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Daybreak in the West

HOLGER J. KOCH.

From Atterdag College, Solvang, Calif., comes the sound of Reveille:

"For a good many people, perhaps most, war-time existence assumed all the aspects of a tread-mill. A time when ideals were compromised or even abandoned completely for economic advantages; and while many did improve their living conditions, few bettered the quality of their living.

"With the termination of the war and the resulting slackening of tension comes a sense of emptiness and futility. Something has been lost; some spiritual quality has gone out of our individual and social living.

"Perhaps it is the realization of this unsuspected cost of war which has awakened the desire among the people of this community to revive the meetings of pre-war days at Atterdag College. The desire to share the good and lasting things of life has returned; and so, to make this possible, we are again opening the doors of Atterdag College for such a meeting during the week of March 24th-31st."

VIGGO TARNOW.

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In order to appreciate the importance of this unpretentious invitation it is necessary to be familiar with the nature and practices of the Folk-School movement. As usual there is the absence of any form of "promotion", or trying to "sell" the meeting to the public by bartering honesty for fancy-catching advertising tricks.

One of the most striking aspects of contemporary American "spiritual" life is the reckless abandon with which we employ the questionable business practices of attracting attention and participation in supposedly sincere and solemn activities by ballyhoo, sensationalism and other tricks of the trade. That turn-away crowds frequently honor this Hollywood procedure merely testifies to the lack of taste and discrimination on the part of the public; or it

would soon discover that such tongue-in-cheek methods unfailingly destroy whatever real quality the offering might have.

We have taken some dangerous chances on the means we employ to reach our goals and retribution is sure and swift. Spiritual laws will no more be tampered with than natural laws. We won't "get by" with a thing. While we agree more or less whole-heartedly that the end does not justify any and all means, it hasn't quite dawned on us that the means by which we seek to reach the end definitely determine the quality of the end. Shoddy warp makes shoddy weaving. It never fails.

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I am sure the call from Solvang is not indicative of a mere wistful desire to return to the good old days; although earlier experiences do, by their remembered satisfaction, become an incentive toward repeated efforts. However, this is a new day with a new day's needs and a new day's tasks. We want new wine for the new wine-skins.

Nor is Solvang an isolated instance of this awakening demand for renewed action; the impatience to be on the march. While existence on the world's outer crust is raucous with sound and fury signifying very little, deeper underground veins are quietly but inexorably pressing toward the surface. The demand for loyalty to principle, for honesty and for charity is stirring in the land. The real America is rising to denounce trickery, hypocrisy and moral cowardice at home and abroad. World leaders are about to sell us down the river of nationalism, self-sufficiency and suspicion again, eventually leading to another war. (I can't imagine what else they could do as long as they are in duty bound to represent the majority will at home. I could name a large number of organizations which profess loyalty to lofty principles, but not a single one which would jeopardize its own security to honor them).

But an increasing number of individuals are casting aside the yoke and refuse to follow. They have become conscientious objectors, not only to violence, but to subservience to fear and egotism—in national affairs and on Main Street. In the past they feared to give offense, to be thought "different"; they have hesitated to disturb relationships to neighbors and kin; they shrank from provok-

ing hostility and persecution; they became appeasers instead of peace-makers; having sown compromise they reaped defeat. They have found that truth is a shield and armor only for those who serve it with a single heart. No man, friend or foe, kin or stranger, is served well by dissembling. Less than the truth is in any case less than the best.

There may not be enough of such for a political party or a majority at a convention; but then: the truth must be lived into the world, not voted in or adopted by resolution. Every individual is an overwhelming majority in all that area of existence which concerns him. He must decide every question on its merits alone. What the next person thinks or does is neither his responsibility nor his criterion. Truth itself does not live or die by the loyalty or disloyalty of the individual,—but the individual does. To cut one's throat to fool a few people seems hardly worth the bother.

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It is not what people can be led or forced to do that is important. The most excellent plans for social or economic utopias inaugurated and perpetuated by force of arms or law will avail us nothing. There is nothing in the world of enduring good except what is accepted or created by the free choice or activity of the individual for no other purpose than that it has become a necessity for that individual to act or accept in response to a powerful inner need: the need to be in harmony with the laws of life; a demand so imperial that he strictly speaking has no choice except between survival or destruction. There is no answer to the cry, "Let this cup pass!" The only alternative is death.

In all this we cannot wait for the democratic process to institute and direct the forward thrust of the human spirit. Democracy acts upon principles and truths long acknowledged to be desirable and right; but it is entirely foreign to its nature to be the genesis of such principles and truths. It is democracy's only glory—and not a mean one—that it does, when it does, acknowledge what has been tried and found true and incorporates such findings in its laws and institutions; but we are still completely dependent on the individual to gain every inch of ground for us, staking his life as a forfeit on the conviction that his belief is founded on enduring verities.

However, in a sense it is improper to speak of the individual as if he were an isolated entity acting entirely on his own initiative, independently of influences at work everywhere in the realm of human life. The fountain-head does not produce the water which flows from it; it has simply become the logical, because the **MOST AVAILABLE**, outlet for an unseen body of water in dark under-ground veins pressing upward for an outlet. In what manner individual human beings are spiritually joined with their fellows we do not yet know; but we know from experience that the "originator" of a new and vital truth is invariably also a spokesman for an indeterminable number of individuals who in his words find expression for their own more or less inarticulate feelings. He is not the creator, but himself a creature of a greater force acting upon the corporate human body without reference to race or national boundaries.

The Danish Folk-School, itself no more than a channel for an all-embracing philosophy of life, constituted such a fountain-head,—and one of the richest and sweetest that ever welled from the depths of life,—to water and revitalize every nook and cranny of human living; even spreading so far from its source as to affect drastically the economic life of the people. The folk-school movement is sometimes erroneously spoken of as a fruit of the co-operative movement. Nothing is farther from the truth. On the contrary, the economic sphere of existence is by nature so far removed from the head-waters of that stream as to constitute the outer reaches of its influence. So far out, in fact, that no INTERaction could be said to exist. The co-operative movement received its impulse from the dynamic spiritual force of the Folk-School; but had nothing to give in return. In fact, when the pressure from the co-operative movement tended to turn the Folk-Schools into agricultural experiment stations the springs promptly began to dry up. There just isn't any way in which the gifts of life may be turned to personal advantage.

In like manner the American spirit of utilitarianism, having thoroughly pervaded our educational system, quickly choked such springs as immigration had carried to these shores. Atterdag in California, Danebod in Minnesota and Grand View in Iowa are fountain-heads of other days that are still bubbling or about to flow again; this time, however, from the veins of America's hidden historic stream: the sweet water of freedom and human dignity, and an undying hope for brotherhood and peace: the American Dream. A stream fed by rivulets from every country on earth in which tyranny of kings and caste denied the equality of men. It should bring out some unique and striking qualities from the heritages of so many cultures and pools of living. But they will not be "foreign". They will have been filtered and purified of the nationalistic sediments which beget hatreds and war in the clean soil of America.

Yes, it has been a long, long night; but the dawn is near for:

"The Spirit moves us onward. None may rest:
Thought presses thought: we were not born to wait.
The future crowds the ever-opening gate
Of time, and is possessed
And written in the histories of men.
The rising generations are impressed
For service in the hidden and untried;
And each, by deed or word, by gun or pen,
Must venture, must decide,
For good or evil, what is destiny.
We cannot wait—in this we are not free.
The Spirit flows within us like a tide
Upon a nameless sea,
Pulled onward by some moon we cannot know
To inundate some shore that cannot be;
Some country out of mind, beyond surmise,
Beyond the reach of sine or ratio,
Or touch or taste or smell, or ears or eyes;

Some truth we cannot dream or analyze,
 Forever hidden from intelligence,
 Of which our will is yet the embryo.
 We cannot hold this tide. It drives us on.
 It drives us ever hence,
 To war and devastation more intense
 Where man will fight his own automaton;
 Or else, to that which waits within the heart,
 Still uncomposed in time, still unordained —
 The brotherhood of man — — — — ”

RUSSEL W. DAVENPORT:
 “My Country.”

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The Obligation of a Trust

LEIF A. KIRKEGAARD, Rushford, Minn.

It has been a pleasure to read the “Vanguard American” from the first issue and on. Its readers and contributors are partakers in a search for the key to America’s heart. As a group we are convinced, I believe, that there is something in our lives, due to our cultural heritage, which makes living rich and meaningful. So highly do we value this heritage, which originated in a Danish religious movement years ago, that we are anxious to transmit it to others. In other words, we are people with a message. Let us ponder that fact for it gives us some unusual responsibilities.

Has anyone found the key? While we feel that this materialistic civilization is totally inadequate and its scale of values are shoddy, the average American does not feel so. He knows of nothing better and is convinced there is nothing wrong in his life which a good raise will not cure. How are we to convince him of anything else?

Let us not forget that it was defeat and despair which brought about a rebirth in Denmark. First she was on the wrong side in the Napoleonic Wars, then came the resulting economic collapse. The Industrial Revolution caused her agriculture to become outmoded, and finally there was 1864. As a nation she was forced to renounce her worldly ambitions. No more for her the glories of army and navy. Paradoxically it gave her people a better life than the imperialism and power pacts of her big neighbors.

Perhaps we are to bank our fires and await a similar situation here. It will not necessarily be a military defeat that America must have, but she does need some form of disillusionment.

There were signs of degeneration in Danish culture which became very noticeable after the first World War. But after 1940 she found herself and showed the world that a gentle, cultivated nation has also been given means of resisting evil. Out of suffering she emerged nationally intact with no complexes of fear and hatred to mar her future and a new self-assurance.

With this in mind we feel more than ever convinced that we have something to share, something that could survive the bloody torture of Europe.

Just what is this we have to share?

Basically, it is that religion is a force. We must apply it to our daily life. Grundtvig revitalized a dusty formalism in Christianity. It has been interesting in that connection to see references to the Quakers in the “Vanguard.” To me they are a living rebuke. I have not sufficiently used religion in my daily life, having been too timid, too respectable, too busy. Yet that is supposedly a part of our message.

We have a suspicion of mere material success, having learned many ways of enriching ourselves not necessarily dependent on wealth. We have acquired a liking for good reading, for music in which we take part, for art expressed in our homes and gardens, for sociability pleasant and worthwhile.

This idealized portrait of ourselves must be balanced by a few adverse criticisms.

There can be little doubt that the church which brought Grundtvig’s message over here has lost its early enthusiasm and suffers from a spiritual paralysis. Those whose religious needs have been desperate and urgent have gone elsewhere. There is a sad lack of vitalizing leadership. At times we have made a virtue of mediocrity. There has been an unwarranted self-contentment, for this church and its members have not lived up to their heritage. True it has been a small group, about the size of the Quakers, that small.

Yet there is something. The seeds are there for the new growth that this country must have.

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Without Money

AAGE MØLLER, Solvang, Calif.

Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul itself in fatness. Isaiah 55:1-2.

I go down to the store to buy a bread. It looks so good, but it is not a bread. Bread is a lifegiving substance but there is no life in this bread. It was taken out of the bread because money wanted it to be taken out. It started with land speculation. With that money squeezed itself in between man and soil and separated the two. Man ceased to live with the land. Land did not get what it needs more than anything else, affectionate care. Soon land commenced to starve. It became anemic. For a while artificial substitutes could induce land to produce quantity but not quality.

We spend money for celery that is not celery, milk that is not milk. The more money we spend the more do we reduce vitality. Not so long ago men and women could dance til 7 a. m. and then go to work. Now young people are tired out by twelve.

I have just spent 50 cents to get two hours of fun but I did not get it, nor did anyone else get it. The actors tried hard to make us laugh, but they were not full of fun when

they made the pictures. They were paid for throwing pies in the faces of groomed butlers. It was not funny. Fun and frolic cannot be bought. You cannot buy a man to produce contagious mirth. The whole Hollywood fun-factory business is as much a failure as was the Roman circus.

Arthur has lost Elsie's confidence and wit. Existence is a misery to him. He tries money. Gives her an \$800 fur coat, a \$30 dinner, a new Buick. She does her level best to pretend that she has come back. He knows, it was a failure.

The community is so barren and void that the young people scream for a bit of genuine folk-life. Committees are chosen. They collect money, make snackbars, skating rinks, etc. It does not help. There is plenty of potential folk-life but it will not mix with money.

A man and woman buy a farm. They work hard for ten years in order to accumulate some money which supposedly will satisfy a hunger in their souls. They fail. The money does not satisfy. The farm, the plants, animals and even the children did not become a part of them. They did not create a home atmosphere and home beauty.

We may as well square up with the truth that life values cannot be attained by means of money. Money cannot be a sacrament. As a means of acquiring values it is totally on the side of death. It acts negatively.

I can send my check to the florist and ask him to decorate my room with flowers, but unless I myself am mated to flowers they do not become a part of me. It is the intimate personal touch which will regenerate in me life values.

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The Loom of Living

NADJESCHDA L. OVERGAARD.

The idea of creative activities, as an integral part of every day living, must certainly strike a responsive chord in many of the Vanguard's readers. A look about us presents the evidence that creative living is practically non-existent. We crave activities, yes, but partake in them passively and are left with a hunger still unfilled. When this becomes a constant experience it inevitably leads to a breakdown in the capacity of the individual for creating.

All life is creative. To justify our existence as creations children we must continually further this process. In our day, with the invention of countless machines to ease the toils of man, undreamed of in other ages, the only justification will surely be an increase in creative activities directly proportionate to the increase of labor saving devices. This is not yet in evidence. The direct opposite seems to be the case. The more leisure time we have the less we know what to do with it.

Could it be that a distorted sense of values is at the root of this unproductivity along these lines? Much too often it is the gaudy, artificial, machine-made imitation that is admired out of all proportion to its artistic value, which actually is exactly nothing, while the genuine, honest creative effort is hardly recognized. This lack of good judgment is not confined to the realms of art but is felt in all fields of creative endeavor.

With the conviction of the fundamental importance of this creativity it seems impossible not to try to explore the many and varied phases of it. This is our aim as we invite your comments and suggestions. Through an exchange of ideas we hope to inspire and be inspired to begin to live creatively in a purely non-professional way.

May we hear from you concerning this? Community projects or individual accomplishments will be equally welcome.

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Rebirth or Death of a Vision

THORVALD RASMUSSEN, Solvang, Calif.

The miracle of seeing a vision is a challenge to the barbarian instincts of man. Without this great ability humanity would forever be in the clutches of the animal desires of creation.

All through history a person here and there has been inspired by a vision.

When truth was revealed to Moses in a vision and later clarified in the Ten Commandments the foundation for the life of the people of Israel was laid. Similarly at other times various groups of people have been inspired by visions.

In the great revelation to those who believe, God granted the Jewish people the privilege of salvation from eternal oblivion. The nordic people received this at a much later time.

The nordics referred to their god as the "almighty" or "all God" and the Israelites spoke of their god as "Jehova" or "one God." This similarity places both peoples in the same category of being derived from a similar source or belonging to the same "tree of life."

What is it that the Danish people mean when they speak of "our vision"?

If we look back on the heritage of the Danish people we find in their hymns, songs, folk-life, church, and literature that a single pattern weaves in and out of the whole fabric and that this is the keynote of that which they call "our vision."

This central idea is definitely spiritual in nature. Its meaning and expression can be traced back to the core of the Holy Scriptures.

Out of this spiritual inspiration which the nordic people have received there has grown a great movement which is centered around the folk-school. The immutable laws of life were the guiding light and were expressed in some of the following principles and truths:

"The universality of the brotherhood of man."

"The unprejudiced freedom of thought and expression."

"The acknowledgement of the diversity of meaning of the two ways of living that are referred to as the spiritual and the materialistic."

"The acceptance of the personality of each individual as a life force by itself."

"The belief that any thought, word, deed, or expression of any person or group should not be used or be caused to be used for monetary gain to any person or group."

"The belief in mercy and forgiveness to any digressor."

Does America have "a vision" comparable to this?

Here is where the Danish-American people are entrusted with a great mission: the revealing of "our" principles and truths to the American people.

For a while it looked as if we as Danish-Americans were going into stagnation by discarding our heritage and giving in to the seemingly unsurmountable barriers of language. But, the will of a minority is again making an effort that "our vision" may be reborn.

Here is the question for us as Danish-Americans: Will "our vision" die or be reborn?

America is waiting for a guiding hand!

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Toward Church Consolidation

HAROLD PETERSEN, Ringsted, Iowa.

We cannot deny that our churches of European background are gradually losing their foreign identity. That is only natural. They have become rooted to American soil and American life. The dominant American influence of Puritanism has not been confined to a few churches with Calvinistic background; it has found its way into all our churches. Many Lutheran pastors, in their unflinching loyalty to Luther's catechism have unknowingly expounded Puritan moral codes with as much zeal as their Baptist brethren whom they tend to scorn. When a humanistic current sweeps the country all churches plug in. When the voice of Barth encircles the globe it is heard by all our churches alike. All our church bodies follow "The Christian Century," the daily press, football scores, and the decisions in Washington. All church bodies have, at least, one creed in common, the business creed of good organization and the latest in business ingenuity.

The religious forces in America even though they may not always be recognized by our respective church bodies do nevertheless influence the thought and action of the people of our churches. While church bodies closely guard their respective creeds, the American people of our churches are unconsciously responding to the forces of our time. Even our pastors, while some may hesitate to admit it, are more in accord with the forceful messages of their own generation, even when they come from men of other denominations than their own, than they are loyal to the dogmas of a Luther, a Calvin, a Grundtvig of a Wilhelm Beck.

This does not mean that we have any Luther, Calvin, or Grundtvig on the scene in American church life today. Far from it. I fail to find any strong religious force at work in America today. As yet the great American prophet who is one with the soul of his people and aflame with the gospel of Christ has not arisen. My faith is that such will come and that he will be instrumental in the birth of an American folk church.

But there is something else at work which is seeking to bring about a temporary united front of the churches. It is big business and organization in the church. Centralization, massive organization, and large buildings have long appealed to the practical American sense. The present at-

titude is, "Why wait for the spirit to move the churches, why not use our good business sense and unite the churches into a more practical working order? If the movement succeeds as it likely will, it is not because we have grown in religious depth but because we have centralized the dominant American religion of big business into a more centralized body also within the church. The movement will not necessarily demand strong preachers, it will demand strong engineers and good business men.

The whole idea is so very appealing. It adds an external atmosphere of unity. It appeals to our love for big crowds and big buildings. Only the increased budgets will tend to dampen our enthusiasm. But the whole movement is a false front of the church. As long as we do not share our faith with one another within our church bodies there is little hope that we will find our way into the inner life of those of other churches. External size, large churches, and smooth organizations are more likely to reflect a weakness of the church than reveal any strength. The church, when it has been most powerful, has not exhibited any strong organization. The church's strength has always been, and always will be, Christ. Man does not build churches like he does barns, elevators, or community clubs. The church grows out of man's faith in a Living Christ.

However, I cannot abandon the hope of one church. If there is to be a "One World" there must also be a "One Church." Both rest on the same foundation. Both demand of us a resignation of self to the Spirit. It must come through growth and sharing and a gradual death of the old prejudices, creeds, and dogmas which now hold us to our isolationism. Christ must be free from His Sunday prison and take His place in our general community life, our home life, and our business affairs. But let us not prolong such a unity by establishing a make-believe unity before our hearts have awakened to what real unity demands of us. It is better that our small denominationalism dies its natural death than to incorporate the present religious indifference into a large organization which claims to have the unity of souls in its grasp but in reality has only a membership list of stockholders. Let us not be indifferent to the hope of One Holy Christian Church in our midst. But let the Spirit be our guide. Let us form no pre-patterns of its shape or size.

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For Meditation

Dr. HOWARD THURMAN.

In one of Petrarch's letters of Old Age appears these words: "When a word must be spoken to further a good cause, and those whom it behooves to speak remain silent, anybody ought to raise his voice, and break a silence which may be fraught with evil . . . Many a time a few single words have helped further the welfare of the nation, no matter who uttered them; the voice itself displaying its latent powers, sufficed to move the hearts of men." It is so easy to underrate the potential power of one word spoken at the critical moment. We say to ourselves some-

times that because we are not famous or learned or rich or powerful or gifted our word means nothing in the presence of a great injustice. Who would pay attention to us? Many good causes are hindered, often nameless persons are brought to an untimely end because "those whom it behooves to speak remain silent;" and because they do not speak, we do not speak. It is important to remember that there is no limit to the power of any single life or any single voice when it is the only outlet, the only channel for justice, righteousness in a given situation. The silence of the high and mighty sometimes gives greater power to the simple voice of the solitary individual. During almost any week you may be faced with some great wrong or some simple but gross expression of injustice and there is no one to speak out except you. Do not be silent—there is no limit to the power that may be released through you.

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On Lincoln's Birthday

HOLGER J. KOCH.

Much labor and thought are being expended on creating favorable living conditions for human beings everywhere in the world. It is difficult to quarrel with any sincere attempt to better the lot of man, arduous at best, but I fear that in all this preoccupation with his living conditions, his health, his food, his education and habits we are putting the cart before the horse. The real transformation takes place when the activated personality begins to react upon his environment. Wherever he lives, in city or country, in slum, cottage or mansion the quickening of man's spirit immediately reacts upon his environment for its betterment. The really moving force for the eradication of the ills that beset mankind lies in the attitude, the motives and the objectives of the individual and the group. We see it constantly about us: One type of person can work himself down from any height of favorable circumstances; perhaps not even honestly by squandering his "substance" and his health and ending in the gutter;—more likely by becoming a bigoted, narrow-minded, smug, self-sufficient pillar of society. Or from the humble station, bereft of all advantages, may come the leader, the seer, the benefactor, who changes conditions by changing men. In every case the motive force is inherent in the personality.

We are developing the most pernicious habit in this country; the habit of blaming our misfortunes and general worthlessness on somebody else: the government, the capitalists, the workers, the middle-man, too much food, too little food, the wrong kind of food. We have an organization working against everybody and everything. And it is none of these. Or perhaps we should say that these evils are simply the reflection of the individual on the life and the society he creates. When he is "right" he at once begins to create right conditions about himself; not by violent attacks on his own image, but by growing out of his own personality the stuff of which good conditions are made.

The people who are building America's future are not the crusaders, the propagandists, the haters of this or that, but the men and women in town and country, in every walk of life who are quietly building a human life with

honest, durable things: the genuine, the noble, the charitable; building for themselves and their fellows; always increasing their capacity for enjoyment and creation. Those of the kindly eyes, the quiet speech and the gentle hands. Or the prophets and the dreamers who speak of things to come, and walk in worlds not yet made:

"The lean, far-sighted countrymen who hear

The breath of living things beneath the snows,

And feel the hope of Heaven in their blood,

And far below the frost, the glowing Rose.

The earthy men are those

Who have America to love and keep:

Her mountaintops, her daring clouds that scud

Above the dappled carpets that we reap;

Her rain, her snow, her forest-fire, her flood,

Her dusty winds, her tidal hurricanes,

Her desert buttes,, her lakes, blue-eyed and deep,

Her foaming rocks and shores, her silver veins.

These are her men to whom she will confide

The secret of the seed that she contains,

Which has so generously multiplied

Within the fertile pastures of her creed;

The seed of liberty, which can provide,

Out of the dark and frozen depths of need,

The love of man, the Flower of the freed."

Russel W. Davenport.

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The Body of This Death

ELLEN NIELSEN, Fresno, Calif.

By one o'clock the little white house was full of people. The hearse stood at the end of the narrow concrete walk. The hearse looked exceptionally long there (the little house, the small uncertain walk) and black and polished except where dust had filmed it. Through its wide windows you caught flashes of silver. All down the road right into the ugly little town sprawling lifelessly in the heat there were cars.

Under half-grown trees on the lawn stood people who could not find room in the house. They were mostly men, farmers; the women stood there a little while looking at the house, wondering if they could find room should they venture inside. Gradually they left the men for they craved the sanctity of the occasion and they wanted to see how the family "took it" and they also wanted the family to see that they had come. Besides, out there on the lawn, it didn't seem so much like a funeral but more like a sedate family gathering.

The grass was newly cut. Maybe the son had done that this morning. His mother had always been neat, you could see that by her curtains. The door to the little porch was swung back, out and back against the wall; it was a very narrow doorway, even with the door open how could the casket . . . ?

The little porch was enclosed with windows and along these you could see the backs of the women. Their necks

handkerchiefs over their necks, it was very hot and the sun battered them through the windows.

There was not a sound from the house outside of an occasional scraping of chairs, but out on the lawn under the wispy trees the men shuffled their feet and talked in low voices. The farmers pointed to the close-cut dry and yellow grass talking about the way this hot wind blew; they looked up into the sky and said, "Yes, sir, we sure need it."

The farmers looked uncomfortable and too big in their dress-up clothes; most of them carried their coats and their suspenders were new across their backs. They mopped their necks with handkerchiefs that were startling white in their brown hands. A group of young men stood under one of the trees smoking cigarettes and laughing nervously without mirth; they wore new shoes, smart and "snappy" but they were farmer boys or store clerks. The men walking up and down the sidewalk slowly and without too much noise kept glancing into the hearse, but they didn't want to stop and crane their necks to look inside to see how it all was much as they wanted to.

Suddenly a loud sing-song voice came from the house. It was the minister beginning the home service, reading the scripture, his voice rising and falling and dying away. Awkwardly the men on the lawn removed their hats and bent their heads a little, the young men crushed out their cigarettes and stood watching them smolder in the grass; it became absolutely still. You could smell the flowers now from the house, maybe because there was nothing else to do, the too-sweet, obscene odor of greenhouse flowers. Your nostrils denied the odor, rejected it fastidiously, but it rose around you, insistent, cloying, tugging at your memory of other funerals.

The voice went on and on almost without pause; you knew he was standing beside the casket. It was not his natural speaking voice, it was the voice he used for Occasions and the Pulpit. It was the Minister.

It seemed almost too hot to stand so still and as the voice went on the men under the trees began to stir and shift their weight from one foot to another. They lifted their heads and began to look natural again, not so stricken as when they first heard the minister. Now a phrase could be heard, he was closing and it was fitting to close on a loud, firm, confident note. "He that believeth in Me" and finally "put on incorruption."

Silence. Then suddenly a stir and the little five room house seemed to rock and spill out its contents. A woman came out first sniffing noisily into her handkerchief, her feet one at a time fumbling for the steps down from the porch. It couldn't have been one of the family for they come out last, so the men on the lawn stared at her curiously, without sympathy. When she got down to the walk she straightened from her preoccupation with the stairs and took her handkerchief away from her face; when she saw all the men she walked crossly off to the side under a tree by herself and stood wiping her eyes and nose virtuously and set her hat right.

All the people were coming out of the house now; the undertaker had come down to the hearse and opened the double doors. The men turned slightly and watched him as he clicked with the latches and the stand that was to hold the casket swung out over the walk. The undertaker was a

neat, compact little man, all his movements were sure and deft; when he walked back up the walk you could tell he had rubber heels on his shoes, his walk was quiet and elegant. At the door he stood courteously to one side pulling himself back from the people who were coming out, his head bent a little to one side, reverent and polite. When there was a pause he went quickly up the stairs and into the house. The lawn was filled with people now; the odor of flowers seemed to hang in the clothing for it was everywhere. As soon as the men came out they took off their coats and stamped their feet a little.

Women began carrying out the flowers. There were floral pieces on wire stands and large sprays and baskets of flowers. All the flowers looked alike. The women carried them carefully and hurried in a little bustling walk to the cars with them. They looked happy and important.

The minister had come out now and stood waiting at the door for the procession to form. The undertaker was arranging the pall-bearers, nephews of the deceased woman. "It's all the nephews," whispered the women to their men; the women whispered together, "It's the nephews." It seemed important to them.

The undertaker motioned two of the pall-bearers outdoors to the foot of the steps where they stood blinking in the sun. They carried their hats and you could see they really didn't know what to do with them, they looked around wondering if they should Up on the porch the undertaker had arranged the rest of the pall-bearers in a double row, but after a moment he seemed to see that there would not be room for them on either side of the casket as they carried it through the doorway, so after whispering quickly to them, one hand confidentially on their shoulders (and the heads of the young men bent alertly to hear him) he moved them all outside along the steps on either side. The minister walked on ahead of them looking up into the sky with great presence. The door banged back against the wall and one of the pall-bearers fastened it, everyone watching him respectfully.

Now the casket was being wheeled up to the door. The pall-bearers reached up to grasp it as it slid off its stand. It could just barely go through the doorway. The little lace curtain (she, the dead woman, had said she liked having it on the door because she could see people and they couldn't see her when she came to answer a knock) the little lace curtain hanging over the window in the door billowed suddenly in the wind and spread itself over the coffin catching in the thorny flowers; the pall-bearers waited while the undertaker pulled back the curtain.

All the people lined up on either side of the walk and after the casket came the family, two by two, first the husband and the son (their eyes were red but there was no grief as she had been sick a long time and had had last rites given her several times when it seemed the end was near) and then the brothers and their wives and the rest of the nephews and nieces.

At the hearse the undertaker was swift and helpful and the casket slid nicely into its groove and was pushed back into the car. The double doors were closed and the undertaker motioned to the pall-bearers to follow directly after; the crowd began dispersing, everyone going to their were brown and their hats sat squarely on their heads, they did not wear hats everyday. Some of them spread

cars. The sound of motors starting made a foreign sound in the quiet, hot day. Dust began to rise. The procession formed. There were twelve miles to the church and cemetery.

It was a long procession and before it got under way the heat from the many motors rose and quivered in the air, it was like spots before the eyes.

The drive was a pleasant one along slow curves and up and down knobby little hills. For a long stretch trees lined the road, they were grey with dust. When there was a break in the trees there was a sudden view of gentle picturesque fields, cattle grazing, horses lifting their heads to stare and listen.

The procession was like a long jointed snake winding over the road, often the head could look at the tail as the road curved. But it moved in clouds of dust, in low places the dust was like a heavy, unmoving fog. Up on the plains the wind blew it back to the next car; all the windows had to be closed and it was very hot, the heat pounded at your head and burned your eyes.

Finally the church could be seen up on a hill. It was a large white church its steeple touching the sky. It stood out gaunt and bare, high up over the trees. The fields sloped down from it, large, spacious fields, rolling masses of black, newly-turned earth, meadows of grass bending westward in the wind. Back of the church stood two little out-houses a long distance apart, they looked like beehives.

The procession had stopped, cars were parked every which way along the road; the road ended at the church and cemetery, other cars would not be passing. The bell was tolling. Most of the women when they heard the great, ringing bell began crying a little.

People crowded up the road wanting to get into the church. The casket and the family were just going up the broad steps; there was a pause at the door while the undertaker darted around getting the casket adjusted to the stand. Through the open windows you could see the people already come rise to their feet as the casket came in. Organ music was being played but the sound vanished out over the fields. The cemetery at the side of the church glistened in the sun. At a nearby grave a cluster of bees hung over withered flowers.

People were busy getting seated. It almost looked as though there wouldn't be room for them all; those still crowded in the doorway stood on tiptoe peering anxiously into the church looking for empty seats. Finally all were seated, the music stopped after everyone had finished coughing and settling themselves the minister in his black robe advanced to the coffin and read the obituary: baptized, confirmed, married, two sons one of whom preceded her in death, leaving to mourn . . . may her soul rest in peace. After this had been read a quartette sang **ABIDE IN ME**. They too were in black robes. People looked at them but hardly listened.

Now the minister had mounted the pulpit and spread open his books. He spoke a long time and there were long significant pauses. It was very warm. Quite often he said sonorously, "Ere the silver cord be loosed and the golden bowl broken." Once he said, "Our sister lying there on her silken couch, peacefully sleeping."

When people moved their clothing stuck to the back of the benches and made little tearing sounds as it came loose. One woman started to fan herself with her hymnal but felt it was not quite fitting at a funeral and she stopped, looking back at the door wondering . . .

The minister's voice trembled a little like an opera singer's. He himself looked untouched, reading from his manuscript. Finally he finished and the undertaker came forward in his silent, certain way, opened up the casket fixing things here and there, and then stepping to the first pew motioned that if they cared to see the remains . . . People began filing up past the casket. The dead woman was more dead than her silken couch. In contrast to the white, glinting silk her face was yellow. People's stares pounced upon her noting every detail so that later they could say, "Did you notice . . . ?" or "you mighta thought she was sleeping." But she was dead.

After looking at her they walked down the aisle and out of the church. There they stood in clusters on the lawn waiting for the casket and the family to come out.

All the people walked over to the grave, the hearse crawling silently ahead of them like a giant bug. The sky had turned an ominous grey; the farmers looked at one another. Wind clouds were coming up although it was almost entirely still. It was hotter than ever. People crowded around the grave. The casket was lowered a little and the minister read the burial service. When he came to the words, "Out of dust hast thou come," the undertaker threw flowers on the casket. Through the hush a horn on a nearby highway sounded unreal and theatrical. Only the silence and the tombstones, some of them leaning tiredly, the hushed group of people and the wilting masses of flowers were real.

As soon as the service was over people edged away hurriedly, looking up at the sky; when they were a little away from the grave they began walking briskly. By the time they got to their cars they were talking naturally, even laughing in a nice deprecatory way. The undertaker had already begun gathering together his paraphernalia. In the church the organist was closing the organ and picking up the music and the janitor was closing the windows. The building looked as hollow and meaningless now as an empty theatre.

At the grave two men were filling it in; they worked fast for the sky was dark. In the field cattle turned homeward, swinging along leisurely in single file, head to tail. Horses stopped cropping the grass and lifted their heads as though smelling the air, they swung their heads nervously as though they had something in their ears.

A low rumble of thunder started and the wind came up suddenly with a whistle. It grew even darker and the men at the grave grabbed their coats and ran to the little tool-house with their shovels. Locking the door hurriedly they ran down the field and vanished back of the church. Great drops of rain fell making little holes in the dust. There was a bright zigg-zagg of lightning across the sky and instantly the whole earth was deluged with beating, stinging rain and sound of thunder, there was nothing at all a-stir but the rain.