

## ENG 202: British Literature Summer Reading

A survey of British literature is monstrous in scope, covering a period of over 1200 years and thousands of authors. Unfortunately, we will only have a single school year with which to familiarize ourselves with a few of these works and to appreciate the significance of the continually shifting and growing nature of English as a language – and consequently as an influence in the world. Therefore, the thematic focus for our journey will be to explore the innate beauty and “savagery” of nature in juxtaposition to humankind’s attempts to control these inclinations through “manners” and other social constructs. We will be referencing each of the works you read over the summer throughout the course so be sure to read with an eye for future use. In other words, annotate!

### Read:

- Lord of the Flies* by William Golding (full novel)
- Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

Provided reading listed below:

### Poetry

- 1595- Mary Sidney- Psalm 52
- 1751- Thomas Gray- Elegy Written in the Country Churchyard
- 1843- Elizabeth Barrett Browning- The Cry of the Children
- 1899- Rudyard Kipling- The White Man’s Burden

### Short Stories

- 1921- Katherine Mansfield- The Garden Party
- 1960- Jean Rhys- The Day They Burned the Books

### Write:

- Completion of the Reader Response Journal for *Lord of the Flies*, **which will be collected on the first day of class.** (See below for directions, an example, and a rubric.)
- Annotate the additional readings, focusing on asking questions about the text. We will be discussing them throughout the year and it will be useful to have these annotations to use in classroom work.

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### The Response Log:

Complete **2** Response Logs (10 entries each) for *Lord of the Flies* and *Jane Eyre* (20 entries total)

A response log is an effective way to keep a record of your reading responses (positive or negative, sure or unsure). It offers a chance to respond personally, to ask questions, to wonder, to predict, or to reflect on the characters, people, events, literary elements, writing techniques, or language of a text. Do not summarize! Instead, record your textual observations.

Response Log must have an MLA heading and formatting. Begin with two columns

Title the column on the left “Quotations from the Text”

Title the column on the right “Commentary/Responses to the Text”

Responses may start:

“The imagery reveals...”

“The setting gives the effect of...”

“The author seems to feel...”

“The tone of this part is...”

“The character(s) feel(s)...”

“An interesting metaphor or symbol is”

“The detail seems effective/out of place/important because...”

“An interesting

word/phrase/sentence/thought is...”

“This reminds me of...”

“Something I notice/appreciate/don’t appreciate/wonder about is...”

“The author emphasizes\_\_\_\_\_in order to...”

Or you may start with something else you feel is appropriate

Generally, each response to a quotation should be 3-5 sentences and should include your response to the quotations, the author’s attitude, purpose or tone, and relation to personal experience.

You must include a total of **10 entries per work** that range from the beginning to the end of the text. Show me that you have read the entire text by responding to the book from the first to the last page. This means you will need to have paper and pen with you as you read or mark your quotations and complete the log after completing the novel.

Make sure that you note the page number for the quotes in the left-hand column. Your response log will be used to determine your comprehension of the text. Be sure that your responses are thorough and that you complete the journal for all chapters of the book. Please remember that these logs are not meant to be personal diaries. They are meant to be read by others and should be related only to the assigned material. You will be sharing your logs in class, so keep this in mind as you write. When sharing you will have the opportunity to confirm, clarify, and modify your responses through discussion. You will also find that your response logs can be helpful in writing literary and rhetorical analysis of the text.

- **Star 3 of your entries per work in which you feel you use the Claim – Evidence – Warrant structure effectively. We will be conferencing these the first week of class.**

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*\*\*\*I do not expect you to be an expert at analyzing literature, so don't panic if you don't know what to do here. We are going to spend nearly the entire class working with analysis. Focus on using the analytical techniques you learned in your previous English classes\*\*\**

### Sample Response Log: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

Quotations from Text	Commentary/Responses to Text
“ ‘He might have hurt me a little,’ Atticus conceded, ‘but son, you’ll understand folks a little better when you’re older. A mob’s always made up of people, no matter what. Mr. Cunningham was part of a mob last night, but he was still a man...So, it took an eight- year-old child to bring ‘em to their senses didn’t it?’” (159-160)	The tone here is matter-of-fact. Atticus admits that Mr. Cunningham could have harmed him, but he explains that Mr. Cunningham’s actions were not entirely his own; he was influenced by the crowd as is common for many people. It takes Scout recognizing him and talking to him to make Mr. Cunningham realize that what he is doing is wrong.

*As with every class assignment, all summer reading work should be original. Do not wait until the last minute to begin your work. I am interested in your original thoughts and ideas, so leave yourself enough time to carefully and thoughtfully complete this assignment.*

### Response Log Rubric

#### **A-B: 40-50 points (per log)**

##### **Successful: Synthesis and evaluation of the text**

- Features detailed, meaningful passages and quote selections
- Coverage of text is complete and thorough
- Journal is neat, organized, and professional looking; student has followed directions for organization of the journal
- Uses thoughtful interpretation and commentary; avoids clichés
- Makes insightful personal connections
- Asks thought-provoking and insightful questions
- A strong interest in the material as evidenced through an awareness of levels of meaning
- Judgments are textually and experientially based
- Predictions are thoughtful and keenly observed
- Character analysis is consistent with the material presented
- Show an understanding of character motivation
- Comparisons and connections are found between text and other literary and artistic works
- Recognizes the author’s writing choices and reasons for those choices (rhetorical, stylistic)
- Recognizes the energy and deliberateness of the writing process
- Awareness that their own personal beliefs may differ from those expressed in the text
- Demonstrates an awareness of point of view

#### **C: 35-39 (per log)**

##### **Adequate: Some evidence, understanding and appreciation of the text**

- Uses less detail, but good quote selections
- Adequately addresses all parts of the reading assignment

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- Journal is neat and readable
- Follows directions for organizing the journal
- Uses some intelligent commentary
- Addresses some thematic connections
- Includes some personal connections
- Does not summarize, but rather reflects upon the narrative
- Predictions are plausible
- Demonstrates some understanding of character motivation
- Show student's engagement in the text

### **F: 0-34 points (per log)**

#### **Unsuccessful: Literal surface encounter with the text**

- Only a few good details from text; quotes may be incomplete or not used at all
- Most commentary is vague, unsupported, or plot summary
- Journal is relatively neat, but may be difficult to read
- Student has not followed all directions for organizing the journal (no columns, no page numbers, etc.)
- Shows limited personal connection to text
- Asks few or obvious questions
- Address only part of the reading assignment
- Predictions are unrealistic or improbable
- Uses stereotypical responses
- Entries are too short
- Features off-topic response

## Psalm 52 by Mary Sidney Herbert

Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621), was a major poet: the fact that she inherited great wealth and privilege shouldn't discolour our vision of her achievement. While "fitting the approved categories for women – elegy, encomium and translation", her output also challenged and expanded them. Her work influenced many writers who succeeded her, including William Shakespeare.

### Psalm 52

Tyrant, why swell'st thou thus,  
Of mischief vaunting?  
Since help from God to us  
Is never wanting.

Lewd lies thy tongue contrives,  
Loud lies it soundeth;  
Sharper than sharpest knives  
With lies it woundeth.

Falsehood thy wit approves,  
All truth rejected:  
Thy will all vices loves,  
Virtue neglected.

Not words from cursed thee,  
But gulfs are poured;  
Gulfs wherein daily be  
Good men devoured.

Think'st thou to bear it so?  
God shall displace thee;  
God shall thee overthrow,  
Crush thee, deface thee.

The just shall fearing see  
These fearful chances,

And laughing shoot at thee  
With scornful glances.

Lo, lo, the wretched wight,  
Who God disdaineth,  
His mischief made his might,  
His guard his gaining.

I as an olive tree  
Still green shall flourish:  
God's house the soil shall be  
My roots to nourish.

My trust in his true love  
Truly attending,  
Shall never thence remove,  
Never see ending.

Thee will I honour still,  
Lord, for this justice;  
There fix my hopes I will  
Where thy saints' trust is.

Thy saints trust in thy name,  
Therein they joy them:  
Protected by the same,  
Naught can annoy them.

*Carol Rumens*

Mon 7 Nov 2016 06.00

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/nov/07/poem-of-the-week-psalm-52-by-mary-sidney-herbert>



## Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

BY THOMAS GRAY

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
    The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
    And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,  
    And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
    And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
    The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
    Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
    Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
    The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
    The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
    No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
    Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
    Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
    Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;

How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,  
If Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault  
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust  
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,  
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;  
Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage,  
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast  
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;  
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,

Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,  
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone  
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;  
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,  
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,  
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;  
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life  
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,  
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,  
The place of fame and elegy supply:  
And many a holy text around she strews,  
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,  
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.



For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead  
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,  
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,  
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,  
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,  
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,  
Or craz'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

"One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,  
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree;  
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,  
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array  
Slow thro' the church-way path we saw him borne.  
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,  
Grav'd on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

#### THE EPITAPH

*Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth  
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.  
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,  
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own.*

*Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,  
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:  
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,  
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.*

*No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.*

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**The Cry of the Children**  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–61)

DO ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,  
And *that* cannot stop their tears. 5  
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,  
The young birds are chirping in the nest,  
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west:  
But the young, young children, O my brothers, 10  
They are weeping bitterly!  
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow  
Why their tears are falling so? 15  
The old man may weep for his to-morrow  
Which is lost in Long Ago;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest,  
The old year is ending in the frost,  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,  
The old hope is hardest to be lost: 20  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces, 25  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy;  
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,  
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak; 30  
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,  
For the outside earth is cold,  
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering, 35  
And the graves are for the old."

"True," say the children, "it may happen  
That we die before our time:  
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen 40  
Like a snowball, in the rime.

We looked into the pit prepared to take her:  
Was no room for any work in the close clay!  
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,  
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower, 45  
With your ear down, little Alice never cries:  
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,  
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:  
And merry go her moments, lull'd and still'd in 50  
The shroud by the kirk-chime.  
It is good when it happens," say the children,  
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking  
Death in life, as best to have:  
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking, 55  
With a cerement from the grave.  
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,  
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;  
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cow-slips pretty,  
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through! 60  
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows  
Like our weeds anear the mine?  
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,  
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary, 65  
And we cannot run or leap;  
If we car'd for any meadows, it were merely  
To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go; 70  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,  
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, underground,  
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron 75  
In the factories, round and round.

"For all day, the wheels are droning, turning;  
Their wind comes in our faces,  
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,  
And the walls turn in their places: 80  
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,  
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,  
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,

All are turning, all the day, and we with all.  
And all day, the iron wheels are droning, 85  
And sometimes we could pray,  
'O ye wheels,' moaning breaking out in a mad  
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing  
For a moment, mouth to mouth! 90  
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing  
Of their tender human youth!  
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion  
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:  
Let them prove their living souls against the notion 95  
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!  
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
Grinding life down from its mark;  
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,  
Spin on blindly in the dark. 100

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,  
To look up to Him and pray;  
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,  
Will bless them another day.  
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us, 105  
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirr'd?  
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us  
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.  
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)  
Strangers speaking at the door: 110  
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,  
Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,  
And at midnight's hour of harm,  
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber, 115  
We say softly for a charm.  
We know no other words except 'Our Father,'  
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,  
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,  
And hold both within His right hand which is strong. 120  
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely  
(For they call Him good and mild)  
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,  
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But, no!" say the children, weeping faster, 125

“He is speechless as a stone:  
And they tell us, of His image is the master  
Who commands us to work on.  
Go to!” say the children,—“up in heaven,  
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find. 130  
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:  
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.”  
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,  
O my brothers, what ye preach?  
For God’s possible is taught by His world’s loving, 135  
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!  
They are weary ere they run:  
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory  
Which is brighter than the sun. 140  
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;  
They sink in man’s despair, without its calm;  
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,  
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:  
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly 145  
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—  
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.  
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their look is dread to see, 150  
For they mind you of their angels in high places,  
With eyes turned on Deity.  
“How long,” they say, “how long, O cruel nation,  
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child’s heart,—  
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation, 155  
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?  
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,  
And your purple shows your path!  
But the child’s sob in the silence curses deeper  
Than the strong man in his wrath.” 160

AUTHOR: [Stedman, Edmund Clarence](#), 1833–1908.

TITLE: [A Victorian anthology](#), 1837–1895; selections illustrating the editor’s critical review of British poetry in the reign of Victoria, edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman.

PUBLISHED : Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1895.

CITATION: Stedman, Edmund Clarence, ed. *A Victorian Anthology, 1837–1895*. Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1895; Bartleby.com, 2003. [www.bartleby.com/246/](http://www.bartleby.com/246/). [Date of Printout].

ON-LINE ED.: Published April 2003 by [Bartleby.com](#); © Copyright 2003 Bartleby.com, Inc. ([Terms of Use](#)).

## Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (1899)

Kipling was a British poet and novelist and his most famous work is the novel *The Jungle Book*. He wrote this poem after the United States defeated Spain and came into possession of Puerto Rico, Guam, Hawaii, and the Philippines. (The full title of the poem is "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands.") The poem is meant as a piece for advice for the United States as it followed Great Britain's footsteps in becoming a great empire. The "white man's burden" was the obligation that the white race supposedly had to civilize the darker races of the world.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need;  
**5** To wait in heavy harness,  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,  
Half-devil and half-child.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
**10** In patience to abide,  
To veil the threat of terror  
And check the show of pride;  
By open speech and simple,  
An hundred times made plain  
**15** To seek another's profit,  
And work another's gain.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
The savage wars of peace—  
Fill full the mouth of Famine  
**20** And bid the sickness cease;  
And when your goal is nearest  
The end for others sought,  
Watch sloth and heathen Folly  
Bring all your hopes to nought.

**25** Take up the White Man's burden—  
    No tawdry rule of kings,  
But toil of serf and sweeper—  
    The tale of common things.  
The ports ye shall not enter,  
**30**    The roads ye shall not tread,  
Go mark them with your living,  
    And mark them with your dead.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
    And reap his old reward:  
**35** The blame of those ye better,  
    The hate of those ye guard—  
The cry of hosts ye humour  
    (Ah, slowly!) toward the light:—  
"Why brought ye us from bondage,  
**40**    Our loved Egyptian night?"

Take up the White Man's burden—  
    Ye dare not stoop to less—  
Nor call too loud on Freedom  
    To cloak your weariness;  
**45** By all ye cry or whisper,  
    By all ye leave or do,  
The silent, sullen peoples  
    Shall weigh your gods and you.

Take up the White Man's burden—  
**50**    Have done with childish days—  
The lightly proffered laurel,  
    The easy, ungrudged praise.  
Comes now, to search your manhood  
    Through all the thankless years,  
**55** Cold, edged with dear-bought wisdom,  
    The judgment of your peers!





## THE GARDEN PARTY (1921)

By Katherine Mansfield

And after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seeded to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

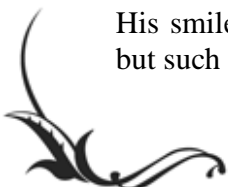
Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she had not got the bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up,



we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing? Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for her friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom... And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Some one whistled, some one sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the—the—Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.



"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that sweet hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase, in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.



"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I do, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and—one moment, Hans—" Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta Tee-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

"This Life is *Wee*-ary,  
A Tear—a Sigh.  
A Love that *Chan*-ges,  
This Life is *Wee*-ary,  
A Tear—a Sigh.  
A Love that *Chan*-ges,  
And then... Good-bye!"



But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

"This Life is *Wee*-ary,  
Hope comes to Die.  
A Dream—a *Wa*-kening."

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes."

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and—" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

"Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

"Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

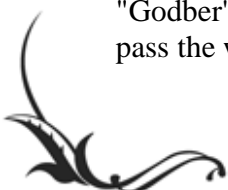
"I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. "How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?"

"Fifteen, Miss Jose."

"Well, cook, I congratulate you."

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

"Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.



That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

"Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

"Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?" said Laura.

"I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. "They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

"Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. "Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

"Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. "I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

"Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

"What's the matter? What's happened?"

"There's been a horrible accident," said Cook. "A man killed."

"A man killed! Where? How? When?"

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

"Know those little cottages just below here, miss?" Know them? Of course, she knew them. "Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

"Dead!" Laura stared at Godber's man.

"Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. "They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, "He's left a wife and five little ones."

"Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. "Jose!" she said, horrified, "however are we going to stop everything?"



"Stop everything, Laura!" cried Jose in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. "Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

"But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

"And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

"Oh, Laura!" Jose began to be seriously annoyed. "If you're going to stop a band playing every time some one has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. "You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

"Drunk! Who said he was drunk?" Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said, just as they had used to say on those occasions, "I'm going straight up to tell mother."

"Do, dear," cooed Jose.

"Mother, can I come into your room?" Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

"Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?" And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

"Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

"Not in the garden?" interrupted her mother.

"No, no!"

"Oh, what a fright you gave me!" Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.



"But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. "Of course, we can't have our party, can we?" she pleaded. "The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!"

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

"But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If some one had died there normally—and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?"

Laura had to say "yes" to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

"Mother, isn't it terribly heartless of us?" she asked.

"Darling!" Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. "My child!" said her mother, "the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!" And she held up her hand-mirror.

"But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

"You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. "People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

"I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan...

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

"My dear!" trilled Kitty Maitland, "aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

"Laurie!"





"Hallo!" He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. "My word, Laura! You do look stunning," said Laurie. "What an absolutely topping hat!"

Laura said faintly "Is it?" and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to—where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

"Darling Laura, how well you look!"

"What a becoming hat, child!"

"Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, "Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. "Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?"

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

"Never a more delightful garden-party... " "The greatest success... " "Quite the most... "

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

"All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!" And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

"Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

"Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. "I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?" he said.

"My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, "we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

"Oh, mother!" Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

"It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. "The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.



"I know," she said. "Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura!" She jumped up. "Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

"But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?" said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

"Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now—"

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

"Take it yourself, darling," said she. "Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

"The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. "Only the basket, then. And, Laura!"—her mother followed her out of the marquee—"don't on any account—"

"What mother?"

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! "Nothing! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.



Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent—"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I—I only want to leave—"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll thenk the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass,"—and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet—"e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and



lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy... happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

"Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. "Is that you, Laura?"

"Yes."

"Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?"

"Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!" She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

"I say, you're not crying, are you?" asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. "Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. "Was it awful?"

"No," sobbed Laura. "It was simply marvellous. But Laurie—" She stopped, she looked at her brother. "Isn't life," she stammered, "isn't life—" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

"*Isn't* it, darling?" said Laurie.



## The Day They Burned the Books

My friend Eddie was a small, thin boy. You could see the blue veins in his wrists and temples. People said that he had consumption and wasn't long for this world. I loved, but sometimes despised him.

His father, Mr Sawyer, was a strange man. Nobody could make out what he was doing in our part of the world at all. He was not a planter or a doctor or a lawyer or a banker. He didn't keep a store. He wasn't a schoolmaster or a government official. He wasn't – that was the point – a gentleman. We had several resident romantics who had fallen in love with the moon on the Caribees – they were all gentlemen and quite unlike Mr Sawyer who hadn't an 'h' in his composition. Besides, he detested the moon and everything else about the Caribbean and he didn't mind telling you so.

He was agent for a small steamship line which in those days linked up Venezuela and Trinidad with the smaller islands, but he couldn't make much out of that. He must have a private income, people decided, but they never decided why he had chosen to settle in a place he didn't like and to marry a coloured woman. Though a decent, respectable, nicely educated coloured woman, mind you.

Mrs Sawyer must have been very pretty once but, what with one thing and another, that was in days gone by.

When Mr Sawyer was drunk – this often happened – he used to be very rude to her. She never answered him.

'Look at the nigger showing off,' he would say; and she would smile as if she knew she ought to see the joke but couldn't. 'You damned, long-eyed, gloomy half-caste, you

don't smell right,' he would say; and she never answered, not even to whisper, 'You don't smell right to me, either.'

The story went that once they had ventured to give a dinner party and that when the servant, Mildred, was bringing in coffee, he had pulled Mrs Sawyer's hair. 'Not a wig, you see,' he bawled. Even then, if you can believe it, Mrs Sawyer had laughed and tried to pretend that it was all part of the joke, this mysterious, obscure, sacred English joke.

But Mildred told the other servants in the town that her eyes had gone wicked, like a souciant's eyes, and that afterwards she had picked up some of the hair he pulled out and put it in an envelope, and that Mr Sawyer ought to look out (hair is obeah as well as hands).

Of course, Mrs Sawyer had her compensations. They lived in a very pleasant house in Hill Street. The garden was large and they had a fine mango tree, which bore prolifically. The fruit was small, round, very sweet and juicy – a lovely, red-and-yellow colour when it was ripe. Perhaps it was one of the compensations, I used to think.

Mr Sawyer built a room on to the back of this house. It was unpainted inside and the wood smelt very sweet. Bookshelves lined the walls. Every time the Royal Mail steamer came in it brought a package for him, and gradually the empty shelves filled.

Once I went there with Eddie to borrow *The Arabian Nights*. That was on a Saturday afternoon, one of those hot, still afternoons when you felt that everything had gone to sleep, even the water in the gutters. But Mrs Sawyer was not asleep. She put her head in at the door and looked at us, and I knew that she hated the room and hated the books.

It was Eddie with the pale blue eyes and straw-coloured hair – the living image of his father, though often as silent as his mother – who first infected me with doubts about 'home', meaning England. He would be so quiet when others who had never seen it – none of us had ever

seen it – were talking about its delights, gesticulating freely as we talked – London, the beautiful, rosy-cheeked ladies, the theatres, the shops, the fog, the blazing coal fires in winter, the exotic food (whitebait eaten to the sound of violins), strawberries and cream – the word 'strawberries' always spoken with a guttural and throaty sound which we imagined to be the proper English pronunciation.

'I don't like strawberries,' Eddie said on one occasion. 'You *don't like* strawberries?'

'No, and I don't like daffodils either. Dad's always going on about them. He says they lick the flowers here into a cocked hat and I bet that's a lie.'

We were all too shocked to say, 'You don't know a thing about it.' We were so shocked that nobody spoke to him for the rest of the day. But I for one admired him. I also was tired of learning and reciting poems in praise of daffodils, and my relations with the few 'real' English boys and girls I had met were awkward. I had discovered that if I called myself English they would snub me haughtily: 'You're not English; you're a horrid colonial.' 'Well, I don't much want to be English,' I would say. 'It's much more fun to be French or Spanish or something like that – and, as a matter of fact, I am a bit.' Then I was too killingly funny, quite ridiculous. Not only a horrid colonial, but also ridiculous. Heads I win, tails you lose – that was the English. I had thought about all this, and thought hard, but I had never dared to tell anybody what I thought and I realized that Eddie had been very bold.

But he was bold, and stronger than you would think. For one thing, he never felt the heat; some coldness in his fair skin resisted it. He didn't burn red or brown, he didn't freckle much.

Hot days seemed to make him feel especially energetic. 'Now we'll run twice round the lawn and then you can pretend you're dying of thirst in the desert and that I'm an Arab chieftain bringing you water.'

'You must drink slowly,' he would say, 'for if you're very thirsty and you drink quickly you die.'

So I learnt the voluptuousness of drinking slowly when you are very thirsty – small mouthful by small mouthful, until the glass of pink, iced Coca-Cola was empty.

Just after my twelfth birthday Mr Sawyer died suddenly, and as Eddie's special friend I went to the funeral, wearing a new white dress. My straight hair was damped with sugar and water the night before and plaited into tight little plaits, so that it should be fluffy for the occasion.

When it was all over everybody said how nice Mrs Sawyer had looked, walking like a queen behind the coffin and crying her eyeballs out at the right moment, and wasn't Eddie a funny boy? He hadn't cried at all.

After this Eddie and I took possession of the room with the books. No one else ever entered it, except Mildred to sweep and dust in the mornings, and gradually the ghost of Mr Sawyer pulling Mrs Sawyer's hair faded, though this took a little time. The blinds were always halfway down and going in out of the sun was like stepping into a pool of brown-green water. It was empty except for the bookshelves, a desk with a green baize top and a wicker rocking-chair.

'My room,' Eddie called it. 'My books,' he would say, 'my books.'

I don't know how long this lasted. I don't know whether it was weeks after Mr Sawyer's death or months after, that I see myself and Eddie in the room. But there we are and there, unexpectedly, are Mrs Sawyer and Mildred. Mrs Sawyer's mouth tight, her eyes pleased. She is pulling all the books out of the shelves and piling them into two heaps. The big, fat glossy ones – the good-looking ones, Mildred explains in a whisper – lie in one heap. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *British Flowers, Birds and Beasts*, various histories, books with maps, Froude's *English in the West Indies* and so on – they are going to be

sold. The unimportant books, with paper covers or damaged covers or torn pages, lie in another heap. They are going to be burnt – yes, burnt.

Mildred's expression was extraordinary as she said that – half hugely delighted, half shocked, even frightened. And as for Mrs Sawyer – well, I knew bad temper (I had often seen it), I knew rage, but this was hate. I recognized the difference at once and stared at her curiously. I edged closer to her so that I could see the titles of the books she was handling.

It was the poetry shelf. *Poems*, Lord Byron, *Poetical Works*, Milton, and so on. Vlung, vlung, vlung – all thrown into the heap that were to be sold. But a book by Christina Rossetti, though also bound in leather, went into the heap that was to be burnt, and by a flicker in Mrs Sawyer's eyes I knew that worse than men who wrote books were women who wrote books – infinitely worse. Men could be mercifully shot; women must be tortured.

Mrs Sawyer did not seem to notice that we were there, but she was breathing free and easy and her hands had got the rhythm of tearing and pitching. She looked beautiful, too – beautiful as the sky outside which was a very dark blue, or the mango tree, long sprays of brown and gold.

When Eddie said 'No', she did not even glance at him.

'No,' he said again in a high voice. 'Not that one. I was reading that one.'

She laughed and he rushed at her, his eyes starting out of his head, shrieking, 'Now I've got to hate you too. Now I hate you too.'

He snatched the book out of her hand and gave her a violent push. She fell into the rocking-chair.

Well, I wasn't going to be left out of all this, so I grabbed a book from the condemned pile and dived under Mildred's outstretched arm.

Then we were both in the garden. We ran along the path, bordered with crotons. We pelted down the path,

though they did not follow us and we could hear Mildred laughing – kyah, kyah, kyah, kyah. As I ran I put the book I had taken into the loose front of my brown holland dress. It felt warm and alive.

When we got into the street we walked sedately, for we feared the black children's ridicule. I felt very happy, because I had saved this book and it was my book and I would read it from the beginning to the triumphant words 'The End'. But I was uneasy when I thought of Mrs Sawyer.

'What will she do?' I said.

'Nothing,' Eddie said. 'Not to me.'

He was white as a ghost in his sailor suit, a blue-white even in the setting sun, and his father's sneer was clamped on his face.

'But she'll tell your mother all sorts of lies about you,' he said. 'She's an awful liar. She can't make up a story to save her life, but she makes up lies about people all right.'

'My mother won't take any notice of her,' I said. 'Though I was not at all sure.'

'Why not? Because she's . . . because she isn't white?'

Well, I knew the answer to that one. Whenever the subject was brought up – people's relations and whether they had a drop of coloured blood or whether they hadn't – my father would grow impatient and interrupt. 'Who's white?' he would say. 'Damned few.'

So I said, 'Who's white? Damned few.'

'You can go to the devil,' Eddie said. 'She's prettier than your mother. When she's asleep her mouth smiles and she has your curling eyelashes and quantities and quantities and *quantities* of hair.'

'Yes,' I said truthfully. 'She's prettier than my mother.'

It was a red sunset that evening, a huge, sad, frightening sunset.

'Look, let's go back,' I said. 'If you're sure she won't be vexed with you, let's go back. It'll be dark soon.'

At his gate he asked me not to go. 'Don't go yet, don't go yet.'

We sat under the mango tree and I was holding his hand when he began to cry. Drops fell on my hand like the water from the dripstone in the filter in our yard. Then I began to cry too and when I felt my own tears on my hand I thought, 'Now perhaps we're married.'

'Yes, certainly, now we're married,' I thought. But I didn't say anything. I didn't say a thing until I was sure he had stopped. Then I asked, 'What's your book?'

'It's *Kim*,' he said. 'But it got torn. It starts at page twenty now. What's the one you took?'

'I don't know, it's too dark to see,' I said.

When I got home I rushed into my bedroom and locked the door because I knew that this book was the most important thing that had ever happened to me and I did not want anybody to be there when I looked at it.

But I was very disappointed, because it was in French and seemed dull. *Fort Comme La Mort*, it was called. . . .