mercy* and Browning at the end of *Saul* that I hesitate to put it into words—simply refer you to the ecstasy of Saul Kane and David, that Masefield and Browning themselves must have felt in some spiritual crisis. I was buoyed up by a magnificent pensive elation—full of love for all things.

"In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills,

In the shuddering forests' held breath, in the sudden wind-thrills."

When I had tramped a mile or two a little fox terrier rushed out from a farmhouse, barking and snarling at me most pertinaciously from the path ahead. He was an ordinary dog and his discourtesy to tramps was probably quite normal although not discriminating. To my state of mind he was a bundle of nervous antipathy. But I loved him, too, spiteful as he was. I thought, strangely sorrowful, "Why do I, so full of love, attract this antagonistic Spirit that seems to possess these dogs". Like Baalam's ass, I took his defiance for a sign. It shocked me out of aimless wandering. So, while not afraid of him, I turned back immediately. I mention this episode to show how, at the time, trifles affected me like omens. Yet I was never by nature superstitious.

It may have been noon when I returned to Avalon. Time did not exist. I was admitted to the reception room. Beyond this in an alcove or hallway the figure of Tertius van Dyke sat on a lounge, facing a flight of stairs. Usually friendly and democratic, he seemed too preoccupied to greet me as a class-mate. His uneasy silence brought suspicion to my mind. This suspicion was projected in a

flash of illusion. Without actually *seeing*, I *recognized* the pursuing genie. But I couldn't confuse It with *Tertius himself*. So I asked briefly, "Tertius, is your father home?"

Without a word Tertius and the co-incident Suspect rose abruptly and vanished up the stairway. But there was no diabolism about the appearance of his father.

Dr. van Dyke descended, calm and dignified. If he thought I was mad, he at least treated me with every courtesy. I believe that I introduced myself, apologized for the intrusion, said I wanted his advice, and then tried to tell him about my morning's experience. I got everything hopelessly mixed, because I didn't give it in narrative sequence. Ideas crowded each other. Evolution, Mutations, Joe Gish, the scene in the class, Revelations, the New Name, and the girl. It must have been a hopeless jumble. In my suppressed excitement it was impossible to tell the story consecutively and coherently.

He listened patiently—the literary artist who sensed a background of reality, even if he thought the interpretation pathological. But when, remembering the reference to Dr. van Dyke's supposed "heresy", I tried to explain the Virgin Birth as a possible Mutation, I must have imagined a shade of disagreement on his sympathetic and finely chiseled features—probably a troubled awareness of the confusion of my ideas. He failed to see the connection with my story and I was inexpressibly disappointed.

"Oh, Dr. van Dyke!" I exclaimed, "And you could write *The Story of the Other Wise Man*." His attitude was incredible, when everything seemed so clear to me. "Well," I added, distinguishing between faith and works, "*You've* just been doing good all your life—like your 'Other Wise Man'"—a little bitterly, or sorrowfully perhaps, because I thought he had not acknowledged the validity of ideas that were so authoritative in my own experience.

He thought it best not to argue with me, and asked me to accompany him across the street to see Dr. Hibben.

In the hall he allowed me to help him with his overcoat, showing some courage if he thought I might be suffering from homicidal mania and attack him from behind in defense of theological dogma. I remember pulling down his coat-tails in the approved style. This thoughtfulness may have reassured him. Then we crossed the street together.

Mrs. Hibben met us first, and Dr. van Dyke exchanged a few

words with her in low tones. Then Jack Hibben appeared and I tried to tell my story over again. There must have been a thread of sense in what I said. At least I made it plain to them that I was expecting my friend of the "new name" from Ithaca. I told them I had wired her, and I insisted that she would come. She knew that I needed her help. She'd probably make it all clear to them. (Fond and dangerous delusion!)

They were all very patient—made no attempt to cross me. Someone suggested that I go to my room and wait. Then they evidently got in touch with my roommate.

On my way back to Brown Hall I saw two dogs fighting in the middle of Nassau Street. Dogs were coming a bit thick. These two were close-locked in battle, snarling, snapping, and rolling over and over in that strident vortex of ferocity that resembles no other possible combination of sound and action but dog-fight. Dogs were certainly getting on my nerves. I can't say that I loved this pair. I bellowed in a deep voice that didn't seem to be my own. "Cut 'at out." . . . They separated immediately and slunk away in different directions. I strode on, with a new sense of power. This sort of thing was tremendous.

Joe Green passed me on the other side of the street. He called across, "Didn't know that was your dog", (doubtless referring to Joe Gish). I waved a greeting but don't remember whether I replied.

I didn't want to answer any questions. I wouldn't go to the Club for lunch. I couldn't bear the atmosphere of flippant indifference to serious ideas that is the pose of all good Princeton men, until like Woodrow Wilson, they close their teeth uncompromisingly on an ideal. This was too serious. I wanted to think.

So for a long time I waited in my room. I had told Hibben, "She will come. She *must* come." I was sure of it. I took out my Gillette and began to shave. Again that sense of the stoppage of Time.

While I was shaving George Sargent appeared. Excitement showed in his voice. Whatever he said, I remember only that he shrilled my name as he passed me in the bedroom doorway. He annoyed me but was gone almost immediately.

Then Andy Andrews and Billy Bain dropped in. They sat with me a while. Tacitly we all realized that they were trying to be helpful. Conversation lagged. I may have told them that I was

expecting a friend. That was all. They sat like silent priests with a condemned prisoner. I was glad of their company but relieved when they left me to my own thoughts.

Finally there came a knock at the door. Could it be —? But impossible. Too soon. I opened the door. A uniformed messenger boy stood there. He pulled a yellow envelope from inside his cap. I signed for the telegram, slit the envelope and read the message typed in capitals on the Western Union blank.

"Cannot come today. Will meet you at your home."

It was signed with her given name. I had no doubt that it was genuine. Of course that was good sense. I had made no allowance for train schedules or a chaperone. The trains from Ithaca, and the proprieties, made Philadelphia much more feasible as a meeting place. But the telegram was finally and irrevocably convincing. SHE KNEW and had accepted my discovery. So the message did two things: confirmed my delusion—the superwoman idea—and set the stage for a terrible disappointment later that threw my mind into a tumult of doubt and suspicion.

This, perhaps, is no place to enter into a discussion about the wisdom of deceiving invalids, or those suffering from mental aberrations. An immediate strategic advantage may accrue to those who have to deal with the sufferer, or he may be temporarily spared bodily harm or mental anguish. But ultimately the effect of deception may be inculcably harmful. I am blaming no one—merely showing the unforeseen relations between cause and effect.

My roommate later assumed full responsibility for faking the telegram. Had it been followed in a few days by an explanation in person or even by letter, my mind might have been comforted and brought back to realities. But this possibility was prevented by my family.

The efficacy of the deception was indicated by my next move. I had told Hibben particularly that the lady would come. It was only right that he should be informed of the change in her destination. The telegram would be self-explanatory. So I decided to relay the message by mail. He would get it the next day. But I was tempted to add a flourish: On the telegraph blank, under the message I wrote my name and the name of the girl in full. Over the names, the words—

"Great Mutation—Philadelphia"

Beneath her name, the symbolism:

"Noble Christess White Stone"

Beneath my names the almost literal meaning, with a romantic stop-gap for the surname:

"King Rock Poet".

I joined the names with a large X indicating cross-reference and added "See Rev. ii. 17". I enclosed the telegram in a large envelope, and as an afterthought slipped in a copy of Wieland's *Oberon* which we had been reading in German. Its general symbolism seemed obvious to me, but would no doubt be cryptic to the uninitiated. *Oberon*, you may remember, is the romantic story of Hüon of Bordeaux and his fair lady,—two faithful human lovers by whose loyalty to one another through trials, afflictions and long separation, the rulers of fairy heaven were reconciled. In narrative details there was no actual parallel, but regarded symbolically, the human elements of the story were to prove strangely prophetic.

I do not remember when I mailed the envelope. But it was sent.

I had seen little of my roommate during the day. Finally Alex appeared and I told him I was going home. He, of course, was prepared for that move.

I admitted that I didn't feel very well. I expected to take a few days' rest and stay over for the gubernational election on the 6th of November. (I was then voting "on age" from a Philadelphia precinct). I said nothing about the telegram. It was one thing to tell my roommate that a girl was coming to Princeton; quite a different matter to explain why she was going to meet me at my home.

To my relief I found that Alex was going home too. If I didn't mind he'd go with me. I was glad of his company. He began packing his suitcase with the big DAMN printed in large capitals on one end. (Since Alex was to study for the ministry, Sargent and I, with a perverted sense of humor, had added a D and an N in indelible ink to his initials,) I packed my own grip and late in the afternoon we left Princeton.

The railroad schedule made it necessary to take the trolley to Trenton. As I remember, before we started, we got sandwiches and coffee at the terminal restaurant. I think Alex paid the bill. He was taking care of me and did it efficiently.

Of that trip, passed in mutual silence, I remember only a few details that nevertheless seemed to be of vast importance. They were "tremendous trifles" (to borrow from Chesterton) with cosmic significance. My mind was as susceptible to trivial impressions

as that of the restored Lazarus, described by Browning in the "Epistle of Karshish":

"Speak of some trifling fact, he will gaze rapt
With stupor at its very littleness
(Far as I see), as if in that indeed
He caught prodigious import, whole results."

My whole sense of values was altered.

For instance, crossing the Canal, after changing cars in Trenton, a canal boat loomed up behind the bridge railing. The name "Gray Dawn" was painted on the bow. To me the words were bursting with prophetic import—symbolic of a new era. They brought back the mood of the morning walk—the strange sense of "wandering between two worlds", one dead, the other in the twilight sleep of labor.

Again, the flaring streamer headlines of a New York paper, probably the "Evening Telegram", caught my eyes from across the car. The big black letters read: "*We love him for the enemies he has made*". The drop-line clearly indicated that Elihu Root was being quoted in a speech referring to Roosevelt. But the scarehead made a deep impression—not taken as a personal reference, but suggesting dangers.

For the first time the possibility of the peril of my own ideas—was suggested to my mind, hitherto exalted in fearless conviction.

A reaction was setting in. At the P. R. R. station in Trenton Alex bought the tickets. I was tired—almost in a daze. Lacking all initiative, I was satisfied to let him run the trip.

At the station in Philadelphia he left me for a few minutes. He was telephoning the family. We boarded a trolley together. I made no objection,—I wanted his company home.

My mother met us at the door. She was all in a flutter from Alec's phone message. But, when I took off my hat, under the bright hall light, her first words were, "Oh, isn't he *pretty*."

I had never thought of my average-looking self in such feminine terms, but a warm glow seemed to be suffusing my face. I was in an ecstasy of relief at getting home after the soul-shattering exhaustion of the day. And that feeling of boundless love for everyone had returned. I kissed my mother and went upstairs to bed.

They had prepared the second-story middle bedroom for me. (You may remember the general arrangement of the house.) The gas-light between the two east windows was burning dimly.

As I removed my spectacles to place them on the bureau-top, I caught a glimpse of my face in the big plate-glass mirror. I could recognize myself only by the inevitable logic of my position before the glass. I thought of my mother's peculiar remark, moved closer and looked carefully at the reflection.

I should have seen the image of features thin and haggard from overstrain, cheeks hollow from hard training. But the face I saw was softened, rounded—actually beautified with an unearthly radiance. To my eyes, there was a faint refulgent aura enveloping my head—a delicate luminosity suffusing my face. My ordinarily dark hair glowed like white wool and my sunburned face gleamed white—not with the ghastly pallor of illness—but with a soft transfiguring beauty like phosphorescence in the gloom.

To my eyes it was a transfiguration so softly marvelous that the phenomenon awed rather than startled me. The wonders of the day had prepared me for almost anything. My image was *behind* the reflection, yet it was clearly not my own. Its beauty was non-sexual, or rather feminine, as if a glowing portrait overlay my own image in so skilful a composite that the lines blended imperceptibly. That was the vision my eyes beheld in the dim light of the bedroom.

What was behind my eyes—working this wonder in the mysterious subliminal optical centers of the brain—is a mystery, and like the secret of consciousness perhaps must always remain a mystery to Science or so-called “rational” thought. But I have often wondered whether visions, or voices, like those of Joan of Arc, ridiculed by rationalism as hallucinations or illusions objectively non-existent, may not be exactly like the projection of pictures on the cinema screen, or the broadcasting of voices from the radio. In the *machine itself* we must search for the cause—the reality—whether the “hallucination” is that of a disordered mentality, of delirium, or a spiritual reality beyond the scope of abnormal psychology. The “machine” in this case is the human mind, both projecting and receiving through the senses, a message from the subconscious to the conscious. But what Power is behind the mind?

There was, in this case, some objective basis for my mother's strange remark. There could be no question about my abnormally ecstatic frame of mind—the exhilaration that came from a boundless sense of spiritual power and love—with a physical manifestation that had actually relaxed and softened the features. We speak

naturally of human faces transfigured with kindness, sympathy, love. . . . But this was an awful transfiguration, such as I had only seen pictured in art as the face of a saint or an angel.

"Clearly I am *not* myself." That was my thought as I climbed into bed, and the thought had a dangerous double meaning. I did not dare look into the mirror again and said nothing to the others.

Psychoanalysts of the Freudian type might attempt to explain my experience on the basis of sexual repression. Undoubtedly there was an element of sex-inhibition present—as there must be in all cases where sex-functions have been stimulated by love or passion and then repressed either through the dictates of morality or loyalty to one person of the other sex. . . . The refuge of rationalism, of course, lies in that all-inclusive label, "insanity".

But never in the nervous breakdown that ensued did I lose my grip on my identity—the continuity of consciousness—or while awake fail in the knowledge or memory of what was going on around me. For a brief period I lost physical self-control, possibly through the curbing of muscular and nervous energy intensified by athletic training. And my hearing seemed attuned to the sounds of an invisible world.

For instance, I dozed off, sleeping fitfully. Every time I awoke, at intervals, during the night, I heard the galloping of a horse's hoofs apparently outside on the hard-paved streets. This was no slow milk-wagon trot, of early morning insomnia, but a wild, rapid midnight gallop—around and around the house—down one street and up another—a constant clatter, furious and unwearying, ever-present in my waking moments. Again and again I heard it.

I had always been fascinated by Gustav Dore's imaginative Bible prints. "Death on the Pale Horse" flashed into my mind. Why was that ghastly horseman of the Apocalypse circling our house in this wild nocturnal ride? . . . Yet I was not afraid. And it was no dream, because at the same time there was also the reality of the locomotive whistles from the P. R. R. freight yards, mournful as fog-horns, and occasionally the arrogant screaming note of a Main Line express. I thought of Pullmans hurtling through the night over the Lehigh Valley, bringing the protecting divinity from Ithaca. Comforted, I fell asleep.

In the morning, after I was given some breakfast, my father entered the bed-room. I wanted to ask him about a lost or runaway horse, but with the warm sunlight flooding the room, the question

seemed either absurd or cheaply rational. He was very serious—spoke kindly but in firm, authoritative tones. He was the first to oppose me in any way.

He told me that She was not coming. I could scarcely comprehend, yet I had to believe him. He gave me no reasons. That made it worse. My hope was blasted. I was cast adrift on a wild sea of doubt and conjecture, with nothing to cling to but the Testament and the little blue picture under my pillow. I protested, "She *must* come. I must *see* her." But by the sheer power of will, he forced me to accept what I wanted to deny. And his statement was confirmed. She did not come.

Later I learned that they had warned her (by wire or letter) to disregard my messages. I have always believed that she alone could have saved me from what followed.

I was absolutely alone—isolated the moment I stepped across the border of reality into the world of illusion. And so I was delivered body and soul to the Powers of Doubt and Darkness—the gods of the Dark Forest, that lurk in the hidden recesses of the mind and prowl forth when the ruling god has abdicated. To use another figure, the steering wheel of my consciousness being no longer under control, the machine might swerve to destruction from the slightest impulse—internal volition or external accident. Acting on pure instinct, I was subject to the least caprice of the sub-conscious. Heretofore my mood had been seraphic. But you remember what William James writes in the book I have already quoted:

“ . . . We may have a *diabolical* mysticism a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down. The same sense of ineffable importance in the smallest events, the same texts and words coming with new meanings, the same voices and visions and leadings and missions, the same controlling by extraneous powers; only this time the emotion is pessimistic; instead of consolations we have desolations; the meanings are dreadful and the powers are enemies to life.

It is evident that from the point of view of their psychological mechanism, the classic mysticism and these lower mysticisms spring from the same mental level, from that great subliminal or transmarginal region of which science is beginning to admit the existence, but of which so little is really known. That region contains every kind of matter: 'seraph and snake' abide there side by side. To come from thence is no infallible credential. What comes must be sifted and tested, and run the gauntlet of confrontation with the total

context of experience, just like what comes from the outer world of sense. Its value must be ascertained by empirical methods, so long as we are not mystics ourselves." (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, Chapter on "Mysticism".)

I was ready for whatever whim might rule me, to rend or destroy. "Diabolical possession" was the unscientific way the ancients put it.

For a while I was quiescent, almost stunned. The transition in mood was not immediate. I thought and thought, with the increasing doubt, suspicion, futile raging from which devils are fashioned. Finally I lost consciousness, in a sort of baffled stupor. My mind was blank. I slept. . . .

I was awakened by a terrific crash. There followed the jingling rattle of broken glass. I suddenly discovered my head and one arm out of a top pane of the bed-room window, my body held by the frame that crossed in the middle. Someone grabbed my legs and called for help. As I struggled in a panic to scramble out through the broken pane, I heard my name and a voice, "Come back. Oh, come back". I managed to turn my head. It was a girl's face, her eyes blue as the sky. The eyes held me. I stopped struggling. (I had been gathering my strength for a desperate push, head first through the jagged glass.) Other hands seized me. Unresisting I let them carry me back to the bed bleeding from cuts in my head, arms, and legs. The room seemed suddenly to fill with men in overalls, carrying ropes. They were painters who had been working on an adjoining building when I had dived from the bed across a five foot space straight at the window.

They said I first yelled "Fire!", but I have no recollection of anything until I found myself partly through the window. I am sure that the plunge was a reflex from my high-diving stunts of the previous summer. The window panes doubtless suggested a pool of water and my sub-conscious complex—the athletic habit of overruling the instinct of self-preservation—demanded the dive. I had done it somnambulistically—utterly oblivious to reality. I have since heard of similar cases—sleeping dives by over-strained athletes.

Later, now fully conscious, I asked, "What color are Hannah's eyes?" (Hannah was the young girl, acting nurse, who had held me back at the window.)

"Brown", my mother said. "Almost black".

"They were *blue*—there at the window," I remarked, and thought to myself, "That's curious. *Her eyes are blue.*"

My mother looked at my father. "You must remember," he said, "Everything looks different to his eyes. The human mind is a very delicate and complex machine. . . ." (That was as deep as he could go.)

The sudden stoppage of intense activity brought inevitable reactions. Exercise, which was scarcely feasible, might have been an outlet for dammed up physical energy. I wanted to run. I insisted that I must keep on training. But even while resisting force, I never offered to harm anyone. My violent impulses were all self-destructive. My voice at times was tremendous. I felt that I must denounce these diabolical forces that were conspiring to confuse and destroy me.

So once, when Alex returned and I heard low voices in the front room, I became suspicious. I leaned from the bed and peered through the doorway. He stood there, slim and slightly stooping—Alec's body and clothing. . . . But Someone Else, as before with Tertius. His expression and attitude—Mephistopheles (I knew him from "Faust")! A smooth, prowling devil—Clearly Alex wasn't *himself*, although *he was there too*. I couldn't address him as Mephisto. That would be absurd. So, with all my force I defied the Devil in a loud "Damn you, Alexander." He bowed slightly as if to acknowledge the impeachment, and in his acquiescence I read confirmation of my suspicions.

He was at the bottom of this complot, but he didn't understand. . . . (I speculated vaguely). Back of this—involved in it all—some kind of wager—between God and Devil—a Book—The Ring and the Book—Ring for marriage, of course—God to dictate a Book no one could understand—forestall events until too late—after prophecies fulfilled . . . now the wager being won . . . Devil naturally sore . . . perhaps not too late . . . Get me yet . . . (My Job, Goethe and Browning were rather mixed but perhaps you know Poe's rationale of prophecy in his review of Stephens' "Arabia Petraea.")

Next day they called some doctors together in hurried consultation and I was committed to a hospital, "for my own good". I went unresisting, recalling certain pacific scriptural texts. But I shall never forget that first night. I became noisy. The attendants

laughed, dragged me out of bed to a remote cell and threw me on a straw mattress like a piece of human junk. Left alone and unguarded in the strange darkness, I was seized by violent half-controlled impulses of despair and defiance. I cracked the high wire-glass window with my fist. I hammered at the door. I reeled drunkenly back to the window and marvelled at the moon, shattered into a thousand fragments. Was this the end of the world? Then a mental whisper dared me, "You're afraid to dive". And so again and again I swayed, head on, against the walls, with cautious but painful bravado. They had given me a strong cathartic that made me horribly sick and weak.

At various times, while my mind was hovering between reason and blank madness, voices from an unseen world came to my consciousness. Once two hag-voices (I heard them distinctly) shrilled from a distance in wild Walpurgis-night bickering. The sounds, at first rhythmically unintelligible, swelled on the air to a crescendo of frenzied but perfect articulation. "He *has* it!" . . . He *hasn't!*" . . . "He *has* it!" . . . "He *hasn't!*" . . . "He *has* it!" . . . "He *hasn't!*" . . . The witch voices seemed to be riding the night wind, high in the air, and gradually faded away in the distance, ever affirming—ever contradicting. So acutely was my hearing attuned that the slightest difference in articulation between affirmative and negative was distinctly audible—always alternating. Again, as I lay weak and battered, more dead than alive, I heard a great chorus, singing with supernal beauty. The voices seemed to come from far away. And although hymns were sometimes sung in another part of the building, the air was no hymn. It was the music of the old half-forgotten "Annie Lisle". But why was my own name enunciated so distinctly in the refrain? Why did the song end in that triumphant burst, "Hail to thee, Christine"? Undoubtedly my imagination had altered the usual words. But without any conscious effort on my part. To me it was an angel chorus, paraphrasing the familiar Cornell "Alma Mater". Quieted and comforted, I fell into a deep sleep. . . .

After the horrors of that first night I had the best of care. My recovery was gradual. I had to think myself back to a normal frame of mind, but in the reaction I lost idealism, self-confidence—all but a stubborn tenacity. My religion was almost gone, my college career ended. The "understanding" was broken off by mutual agreement.

For I was *afraid*—afraid of the mystery of the New Name. . . .
But more of this later.

Yours,

_____*

*A Postscript, in which the author describes his gradual return to health and happiness, will appear in the August number.