

GATE-CRASHERS

BY JOHN ARMSTRONG

SEVEN P.M. An extremely exclusive racket was scheduled for the evening, and the head-waiter, surrounded by his staff of waiters and ushers, was cautioning them about their conduct.

In this hotel a racket was considered exclusive when the guests did not swipe each other's booze, beat the waiters out of their tips, or remove food, napkins, knives and forks from the dinner-tables.

The head-waiter, seated rigidly in the midst of his staff, was aloof and formidable. Standing, he was tall, wiry, and slightly bow-legged—a deformation due to the fact that he spent two-thirds of his life on his feet. Tonight, instead of his customary unpressed, food-splashed dinner-coat, he had donned the almost obsolete evening dress, for the racket, as I have said, was to be an exclusive one.

"Diss," he began severely, "iss a bick pahty, und effery man muss be on de chob. Nobody drings any booze, nobody takes any tips, und de gate-crashers muss not come in. Unnerstan' dot!" he emphasized crisply. "Diss pahty iss egsclusive; it iss nod a cheap booze-pahty. De guests vill all be ladies und shentlemen. It iss for charity, und de tickets cost maybe twenty-five dollars. Nobody vhat don't belong in de pahty geds in. You waiters und ushers muss vatch dot. If any vaiteer leds any gate-crashers come in, he goes home und shtays dere. I fire him on de spot . . . quick," he added grimly. "A lot uf Broadvay bums vill try to crash tonight. Dey muss nod," he repeated with powerful emphasis, "come in!"

The head-waiter paused and consulted a sheet of paper before him. Indicated on it

were the various stations for the waiters and ushers.

"Muller," he went on, "you go by de boxes in de first tier uf de ballroom. Nobody goes in de boxes, unless dey haff a ticket. Don't moof from vhere I put you. No runnin' around to ged de tips; you hear dot, you udder waiters und ushers! Shultz, you go by de ventilating shaft in de basemend. No crashers muss come in de shaft. A special boliceman vill be vid you. Vatch de boliceman, too. He might be a crasher hisself. Krause, you go by de end-trance on de second floor. Hermann, you go by de door vhere de talent comes into de dressing-rooms. Kuntze, you go by de vash-room downstairs. Vatch de vindows comin' in from de street. A special boliceman vill be vid you, too."

The head-waiter abruptly focused his gaze on a short, squat, very greasy English waiter.

"Herbert, you go by de freight elevator in de basemend. Dot's a bad place for crashers. Ride de elevator up und down." The Englishman moved off. "Bradley und Sherman,—you two men shtay in de front lobby. Dot's a bad place for crashers, too. Vatch de endtrances to de ballroom."

Bradley, a ballroom usher, and Sherman, a waiter, pulled on their gloves and strolled into the front lobby. The head-waiter continued to call out the various stations. Every entrance that a gate-crasher might utilize was provided for. Naturally, the most reliable attendants were placed where the greatest pressure from crashers was likely to be felt—the doors through which the talent would come into the ballroom, the entrances for committeemen, the ser-

vice entrances and little-known passageways. When all the stations were given out, the head-waiter reported to the *maître d'hôtel* that not a gate-crasher would be seen in the ballroom during the racket.

II

Ten P.M. Bradley, a very nervous, intensely active young man, looked like an aspiring pugilist. He had more than once outwitted the head-waiter on a big racket, and he was obviously determined to do so again this evening. He was shrewd, quick of wits and full of knowledge of Broadway and its ways.

Sherman, somewhat rougher and wholly dense compared to Bradley, was new to the lobby racket; but he was willing to pick up his cues from his associate, and so he watched Bradley closely. He was stationed at the far end of the lobby, immediately before the main entrance to the ballroom. In a little while he caught Bradley's signal and moved toward him leisurely.

"Now lissen," Bradley began in a low voice, "the racket is this: you shoot the crashers to me from your end, and I'll pick 'em up and send 'em to the third floor on the lobby elevator. Then they go back to the freight elevator and Herbert, the limey waiter, will grab 'em and crash 'em into the ballroom."

"What about the bum runnin' the elevator?" Sherman asked. "Is he O.K.?"

"Yeah, I think so. Herbert and me had a talk with him, anyway. It'll have to be a four-way split. We gotta work hard and fast. Beat it for a second," the alert Bradley abruptly warned. "The head-waiter's out lookin' us over."

Sherman assumed an air of complete nonchalance, and as the head-waiter hurried up to him he yawned.

"Didn't I say don't moof from de station?" the head-waiter demanded fiercely.

"I just got me a new pair o' white gloves from Bradley, sir."

"Yah, yah, always de same egscuses! You go back by de station now. If I see you

moof around again, I fire you right away."

The head-waiter disappeared from the lobby and Sherman and Bradley resumed their consultation.

"We crash nobody for nothin' less'n five smackers," Bradley said. "We'll hit these suckers for all they'll stand. It's gonna be tough gettin' 'em through. Don't take no drunks or college boys, and don't send nobody to me what ain't in a Tuxedo. Crashers in everyday clothes 'll stick out in such a racket."

"Yeah, I know that," Sherman assured him. "They gotta check their hats and coats first."

"And lissen, kid, I forgot to tell you that they's another waiter holdin' down the service door where we let 'em into the ballroom. That'll make it a five-way split. But this bozo's dumb; he'll take a couple of berries, and think he's gettin' a lot of dough."

"Jeez, you got the whole staff in on the split! What about the house dicks and the special cops? You got them in, too?"

"Them birds'll take care of themselves. I never yet seen a special cop on a racket who wasn't the biggest thief of all of 'em. And don't let the house dicks bluff you. They get theirs. Remember: tell all the suckers it's five smacks cash. They'll stand for that on a big racket like this."

III

Twelve-thirty A.M. The racket had really begun. The massive ballroom was cluttered with women in violently colored evening gowns, and men in dinner-coats. They all seemed painfully conscious of the fact that they were at an extremely exclusive racket in a large metropolitan hotel.

Three orchestras were situated in as many corners of the room; they periodically disgorged a frantic, gasping jazz. Celebrities of every description streamed in. Some of them were paid to attend the racket, for their presence would draw the morons. Others, who were perhaps searching for free meals and an opportunity to kill time,

condescended to appear for nothing. A buffet supper is always served the talent actively performing during a racket, and this can always be taken advantage of, even though the committeemen have counted the chicken sandwiches and carefully apportioned the lobster salad.

A wise-cracking, smirking professional gate-crasher, who had entered with the Mayor's party, strolled around alone. He was nationally known for his skill in crashing rackets, no matter how exclusive.

People yelled at one another. Three waiters bellowed at the top of their voices, indicating the coat-rooms. "Gents this way, ladies downstairs!" they called. The heat was terrific.

At the far end of the ballroom, a stage emerged from the floor and a strident night-club hostess of considerable Broadway prestige proceeded to offer the first of a long succession of performances, to be concluded with a breakfast show. She was accompanied by a troop of half-naked chorus girls. The nakedness was greedily absorbed by the souses. Incidentally, while these chorus girls were removing their street clothing and donning their fig leaves within make-shift dressing-rooms, certain guests of the racket, under the guidance of attendants, had paid several dollars apiece for the privilege of staring at them through apertures known only to the initiated.

The head-waiter and a dozen assistants dashed around the ballroom frantically. A waiter at the main gate, taking tickets, was accused of withholding a ticket, passing it to a confederate and having him sell it. He was instantly discharged, and two committeemen assumed control of the entrance. Another committeeman proceeded to lecture the head-waiter.

"Your men can't be trusted," he said angrily. "Our contract with the hotel says we won't have any gate-crashers. Don't you understand that this is an exclusive party, and we don't want all of Broadway running in here? How did Tiger Lewis get in?"

The head-waiter stamped about in a

frenzy. "He come in vid de Mayor's pahty, sir. You can't keep dot man oud. And vhen people go oud," he added apologetically, "dey sometimes sell de return checks, or giff dem away."

"Hereafter," the committee man announced heavily, "we shall use the rubber stamp instead of a return check. I didn't think of that before. Women will be stamped on the arm, and men on the leg. We'll not give out any more return checks. The bums must be kept out."

"Yah, yah. Goot," said the head-waiter with relief. "Dot is yooost de thing."

The head-waiter knew that it was impossible to keep crashers out. He nevertheless religiously watched every avenue of approach, for the committeemen plainly suspected that he collaborated with the invaders. Dozens of spurious newspaper reporters were turned away. Women who represented themselves to be fashion experts and society editors were refused admission. And even the extra cigarette girl who paraded the ballroom was really a crasher. She held her job for the night and was seen no more.

The head-waiter scanned the hat-stand attendants, and those seen loitering around the ballroom were ordered to remove their uniforms and get out of the hotel. It was difficult for a crasher to parade as a waiter, but the attendants in the wash-rooms displayed superfluous assistants, who suddenly disappeared and lost themselves in the crowd of guests. Crashers disguised as special policemen were common.

IV

One-thirty A.M. Bradley was approached by a young man clad in a shiny Tuxedo. The man may have been a pickpocket, a diamond thief, or merely an art student in search of a late party. He had tried to crash the main entrance to the ballroom, but was repulsed twice, for vigilance at the gate had been redoubled since the waiter was removed for trying to sell a ticket. Finally Sherman sent him to Bradley.

"I got to get into the ballroom. Do anything for me?" he asked.

Bradley knew that he was being watched by no less than four house detectives, several special policemen, and an assistant manager attached to the front of the hotel. Consequently, he lowered his voice.

"O.K., brother," he said. "Don't flash any dough in the lobby. First, go up to the ninth floor, check your hat and coat at another racket there, and then come back to me. It's five smacks cash, and don't pay me in the lobby."

He then turned away from the young man. Nonchalance and an air of innocence are necessary in the gate-crashing business. Bradley knew that it would be fatal to take any money in the lobby. Someone would certainly see him. But the men on the freight elevator would take it. And there, Bradley decided with a sigh, lay another delicate problem.

When the young man returned minus his hat and coat, Bradley instructed him *sotto voce* to take the main elevator to the third floor, move back to the service lift, ring thrice and wait.

Another man then approached, and the process of crashing was repeated. An intoxicated man came next, flourishing a bank-note. Bradley turned from him in annoyance. Drunks were dangerous.

Suddenly Sherman, excited and perspiring, crossed the lobby.

"Did you get them three I sent over?" he demanded.

"Yeah, I got 'em. I told you to lay off the souses, didn't I? They make trouble."

"I only sent one, and I thought he'd behave. It's tough as hell where I am. They's a committeeman watchin' every move I make, and the head-waiter comes out every minute. And them special cops are tryin' to grab all our customers. What kin you do with guys like them? Grabbin' crashers right out from under my nose."

"Put a committeeman wise to 'em, kid. That'll stop them babies."

"Say, how about them bums on the freight elevator?" Sherman was eternally

suspicious of the activities of their confederates in the rear. "We ought to check up on them tramps, Bradley. We got the toughest spot—out here in the lobby, where everybody kin see us."

"Yeah, I been watchin' that," Bradley replied, his own suspicions gaining pace. "I'll duck back and see what's happenin' to the dough. I sent 'em back nineteen crashers, and if they don't show me ninety-five smackers, I want to know why. If the head-waiter asks for me, tell him I went to the kitchen to grab me a cup of coffee."

Bradley then disappeared through a service entrance, and, by way of the kitchens, moved to the basement landing of the freight elevator. He knew that it was dangerous to thus abandon his station, but he felt the necessity of checking up on the intake. It looked like a profitable night and morning. By five o'clock several hundred dollars ought to be accumulated.

When the elevator arrived in the basement, he encountered Herbert, the English waiter, now coatless and perspiring vigorously. The elevator operator with him was lame and squint-eyed.

"Jump in," Herbert instructed Bradley. "They's a ring on the third floor."

When Bradley was aboard, the elevator moved aloft.

"How much you birds got now?"

"How much've we got, Joe? How many did we crash?" The English waiter appraised his companion speculatively.

"I don't know. I forgot," the elevator operator replied briefly.

When the elevator arrived at the third floor, a man and a woman got aboard.

"We were told to come up here and ring three times," the man said.

"Yeah, you got the right place all right," Herbert replied. "Ten bucks, please. Five apiece."

The man hesitated. "In the lobby they told us it would only be three dollars a piece."

"Who told you that?" Bradley demanded. "Where do you get that stuff? It's five smacks."

The man was plainly a cheap skate. Sherman, who must have sent them up, had certainly told him the price. Or could it be that the special policemen were crashing them for three dollars? The elevator suddenly halted between floors, and Herbert and Bradley scowled at the couple.

"Five bucks a piece," Herbert repeated, sharply. "This is a refined racket, and if we get caught crashin' you we lose our jobs. Take it or leave it," he added haughtily. "Do you want us to haul you back to the third floor? We can't fool around all night."

Despite the waiter's insolence, the pair were determined to enter the ballroom. The woman, a hard-boiled modern of the sort frequenting hotel lobbies in search of free meals from suckers, indicated her impatience with the man's delay. She was probably thinking of the motion picture celebrities with whom she would come into contact in the ballroom. The man meekly withdrew a wallet and slid out a new ten-dollar note. The elevator resumed its course and halted at a service entrance to the ballroom.

"Is it all clear, Dopey?" Herbert asked the waiter who moped at the entrance. He nodded, and the couple moved from the elevator and were guided to a door that led into the ballroom.

"See what we have to put up with," Herbert said to Bradley. "All of 'em act that way. They don't wanta come across with five. Sometimes we have to take two and three. This bozo happened to fall for the bluff."

Bradley's suspicions soared now.

"We'll see you later, Dopey," Herbert told the waiter at the ballroom entrance. "You'll get yours when the racket's over."

"Oh, dot's all right," the harmless waiter replied. Nothing had been explained to him; he was merely promised five dollars for doing what he was told. He was new on the job.

"How much you birds got now?" Bradley demanded, when the elevator moved aloft and again halted between floors. He

did not sanction the methods of these two. Who could say whether a crasher paid five or three dollars?

"Ninety-one smacks," Herbert said, after he had counted the roll of bills he withdrew from his pocket. "And business is just gettin' hot. Say, Bradley, you oughta be out in the lobby roundin' up the suckers. After four o'clock hardly nobody'll wanta crash."

"Yeah, I know that." Bradley eyed the bills greedily. "You oughta have a hunnerd and five smacks. I sent up nineteen people, and these two makes twenty-one——"

"Now, wait a minute, Jack," Herbert interrupted. "Didn't I tell you that sometimes we had to take two and three? We didn't get five from all of 'em."

"Hell, no," the elevator operator added. "We had to take what we could get outen 'em."

"That's a lotta bunk," Bradley scoffed. "I ain't no sucker."

"Whatta ye mean, bunk?" Herbert demanded. "That's all the dough we got. Whatta ye squawkin' about? We got the dirtiest end of the racket, ain't we? We have to haul booze and food, duck the head-waiter and push crashers through too."

"And I have to stand out in the lobby, where everybody kin see me. You birds," Bradley repeated firmly, "ought to have a hunnerd and five smacks."

"Whatta ye mean we *ought* to?" The English waiter was aroused. The indicator on the elevator said that someone was calling from the basement. "You seen the bank-roll, ain't ye? I showed you every damn penny we took in."

"You'll get yours, Bradley," the elevator operator added. "Why don't you behave?" The buzzer whined again, and a voice bellowed up the shaft. "Lay off now, you guys. I got to go to the basement. Keep quiet."

"I make 'em all unnerstan' what the price is," Bradley said in a more peaceable voice.

"Yeah, I know that." Herbert didn't want a quarrel. "But you can't always get five outa them. You got the low-down on the kitty. You'll get yours. Now, stay out in the lobby and shoot 'em back to us as they come in."

Bradley moved to the lobby again, doubt lingering in his mind. Nothing, however, could be done about it. There were too many men in on the split. He really ought to collect in the lobby. But that was impossible.

"They're holdin' out on the split," he told Sherman. "The dirty crooks!"

"I told you to watch that, didn't I? They got plenty of chances to slip over a fast one. Say, the head-waiter wants to see you." As usual, Sherman was excited.

"Where is he?"

"In the ballroom somewhere and sore as hell. He bawled me out twice."

"What'd you pick up while I was gone?" Bradley appraised Sherman closely.

"Not a lousy dime." Sherman returned his gaze. "I sent up three crashers, though."

Bradley didn't believe him.

He collided with the somewhat frayed head-waiter just beyond the main entrance to the ballroom. There was a fierce light in the dignitary's eyes; his erstwhile stiff shirt was melted.

"Was you lookin' for me, sir?"

"Where you was de last hour?" The head-waiter eyed him closely. He knew exactly what had been going on, but he hadn't actually seen anything.

"I was down in the kitchens gettin' a cup of coffee, sir. I told Sherman where I was."

"Yah, I know all about dot. I come oud and Sherman is gone too. Nobody in de lobby. All gettin' a cup uf coffee." A harsher note appeared in his voice. "Didn't I tell you nod to moof from de station?"

Bradley said nothing.

"Vhen I don't haff a chance to ged a cup uf coffee myself, vhy should you?" The head-waiter attempted to suppress the rage that surged in his tortured carcass. "I haff to do efferything. De committee

come after me aboud de crashers; I haff to vatch you, de special bolicemans, de house detectiffs, de bell boys, und I ged hell from efferybody. I tell you diss, Mr. Usher: if you moof from de station again, I kick you oud uf de hotel like a dawlk. Go back to de lobby now, und keep de crashers oud, und don't let 'em in."

"Bologney!" the usher muttered as he moved toward the lobby. "He must think I'm an iron deer on a lawn."

V

Three-thirty A.M. The racket in the ballroom had reached a fierce tempo. The ladies and gentlemen were all well squiffed. Two enormous carts containing dozens of empty bottles stood in the rear of the room, waiting to be removed. They had been filled with empties once before. A soused guest—perhaps a crasher—was draining the dregs from the bottles, indifferent to the angry stares of the waiters.

An emotional abandon prevailed in the sticky ballroom. The top tier was patrolled by a captain of waiters; several couples, detected in somewhat excessive necking, were chased from this dark area. Ordered to leave, they displayed no shame; rather, they cursed the captain of waiters violently, and tossed glasses at him.

A stream of stage and screen celebrities performed before the multitude. An intoxicated man moved among the guests, imploring various celebrities to autograph his shirt front. Hordes of night-club patrons had begun to arrive. Some of them had tickets and were admitted at once; others relied on the attendants to crash them. Bradley was feverishly busy pushing crashers through. The chief head-waiter had ordered that hats and coats of strangers should not be checked at other parties still operating in the hotel. Hearing of this, Bradley instructed the customers he crashed to check at a Childs restaurant nearby, and then return.

One of the committee suddenly isolated a young man and accused him of being a

crasher. The head-waiter, seeking to gain the committeeman's favor, questioned the young man and he finally confessed that he had got into the ballroom illegitimately.

"You kin shtay, if you tell us who let you in," the head-waiter offered. The committeeman nodded agreement.

The young man, obviously a college student—the inevitable coon-skin coat was actually on his arm—readily agreed to the proposal and guided the head-waiter to Sherman.

"He sold me a return check," he said.

"I thought so," the head-waiter declared triumphantly. "I knew I ged you," he roared at Sherman. "Now, I ged Bradley, too. Who else vas in on de deal?" he asked the student.

The head-waiter indicated Bradley.

"Did you giff him anything?"

"No, this is the man. I paid him three-fifty for a return check."

"You're a damn liar!" Sherman cried. However, he remembered the young man distinctly. "You got the wrong guy. I never seen you before in me life."

But it was futile to remonstrate. Sherman knew that he was dismissed. The guest was always right. While Bradley was back on the freight elevator, Sherman had sold the student a return check he had picked up before the committee resorted to the rubber stamp.

"Oud at vunce!" the head-waiter almost bellowed at Sherman. A small crowd of special policemen, house detectives and potential crashers gathered about the ballroom entrance. "Go home und shtay dere! Ve vant noddings to do mitt peoples like you . . . you loafer! I told you und told you aboud de crashers. Now, go oud before I call a boliceman."

The committeeman seemed very much impressed with the head-waiter's zeal. Sherman glanced at Bradley in the center lobby. Bradley, seeing what had happened, moved from his station, and the head-waiter ordered another man to cover the entrance.

VI

Five-thirty A.M. "Well, Sherman got the gate," Bradley explained to Herbert and the elevator operator "That makes one less in on the split. He crashed a dizzy college boy, fur coat and all. I told him about college boys. It was his own damn fault. We have to hand it to him, though, for not squawkin' on the rest of us. . . . How much you birds got now?"

The men were standing at the elevator landing. Herbert moved into the elevator, extracted from his pocket a roll of bills, and began to count them.

"Two hunnerd and three smacks," he announced shortly.

"How do ye make *that* out?" Bradley asked belligerently. "You ought to have at least two hunnerd and twenty-five smacks. Whatta ye think I am . . . a dope?"

"Jeez, lay off, will ye!" the elevator operator intruded. "You bums gimme a pain. Herbert's right, Bradley. It's the low-down. Look out," he suddenly muttered, "here comes the *maitre d'hôtel*."

Bradley instantly moved from the elevator, and, without looking up, hurried toward the lobby in a direct line. The *maitre d'hôtel*, absorbed in business of his own, hardly glanced at Herbert and the elevator operator as he passed them.

VII

Seven-thirty A.M. Bradley, Herbert and the elevator operator stood before the bar in an all-night speakeasy in the Forties, between Ninth and Tenth avenues.

"I give Dopey, the waiter at the ballroom entrance, ten smacks. Five extra for being so damned dumb," Herbert explained. "Jeez, that was the hottest racket I ever struck."

"That," Bradley interrupted, "makes a hunnerd and ninety-three to split. With the three of us"—he scratched some figures on a sheet of paper—"that makes sixty-four smacks apiece." Bradley knew that it

ought to be more, but he said nothing. A few drinks had straightened out his nerves.

Herbert nodded. "Not so bad, kid; not so bad. I bet the head-waiter's tip won't be much more'n we got tonight, if he gets that much, the big bum!" Herbert moved from the bar, pulled out the bank-roll, and began to split it three ways.

The speakeasy door opened and a familiar voice greeted the trio.

"I kinda thought you birds'd be in here." It was Sherman.

The three groaned in unison.

"Whyn't you go and drown yourself?" Bradley demanded.

"Jeez, we thought you got bounced," the elevator operator added.

"It's a fourway split now," Herbert said, beginning to recount the bank-roll. "What happened, kid? Somebody slip you a fast one?"

"He gimme the works, the bum!" Sherman said. "I just got through tellin' him what I thought about him." A pure fabrication. "I went back, and I says to him: 'You greasy tramp, who the hell do you think you are?', and he kicked me outa the hotel."

"Lissen," Bradley interrupted, "you have to take forty smacks for your end."

He turned to Herbert. "That'll give us three fifty-one smacks apiece. You got somethin' out of that college boy," he told Sherman. "What'd you try to do . . . double-cross us?"

"Aw, forget that stuff," Herbert ordered generously. "He's punished enough. He loses his job, and gets forty smacks. That's fair enough."

He handed Sherman a wad of crumpled one-dollar bills. He likewise handed Bradley and the elevator operator their shares. "Now, drink up on me, you birds," he added, turning to the bar.

"I should think so," said Bradley *sotto voce*. "I wonder how much you held out?"

The four men moved to the bar and ordered drinks.

"Well, here's to the suckers of Broadway," said Herbert, lifting his glass.

"That was a swell racket, though," Bradley put in seriously. "Them was all ladies and gentlemen. I could see that. They knew how to act in a ballroom . . . and I didn't notice so many naked monkeys runnin' around in the lobby durin' the racket."

"They was good people," the elevator operator added decisively. "And I know good people when I see 'em."

PEACH HARVEST

BY CHARLES SAMPSON

THE peach harvest started on the island early in August. About the end of July the growers' association put advertisements in the city papers, and in a day or two pickers came in from all over, and from every kind of job. Some were in the trades, but out on strike; others were mere laborers who had been laid off from simple factory jobs. There were yokel boys from down the State, relishing the ten-hour grind for two dollars a day and board as a vacation from home farm drudgery; and there were loud-mouthed high-school kids from the towns. A few of the hands were oldish fellows with driven looks; they had lost routine jobs or small businesses in the post-war depression, and were eager to do anything to keep out of the almshouses. Then there were tramps, Great Lakes sailors, agricultural students from the State university; chronic down-and-outers, and professional ex-soldiers. A dozen or so of the pickers stayed clan-nishly together in a gang of their own; they were regular followers of the ripening fruit, and later would work into Michigan and then swing down to New York State for the apple and grape harvests.

We were hauled into the orchards on wagons and put to work in the cool of the morning, at six o'clock, two of us to each tree. Our job was to pluck the ripest fruit and fill the half-bushel hemisphere baskets which each of us carried. John Hunderlach, a German grower who acted as gang fore-man during the harvest, was always near with a stack of bushel shipping-baskets to be filled from our smaller ones. When John had a full load we ranged the baskets in rows, ready for the wagons that carried

them to the grading-house. There skilled sorters repacked the fruit according to variety and size, for shipment in iced cars. We were allowed to eat all we wanted, and the only prohibition put upon us was to avoid breaking twigs.

The first day everybody gorged on peaches. I counted all that I ate, and my total was twenty-six. Next day I lost count, for we were working in a small orchard full of Hale peaches, the biggest fruit I had ever seen. There were only twelve or fifteen on each tree, the limbs having been stripped early in the spring to conserve nourishment for the peaches left on the twigs. The Hales were packed only for the fancy grocery trade in nearby cities, being too perishable to withstand long hauls even in refrigerator-cars. After two days in the Hale orchard my stomach felt as though filled with molten metal, and an itchy rash broke out on my skin. I cut down on the eating, devouring only the fruit that was too ripe to pick.

We had lots of time off for dinner at Hunderlach's house, where his perspiring wife and sister-in-law hustled Gargantuan meals from the red-hot kitchen to our plates. They fed us too much fried stuff, but there was plenty of fresh vegetables, cantaloupe, and sliced peaches with real cream to offset the taste of it. And Hunderlach always let us loaf and smoke on the porch afterward until our food settled inside us. Then we went back into the orchard again until six in the evening. After supper there were swims in Lake Erie, off a white sand beach two miles away.

The mainland was six miles off, con-