



Simon and the Thief

By ZONA GALE, *Author of "Miss Lulu Bett," etc.*

Drawings by ERNEST FUHR



TO Simon the valley lay bathed in more than sunshine, revealed more than green. There was an air from elsewhere, and the air was sweet as if from viewless contacts. It was an inner perfume.

From the door of the cottage Simon could look down the path. A near hill, wooded, hid the north. On the south a second growth of oak ventured close and yielded to a flat, green length, less lawn than meadow. Here were the thorn-tree brought from the field of Waterloo and the Scotch thistle from the Edinburgh Castle grounds. Simon could see only these and the stone studio among vines. The rest of his world was green silence and this nameless beauty like fine flowing substance.

"She was to ride over this week," Simon thought, "and this is the day that should bring her."

As he moved along the path, the perfume was heightened; but now there was something more. Abruptly, this exquisite companionship that of late he had known became real again. It had come and gone, been absent for days, and then, when he was about some trivial pursuit, had returned and held him. Not the companionship of any creature or of any thought, but an indefinable companionship as elusive as the perfume; and when it came, his whole being flowered in joy. But not in joy as he had ever known it.

For of old his joys had merely played about him, but this joy held him, drew him up, absorbed him.

At the studio the path turned and gave itself to a wood which had not expected a path or felt the need of a path, but, now that the path was there, courteously subordinated itself. This was not a trail, but was broad and trodden, a very path, magnetized by many feet to an aspect social, companionable.

Now Simon could look beyond the gleaming arch at the old well and to the broken bridge across Blacklocks Force. Still he divined no one riding down the path. "She may come through the upper grove," he thought, and strolled deeper into the green. It was strange that an expectation was using his outer mind while the centers of his consciousness were intent only on this other gracious companionship.

It was now deep summer, and since March this sweetness had been his. In March he had been walking on the bank of a little river. Looking on its still roll and reflecting on its continuity, its hidden source, its hidden destiny, he was beset by a sense of life and of God which had not since left him. He remembered the very moment in which it came, and the soft fire which warmed him. He had remained motionless, his eyes on the silken blue of the flow. In him deepened the understanding that the sweet appearances of

earth have, not less than art, their esoteric meaning. It was a great revelation. He had supposed that all these things were known to him.

Then the companioning. On that day in March he had moved away from the river and had found himself not alone. He could not say that this companionship was merely his new knowledge. It was as if some lovely substance had formed near him and gone with him. It was like his nascent joy in conceiving a picture which he meant to paint, but it was better than that.

He had left his studio in town, his friends, his routine, and in this wild little valley had lived, dreaming and reading life as once he would have hidden himself and dreamed his art. And there had come and gone this gentleness, this friendliness invisible. He gave himself to it now, leaning above the old well where by that strange family which had first inhabited the valley a white arch had been set. The well was long dry, and a slab of stone covered it beneath the arch. Arbor vitæ grew here, and jewels of sun seemed to lie where they fell and never to move. Every aspect of the valley was an aspect of order carried with logic to quietude. It was as if everything were ready.

§ 2

The canter of her horse's hoofs had made no sound on the sand of the road. She had ridden in at the gate, and her horse was stepping delicately across the lawn that was like a meadow when she saw Simon, his shoulder against the white arch. She gave her horse to the green and went down the path.

"Want to see me?" she said.

"Andrea!" His voice showed his joy.

She was glad of his tone. She had been uncertain of her welcome, but his voice rang, and his face shone, and he held out his hands. She took them and murmured:

"You said I was not to come."

"I'm glad you came."

"Then I wish I had come before."

"So do I," he said, and drew her up the path. "We'll lunch here, outside the door. I'm expecting wild strawberries."

They sat outside the door, and old Mrs. West brought the dishes of her simple skill. But she was in intense excitement, which broke through to unwonted speech.

"Hear about the thief?" she demanded.

Upon Simon's thought and mood the word struck like a rock.

"They're huntin' him," Mrs. West went on. "The milk-boy says they're comin' this way."

Simon regarded her.

"Ah," he murmured. "But let us hope otherwise."

She would have argued with him about this hope, since her excitements appeared but rarely. But she had another anxiety. She shaded her eyes and looked down the path.

"Eva should be coming with the strawberries," she said. "I never made a pie to-day."

"Ask her to join us for some berries as soon as she comes," Simon begged, and to Andrea's look explained: "Eva Orwood, of a remote branch of the family—and delicious."

"Eva should be coming with the berries. I never made a pie to-day," Mrs. West repeated, with an unconquerable manner of contribution.

This woman was caretaker at the

cottage where fifty years before the strange family, the Orwoods, had built their home in the glen. She had seen the Orwoods, she told you of them: the artist brother whose portraits of the family hung in the studio down the slope; the younger brother who had tasted a wild herb in the woods and had died there, the little sister who had loved a faun and a peacock here in the Wisconsin wilderness. Mrs. West talked of them now to the neglect of her thief, and returned, still talking, to her cottage.

Simon had watched Andrea as she listened. Andrea's silences came like lovely shadows. Her thought or the thought of another would take her visibly as smoke will cloud a mirror. In the racial rhythm from stolidity to the emotional and on to the inexpression of self-control she had gone still further, and now her face mirrored all things, like quiet water, and yet, like water, remained quiet. Physically lovely, delicately bred, intellectually trained beyond the rules and even faintly psychic, she seemed at the high moment of the race, of this race.

She said:

"Simon, I have wanted to see you. Observe, it is you who have kept away from me for three months, not I from you."

"Was kept away," he corrected gravely.

"That may be. All I know is that one night in March you disappeared. Your notes, of course you know, have been far from confiding."

"I know," he said. "I'm sorry."

She flushed.

"We can't drive each other," she continued. "I don't dream, Simon, of getting inside what's happened to you. Don't think that I came for that."

He was silent, and his very silence seemed to be doing her some violence.

"You have had some great spiritual experience," she said abruptly. "This is what I must know: can I share it? Is it in me to share it?"

It was this that he had been asking himself, whether down all the ways of the spirit's growth, where there is room for only one, this beloved woman's way lay within hailing distance of his own.

"Andrea," he said, "I don't know. Indeed I don't know. But if we love each other—"

"I think," she said, "that this may be beyond love."

"Beyond love?" He looked at her with attention, with excitement.

"We might love each other nobly," she said, "and yet hold each other back."

"You think that love is n't all?"

"I know that love is n't all."

"Then if love is n't all, what is all?"

"For example," she said, "this that has happened to you in these three months."

He looked down the valley. Noon had come. The high, delicate blue had withdrawn. The green had advanced in a wash of strong gold. Here beauty that heals and feeds had ceased its elementary offices and moved to high ministries through pure being. To Simon the light spoke free—light within light, "Light which lighteth light." Ever since that night in March he had seen light as substance, as a mode of life. He knew that his eye, the artist's eye, had never looked on light as he was able to see it in these recent days.

"Simon," she said, "I don't believe I can share it with you—and I believe you know that I cannot."

He had wondered sometimes just how, when the time came, he should try to tell her what these months had done. Now that the time had come, he felt dumb and tired. He heard himself speaking:

"Convinced that men and women, save in rare instances, have never touched the reality of life, I am convinced that *the emotions and the mentality are only the surface of our powers.*"

"Ah," she said, "then it is the psychic. I can at least follow you there."

"No," he said, "it is not the psychic. That is only the sign of it, like some little miracle. No, there are levels of perception which we do not reach; but we can break through to them. The artist does it for form and color; he sees inside form and color. You expect him to do so. The musician does it in harmony; the poet does it—if he does. But all these give only the signs, the little miracles. I am speaking now not only of one who has the vision for creative art, but of the one who has creative vision toward life, toward pure being. He lives it; he is it."

"The saint," she said.

Obscurely, this irritated him.

"Don't use tickets! How can I tell what you mean? Any one can say 'saint.' No, I mean the artist—in ethics, say; but not as we know ethics, either. Not that at all, but far more than that. It's an inner contact with pure truth; it's within, you see. It's life esoteric—" He stopped, at a loss.

"At least," she said, "I can see that it has nothing to do with love, as I said."

"It has everything to do with love," he held, "but not with love as people have known love."

Mrs. West set down two blue bowls of strawberries.

"And now ask Eva to join us," Simon begged in manifest relief.

Eva came round the house by the old Orwood sun-dial whose inscription, worn by weather, no one could read. The dial was so dumb and Eva seemed so obvious!

"Did you want me?" she demanded. All the delicacy that she knew was in that past tense, in those lifted eyebrows.

"Sit down," Simon begged, "and tell us where you found such berries."

§ 3

The two women were so unlike that Eva appeared out of drawing, sketched in at another scale. One saw it as she took awkwardly the chair which Simon placed for her and as she instantly lifted a fork. Eva was pink, rounded, tense, quick—and curved her little finger. Simon watched her, jealously. He wished her to produce all the pretty mannerisms which charmed him, that fashion of smiling and turning away her head, of dimpling when she did not smile. And he wanted her to bring forth for Andrea all her unfledged plans, her hope to nurse, to care for some one who needed her; and that she should, with her beautiful shyness, tell of the fifty dollars which she had saved toward entering her training. Of that fifty dollars she talked with shining eyes, and with tears in them, too.

But now something else claimed her.

"That thief—" she said, "I heard 'em say he's on the Glen road; yes, sir. I heard 'em say he's hiding round here somewhere; yes, sir."

At length and with difficulty Simon

actually did center his attention on this thief.

"Who may he be, Eva?" he inquired, "this thief? Why is our peace messed up with him this morning?"

In her determination to explain Eva's swallow was evident.

"It 's a gentleman that stole," she said. "He 's a stranger; he come in town yesterday. And last night they say he took some money out of the hotel desk and lit into the woods."

"And they 've followed him?"

"Oh, yes, sir; a long way. They 've sent off now for bloody hounds."

"Good heavens—"

"Oh, yes, they have." She looked up at the oak grove, her eyebrows pensive. "The poor gentleman!"

Andrea was amused.

"But 'poor'?" she repeated. "You said that he stole!"

"Yes; it 's too bad," said Eva.

Simon was annoyed. Eva was not showing to advantage to Andrea those childish graces, that quaint phrasing, those bits in character. Simon was bored by the intrusion of this gentleman bandit.

"Thief," said he, "robber, pirate—they seem as remote as cavemen; as the race when it was in its den."

His thought ran to the lovely secret knowledge of his days—the knowledge that in men and women inhere powers and faculties which as yet they do not guess, which he himself was glimpsing in tender shadow. A thief! Could there exist in the same world that crude primal impulse and the exquisite urge which he was learning?

"Ah, Eva, by the way," he said, "that book I promised you—here it is."

He had found her eager to learn, and he had selected for her from his shelf a little volume on India paper, an anthol-

ogy, a capsule of choice adventures.

"Thank you ever so much, I 'm sure," was Eva's acknowledgment. She held the book, and Simon observed that she did not seemingly read the title. It was book, generic. He imagined her thus before a picture or with music or with life.

"May I see?" Andrea asked.

She stooped to the book. Simon watched those faces. A thousand years, a thousand births, lay between the two. Eva was a stone, Andrea a flower. Eva was a cell, Andrea an organism.

Eva creased her silk handkerchief about the book for a cover. The handkerchief bore a border of colored lettering. Simon had not known many who carry silk handkerchiefs with colored lettering and use them to cover books. He rose abruptly. It had been a mistake to ask Eva to join them.

"Will you take us down to the studio?" he asked her, shortly.

Mrs. West was there to fetch the bowls. She stood with her hands laid flatly upon her apron, hands curled and crumpled like old leaves.

"I thought," she volunteered, "I heard some shoutin'. Lands! don't I hope he 'll go chasin' right through here, and they after him, a-flyin'!"

"O Aunt!" Eva cried in horror.

It came to Simon that in that scale which he had considered this woman lay still lower than Eva. Mrs. West was merely brute star-dust.

"I do," she was insisting; but then he caught her shamed wistfulness and thought that, after all, this was only the ardent wish of this isolated being somehow to participate in life.

They went to the Orwood studio, the little stone building that those

strange Orwoods had built with their own hands to house their simple treasures. The small ground floor, with its stuffed birds and little animals of the region, always filled Eva with pity for the bright creatures, so pert and vivid in death; but Andrea spoke of the fine untutored skill of the Orwood lad who had prepared them. Above-stairs, among the artist brother's admirably executed portraits of countenances cast in a mold already passed, Andrea was caught by the pity and the beauty of those lonely figures in that wilderness, of the use and the waste of the art which she thought must chiefly have spent itself on conduct. Eva said: "This is the one that et the wild parsnips and died. To think of the poor gentleman so sick out in the woods, and him all alone!"

When Andrea found Emerson hanging on the wall, and Whitman, hung when America did not intimately know them, Eva merely twitched the uneven picture wire and frowned at a cobweb. And she blushed before the old marble of Clytie around which Mrs. West had piously cast a disused curtain of magenta chenille. But Andrea murmured, "That shade of magenta is the true crime." At every point little Eva acted her part of the homespun, Andrea hers of the evolved. And Simon watched them both, himself in the deadly sin of the consciousness that this level of understanding to which he had somehow attained lay above Andrea, as she was above Eva.

"This experience of yours, whatever it has been," Andrea found place to say, "is over you like a garment, Simon. You are more wonderful than ever."

His smile was perfect in its depreca-

tion, but deep in the well-springs he may have felt that there was something of truth in her words. And he wished that Eva would leave them; her crudity was boring him.

They were emerging from the studio when Eva lifted her head at an ugly angle of listening.

§ 4

"Hark!" she cried bluntly.

From the oak opening on the east slope a man came running. He was tall and white, and his unshaven face was strange above his neat clothes. He ran badly. His hands were flung grotesquely out, like the hands of one unused to running. When he saw the three, he veered and came toward them, tripping in the long grass.

"Hide me, for God's sake!" he said.

Andrea looked at Simon. Simon stood frowning. Eva abruptly turned and ran a little away from them down the path. It was strange to Simon that Eva should run away, she who seemed so doughty, so valiant. He glanced after her in perplexity. He saw her beneath the white arch, lifting the stone slab over the old Orwood well.

"Down there!" she cried.

The man ran toward Eva. None of them ever forgot the horror in his worn face and in his great dog's eyes. He gained the well, leaned gasping on the curb.

"You ain't going to trap me?" they heard him say.

Eva's gesture was queenly.

"What do you s'pose?" she said scornfully. "Drop in there."

The man read her face, dropped into the opening. She let fall the cover. Despite her deadly pallor, she was businesslike. She shot a glance of



“‘This,’ she said, and handed it to Pettie”

annoyance at Mrs. West, who now came hurrying to the screened porch, crying out, "Suz save us!" Yet it was to her that Eva ran, and poured out something of this that had happened, and seemed to confer with the woman, who instantly sobered and nodded with a look of no less than intelligence. Simon and Andrea were left standing detached and distinctly unrelated to all that had taken place. Simon said, "How extraordinary of her!" and Andrea's word was, "Really!"

From the oak-grove came riding four horsemen; six, seven. They cantered down the slope, bringing with them a certain air of festivity, as if they had been merely riding forth into the greenwood this June morning. They were bending forward in the saddle, they were red, they were laughing.

"Where 'd he go?" they demanded variously.

They drew rein, uttering the half-articulate in all the businesslike aspect of the man-chase. It was as if they were making a sport. Only they were rather too sure of their man. They had started him up from cover, they explained, quite close to the cottage, and had run him to the opening.

"Which way 'd he go?" they inquired. "You saw him, of course?"

"Oh, yes," said Eva, "we saw him." She was standing by the horse of a huge red man who seemed to be their leader. Her undeveloped profile, her ineffectual little nose, showed childishly against the group. "We saw him, Mr. Pettie," she said quietly.

"Well," shouted Mr. Pettie, aggressively, "we got no time to lose."

"What 's the man done?" asked Simon.

There was about Simon something so tranquil, so gentle, that the high key of the others was instantly lowered.

"Stole fifty dollars off'n me," said the man Pettie. "Took it out'n the till. I happen to be the sheriff; I 'll show 'im!"

"Fifty dollars!" Eva cried.

"You 're sure you 're after the right man?" Simon persisted.

"Said his wife was sick, the liar," cried Pettie, and jerked stupidly at his horse's bridle.

"Sick?" said Eva. Her face changed, lighted. "Said his wife was sick?"

"She 's sick right enough, and so 's he. Coughing his head off was how we come on him in the woods."

Eva stood still, her eyes on the red man's face. Her jaw was slightly fallen; she was squinting; she bore every inch the look of the incompetent, of the underbred. But when she spoke, her words rang and mounted above Mrs. West's rumblings.

"Sick!" Eva cried with passion, "and you chasing him! I should think you 'd be ashamed of yourselves—the whole of you."

Pettie's jaws closed, and his eyes narrowed.

"Look here," he said, "what reason you got for not telling us where the fellow went?"

"The reason is," said Eva, "that he left something here for you."

"Left something!" cried Pettie, and stared and swore.

She ran to the house. Mrs. West followed her, talking. Simon saw how the terrible air of the men gave place to curiosity and amazement not the less physical. Simon felt repelled; he felt ill; he was distressed that Andrea should be witness to this sordid and hideous moment, that they should

both in a measure be parties to the occasion. Was it the same world down which he had wandered only an hour ago in a gracious companionship, in a beauty that was like fine flowing substance? And Eva in secret communication with that thief! Who would have thought it of her stupidity?

Eva came running back, flushed, brilliant. In her hand was a little bag of cloth.

"This," she said, and handed it to Pettie.

Pettie's clumsy fingers fumbled at the strings. He drew out bills neatly folded, creased, pressed in their places—twenty, forty, fifty dollars.

"There it is," said Eva. "He said you'd come this way. Now you leave him be." She spoke with passion.

Pettie stared, muttered, swore, grinned round at the others. Then he recovered himself, blustered, talked about the law and its satisfaction. But he really meant his own satisfaction, and pocketed the money. But leave the man look out of their way, that was all. Leave him look out. They rode away, pitiful exponents of the law which is satisfied with payment in money, in blood, or in suffering.

Eva turned to Simon. She seemed commanding; she seemed tall.

"Would you and Miss What's-name go off down there a little ways?" she said. "I don't want—I guess it'll be better if aunt and I—"

She looked toward the white arch above the well. Andrea and Simon understood and went mutely.

§ 5

Once more Simon took the path to the wood. He had caught Andrea's horse, walked beside her to the stile, watched her ride away. Neither had

spoken much. Both were busy analyzing, and neither, perhaps, was complacent at the result.

Andrea had said:

"How shocking to have all this forced upon one! And yet Eva—"

"Eva was magnificent," said Simon; and then, after a moment, he said thoughtfully: "She was—literally divine."

"Simon!"

Something in her cry shook him. He knew that it was irrelevant, that her thought had left the late occasion and was seeking to encompass all the situation in which they found themselves. She seemed frail and bewildered and like a little girl. All her manner had fallen from her; she was looking up at him from her secret being. She was Andrea, who loved him.

But she was saying:

"I am not fine enough. Simon, I can't share this that you want your life to be. I am sure of it."

His arms were about her, but he was looking away from her, into the deep green—the tragic, far look of the immemorial lover who hears another voice.

"Live your life, dear," she said.

"Leave me behind. I am quite reasonable if there is a development which you can reach without me and not with me. Oh, don't you see? If it were for the good of your art, I would give you up. Why not for the good of your soul?"

Simon muttered distastefully:

"My soul!" Put like this, he had no relish for it. This spiritual level that he glimpsed was so much finer than its terminology. He was swept by the besetting sweetness of his new knowledge that life is something other

than that which we believe it to be, that the race is certainly to break through to lovely levels of perception unknown to it now, and that those who see this hope must toil at it as at an art.

"You would lose it all," Andrea was saying, "in a life with me."

Her words opened to him that home which would be theirs, in the suburbs, twenty-five minutes out, the shingled garage, the shrubbery, the young married commuters dropping in for bridge.

"Unless," she breathed, "love counted. And here, Simon, love might be in the way."

Crude terminology again. Put so, this was heresy and absurdity. He tried to phrase it.

"I think," said Simon, "that some day men and women will look back on 'romantic love' as we look back on chivalry. We do not even suspect what love is, this tremendous mystery of duality in nature. Everything traceable to sex, yes; but what *is* that? Perhaps only one of countless creative powers which we shall claim—the only one which so far lets us guess at our godhood. Except—"

If he could tell her of his strange new sense which released him, even as love releases, to new areas of living; light beside which love's color of rose is a dimness; presence which might be the actual presence of God.

"Except what?" Andrea had asked wistfully, and then cried: "You cannot tell me; I should not understand. I know—you cannot take me with you in this any more than at dying."

He had cried out he hardly knew what in protest, knowing the truth of what she said. She had ridden away. But even then her eyes summoned him.

Now, lying on the bank of Blacklocks Force, Simon was not wondering as he had wondered before whether indeed Andrea could share his new life, his new birth into life. Instead he was repeating what he had said of Eva: she had done something literally divine. *Eva!* And Andrea and he had merely been in the way. Eva had instantly made her adjustment, had caught the command to help the man, had felt the wrong in harboring him unless she paid his price. Her whole action had seemed without conscious choice, had seemed involuntary, the fruit of some intuitive knowledge, as if her otherness were already bred into the race. And Andrea and he had merely been in the way.

He looked down at the brook, flowing from what hidden source to what destiny; his eye ran to the opposite slope, damascened with sun. Then he looked about him in slow bewilderment. For now everything bore its ancient accustomed aspect, as all had looked before his new sense of life had come upon him. The rollicking brook, the rocks, the tamaracks, they were cold, metallic. Their color lay upon the outside. The light was merely reflected, was decorative, did not drench and permeate. He covered his eyes. Yes, a violence had been done to himself, to this nascent sense of spiritual revivification to which he had tried to give himself. He had somehow cut himself off from the current which since March had been flowing free. He was looking on his visible world as an amateur might look. Certain rays had ceased to be discernible, or certain emanations had refused to act, or lovely particles no longer gave out their influence. And Blacklocks Force, the wood, the slope,

the path, now he saw them all from the outside and naked of magic. As he saw them now he could have painted none of them.

He thought: "It is gone. All is gone. I have lost it; it will never come back. Never the beauty, never the other comradeship."

Through the day he tried to win it back; stood on the outside of some temple and tried to find a threshold; walked in a dream from which he sought in agony to waken. He knew that sin will so separate the heart from its kindredship with nature. He was now to perceive that a spirit may be so sensitized that any slight failure will flaw its cadences. He thought of his failure as his inefficiency before Eva's thief. When he was tortured by the thought of Andrea, he felt no failure, but a kind of spiritual frenzy of renunciation. Was, then, the vice of inefficiency stronger than the power to renounce? For he walked the green and the sun of afternoon to a broken rhythm, decompensated.

At a farm-house he found a bite to eat, and did not return to Mrs. West's cottage until nightfall. No one was about. He paused on the thought of an inquiry for Eva's thief, but abandoned the thought at memory of her imperious wish that Andrea and he should leave her and Mrs. West alone with him.

§ 6

In his room he stretched himself on his bed and waited for that besieging sense of peace, of light, of God which had transformed life for him. It had been necessary for him only to return to quiet in order to find all there, waiting for him. But now nothing came. All that was remote. He was

alone, crowded upon by the casual, the commonplace.

He had of course been caught like this as he worked at a picture. There had been days at his studio when he had waked dreaming of color, let images stream through him as he bathed and breakfasted; and then on such days his brush had died, the light had died, life went through its motions and was not. It was like that with him now. For weeks he had been living creatively, though creating nothing. Now the flow had ceased. There he was, sterile. Was it so that the majority of the race lived its life? But there must be creative artists in life as in art, those who break through to new planes of perception, of being. Had it been given him to be one of those, and had he now somehow lost the power? It was, he rebelliously thought, through the violent impact of the hideous incident of the day. No wonder that the lovely companionship had been withdrawn.

He looked from his window into moonlight. There lay the little lawn, with its thorn-tree from Waterloo, its thistle from Edinburgh Castle. These lay there flat, without magic, without meaning, whereas on other nights they had seemed to him the very vesture of an inhering God.

Down there something stirred. Eva's light dress went out from the house, crossed to the lawn, paused. He saw her stand uncertainly, then turn her face to his window.

"Eva!" he called. "What is it?"

"Oh," she said, "come down, please. Come down."

He was dressed and down at the threshold. He was aware of a light within the house, a stirring.

"He's sick," Eva whispered; "he

may be dying. Yes, we took him in. Somebody's got to go and telephone for the doctor. Oh, maybe you ain't willing—"

Running through the moonlight to the farm-house, Simon found himself wishing that the distance were greater, the hills steeper, the night a night of storm, anything to increase his service. And it was Eva who had taught him this.

When the physician was on his way and Simon back at the cottage, he came on Eva in the kitchen, stooping at the stove, and he demanded rudely that he be set at work.

"But he is a thief, you know," Eva whispered. "He told us everything. He'd just served time, and thought he could start living again; then he found his wife dying, and he took that money—"

"I don't care whether his wife is dying or not," Simon said, but Eva knew that he meant only to disavow need of explanation.

Together they worked over the man. Simon was humble before Eva, who was so deft, wise, instant. He was aware of Mrs. West, her silence, her capability. He was himself able and useful through sheer pressing desire to be so. When the man battled for breath and was lifted by Simon, Simon was curiously aware of a kind of friendliness outraying from himself upon the man, like power.

At dawn, when the doctor was leaving and Eva was to drive back with him to bring some necessities, Simon stood for a moment beside her in the doorway.

"I wanted to tell you," Simon said awkwardly, "yesterday you were wonderful. I—we both thought so."

All her brisk proficiency fell from

her, and she seemed again the crude little country girl, ill at ease before him. There was her smile, however, which hid itself at the turning of her head.

"Goodness," she said in embarrassment, "that was n't anything more 'n you'd have done if you'd thought of it."

"Ah," said Simon, "but I did n't think. I want to ask you something," he added. "You did n't plan it—to give him that money?"

"Goodness, no!"

"But before that you were hiding him—a thief—from the law."

Her eyes flashed.

"Law! Mebbe you call such men and bloody hounds the law. I don't!"

She stepped awkwardly into the doctor's car and was gone.

§ 7

In the lovely dawn Simon once more went down the valley of the brook and ascended to the green plateau on the other side. Here rose the chapel, stone laid upon stone by the departed Orwoods. Among the trees the stations of the cross, every one in its little wooden kiosk, had been painted by the artist brother, figures fine, unfaded, living. Now peering in at the window, Simon saw the neat altar, the rude benches, all speaking intolerably of the past. At these things he stared and doubted his entire revelation. These forgotten Orwoods, with their withdrawals, their preparations to divine more of the preciousness of life, what had they availed? And he with his perception of a heightened level of living? He had called it life more abundant, but was it that? For these Orwoods and he and Andrea had all been shamed by the crude



"Simon rose, and stood in the doorway, open upon that light which was more than sunshine, more than color. Andrea! He wanted to tell all this to Andrea"

literal child and by Mrs. West herself.

"God help me!" said Simon, and lay down on the tall, dry grass. Life pressed upon him like a weight, as if life were but a mode of death.

He woke to the faint sound of the water below the little plateau, and saw it flowing from what hidden source to what hidden destiny. The sun was now surging against the tree-tops, pouring through the leaves, was received in the thick grass where mandrakes slept. He was in the mysterious freshness of wakening from ever mysterious sleep. The words with which he had fallen asleep were still present in that creative activity of the spoken word. And while he lay looking at the little stream he was aware of some sweetness current with the sense: fragrance not of flowers; a slant of glowing light; a lift of spirit as in laughter; the vibration of some loved presence.

It had come again, his new sense of life holding him, drawing him, devouring him. It was a distinct dilation of his consciousness, a catching up into some higher norm of perception, of existence. It was literally the creative mood descending upon him not for creative work, but for creative understanding of reality.

He sprang up, and something else ran with his thought: the man down there in the cottage, he must get back to him.

He found Mrs. West nodding beside her sleeping patient, and Simon took her place. As he sat beside the man Simon was planning. When the man awoke, Eva would ask him about his wife, and they would take help to her. He himself would see to that. And Eva—how could he persuade her to let him replace that fifty dollars?

And he was possessed by his pity for the poor fellow in the bed, the fine, pale face with its definite inheritance of gentleness and decency somehow gone astray. With a flash of wonder Simon knew that he would be feeling the same if here were some poor battered thing, empty of endowment.

Simon rose, and stood in the doorway, open upon that light which was more than sunshine, more than color. Andrea! He wanted to tell all this to Andrea. It was certain that this she would understand.

He stepped from the house, and there was Andrea coming toward him, her horse already grazing near. She was starry with some preoccupation.

"Simon," she cried, "that man—can we do something? I've thought about him all night."

He met her mutely, searched her face. She came close to him.

"Dear," she said, "it's no use. I can't follow you. The truth is, I don't know what you were talking about yesterday. 'Other powers within us,' and all that. I'm not detached; I'm not spiritually up to you—"

"Andrea, wait—"

"Oh, I'm not. I see it now. I can't feel this that you have been feeling. I'm away down on some lower level. I can do only things like helping that man—"

They were alone there in the morning sun. He stood before her humbly, held out his arms, saw her face bright against the background of the valley beauty—a beauty like fine flowing substance.

"Beloved!" he said.

Eva, laden with parcels, was entering the yard. They met her, shared her burdens, followed her within the house to take her orders.



The Real Eugene O'Neill

By OLIVER M. SAYLER

Drawing by WILLIAM ZORACH



ONE of our most unmistakable traits as Americans is to personify ideas and movements in human guise. We like, for instance, to make Foch stand for Allied invincibility, Lenin for the spirit of revolution, or Edison for our native ingenuity. Having our idol or devil, we set about to inquire with prying curiosity into the inmost intimacies of those whom we have chosen thus to honor. It is a bit disconcerting to us, therefore, after agreeing upon Eugene G. O'Neill as the personal symbol of our awakening American drama, to find that little is known about the man himself. True, he has had four plays on Broadway in the last two seasons, "Beyond the Horizon," "The Emperor Jones," "Diff'rent," and "Gold." Two more will have reached the stage by the time these lines are read, "The Straw" and "Anna Christie," while a third, based on a legend as old as man, is likely to be disclosed before another summer arrives. Yet despite this wide and growing acquaintance with O'Neill as a dramatist, the man remains for the general public only a name, a symbol, a luring and mysterious example of that association with the sea which has always stirred the imagination.

I doubt whether any other contemporary has bothered so little as O'Neill whether the public was curious about

him or not. Certainly, there is in his work no deliberate challenge to find out, if you can, what he is like, no conscious bait for the busybody. That is probably only another way of saying that he is primarily the artist, that there is nothing of the propagandist in him, no desire to stimulate interest in his dogmas and theories or in himself as guaranty of further attention to those theories. I do not believe he has any theories; theories are fallible, undependable things.

After all, though, there is close kinship between O'Neill the playwright and the man, and to know the man is to understand his work the more clearly. For out of the life he has lived and the philosophy he has gained from it he draws many of the characters and scenes and ideas for his plays; and even when he goes to his imagination for the raw material, his checkered experiences on sea and land invariably color the use of it.

§ 2

O'Neill's life has been composed of just those struggles, and he has overridden just those obstacles, in just those ways that we like to think are characteristic of our continent. The old Barrett House at Forty-third Street and Broadway was his birthplace a little over thirty years ago, and from Gotham he was carried to the