

# HANDS

BY MARY J. ELMENDORF

ON WINTER nights  
Old Lena sits in the kitchen  
Of the stone farm-house  
Alone with Lottie, her middle-aged daughter.

Old Lena is thin. Her scant hair is wispy.  
Her beak is eczematous like a turkey's wattles.  
Her hands are cold and bony.  
They open and shut like cat-paws  
As she crouches over the hot range,  
Mumbling to herself.

The shades are drawn,  
Shutting out the loneliness of the muddy lane  
And the dying of the fields,  
But not the occasional "Whoo-o-o!" of an owl  
In the spruce tree back of the house  
Hard by the well,  
Boarded up since Amos Grubb fell in.

On the covered stairway there is a small window  
Giving on the back corner-lot.  
It has no shade.  
Old Lena hates that window.  
Even on the thickest night  
As she stumbles past it upstairs to bed  
She sees the well.

(Strange how Lottie misses Amos!  
If she had a dog  
It might help her to forget.)

Sometimes when the wind fumbles at the door  
With sleety claws, or a wet bough  
Crunches against the window-pane,  
Old Lena cackles toothlessly:  
"Dirt's awful crumbly . . .  
He was too old for you, Lottie girl—  
Meaner'n a weasel.  
The devil's got good company now."  
And her hands open and shut like cat-paws.

It wouldn't be so hard for her to undress  
If it were not for her hands.  
What stiff things they are—  
How undetachable—  
As clinging and clumsy as thoughts mired in idiocy.

When old Lena closes her eyes on her pillow  
Amos peeps under the lids.  
(He was always a prying old fool.  
What a hairy chest he had!  
How hard he worked that last day—long after dusk—  
Hurrying to finish the well!  
How tired his back looked as he bent over the edge!)

It is then she feels most  
The aliveness of her hands . . .  
Stealthily, deliberately, the fingers curling like snakes,  
They lift and creep forward . . . farther . . . still farther . . .  
Then suddenly they push hard . . .  
And Amos is gone.

Shuddering, gibbering, old Lena pulls the bedclothes  
Up over her head. .

# LOWELL

BY KARL SCHRIFTGIESSER

LOWELL, in Massachusetts, is the best example of what has happened to New England. Its history is the history of American industrialism. Ugly red-brick buildings line the long miles of its dreary and characterless streets. The shambling wooden houses of its Greek quarter, through the doors and windows of which dark men may be seen drinking and playing cards, spread a foreign odor over the depressing town, though it bears the name of one of the Bay State's proudest families. A statue of William Henry, Cardinal O'Connell, casts its gaze down upon an Irish section which is as tough as South Boston or Charlestown. There are plenty of Poles, too, and Lithuanians are not hard to find. But one looks in vain for a New England face, a face with the stern qualities of Mr. Coolidge's, or the upright virtue of Attorney General John Garibaldi Sargent's, or the benign reserve of Ex-Senator William M. Butler's—faces that all go well with the name of Lowell. Perhaps at Page's, the only half-way decent eating-house in the place, they may be observed; if so, they are the faces of stray bankers, merchants, textile managers, or newspaper editors. You will never see an actual Lowell there, or a Lawrence, or an Appleton, or a Cabot. God, the other member of this circle of New England deities, you will not find there either. He is having lunch in Boston at the Union Club, with His associates and friends, the Lowells, the Lawrences, the Appletons and the Cabots.

If you should be admitted by the fussy little doorman to the sacred and stupid rooms of that stuffy club half-way up Park

street at the hour when these Brahmins are gazing in well-fed contentment across the melancholy wastes of Boston Common, you would hear but little talk of Lowell, though undoubtedly a third of the men sitting around, puffing pipes, and trying to look—and talk—very English, would cherish in their breasts a great respect for that dirty town upon the Merrimac. If the money which gains for such men the obeisance of the club doorman did not really come from Lowell, they probably wish that it had, and they all mention with considerate deference anyone who is in any monetary way connected with it. They love Lowell—for it has made money for their kind, and enabled many worthy Bostonians to live in Beacon street or the correct part of Commonwealth avenue. Many a name respected in State street and mentioned with reverence by the *Transcript* is the name of an absentee landlord of that stronghold which is the living picture of what has happened to New England.

Lowell, today, is not an interesting place. It is respectable, foreign, and dull. It is able to support a newspaper which, editorially at least, continues to believe that the late war is still going on, and sees German spies behind every telegraph pole. There are some nice houses in the "right" part of the city, away from the mills. There is one church of grey stone which doesn't give one eye-strain. The business section is still the overgrown country town of a century ago, with its stores looking comfortable and commonplace and its movie palaces not too garish. The spy-fearing newspaper is very prosperous and