

BIGFOOT JOE
And Others

To The KING

Most Gracious Sovereign,

I beg leave to approach Your Royal Person with an humble Offering, glean'd from long acquaintance with Your Majesty's subjects. A Work, which owes it's Rise, it's Progress, and Completion to this Source, is hence with all Humility proffered to Your Sacred Majesty. That Providence may long preserve the blessings of Your Reign to this Profession and Nation, is the constant prayer of,

May it please Your Majesty,

Your Majesty's most humble and devoted
Servant and Subject,

H. BEDFORD-JONES

To HUMBUG, Rex et Imperator.

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BIGFOOT JOE

In a town of the north there dwelt three men apart from their fellows. One of these men was a Philosopher, one was a Poet, and one was a Painter. These lived and wrought, while all the folk looked up to them from afar off. There was a halfbreed called Bigfoot Joe who hewed in a lumber camp, so that the folk knew nothing of him.

The Philosopher penned a mystical work on the philosophy of the woods, and he grew known in the world. The Poet wrote stanzas filled with the music of the pines and cedars, and his verse brought high wage. The Painter limned a single hemlock, instinct with the breath of the lonely forest; and it found fame. But, deep in the woods, trees crashed down and the unknown lumberjack lopped off their branches.

Now it so happened that a certain Great Author, having heard of the famous Three, journeyed across the seas to visit them; for he was an unwearied seeker after the truth that is in life.

The Artists, receiving him as a brother, expounded to him the philosophy and rhythm and tonal harmony of Nature; but the Great Author warmed himself in their steam-heated studios and said little.

One day the Artists took the distinguished guest on a visit to the woods. They came to camp in time to lunch with the jacks, and the visitor was seated next Bigfoot Joe. Naturally observant, he noted that the halfbreed, coming from the woods bare-headed, flung an expressive glance at the thick furs of the Philosopher.

During their meal the Painter apologized for the coarse fare—the beans and bread, the creamless coffee; but the halfbreed gorged hugely, and drank his molasses-sweet coffee with gusto. The Poet was disgusted by the table manners of the jacks, for a bread-fight arose amid jests and curses; but the halfbreed deftly caught a crust and devoured it.

Later, the visitors went to the woods and watched the work. Presently they came to Bigfoot Joe; the others would have passed on but the Great Author paused and spoke.

"B'jou," replied the halfbreed, wiping his brow and staring at the stranger.

"Is the work hard?"

"It is my work—I am strong, me! You little man, wear four eyes." His gaze swept in contempt over the visitor. "Dis tree, she's be my brudder; she's be tall, strong like me. 'Bon!' she's say. 'You good lumberjack, you Joe!'" And his axe bit a deep chord of assent from the heart of the pine.

The Great Author perceived that here was a philosopher, who drew from the woods his one rule: "Work! You are here; so it is evident that you were to be a lumberjack—but be careful to be a *good* lumberjack!"

The halfbreed was a poet, for he could read the secret heart of the woods and make response from his own. He was a painter, whose brush was the axe; with that brush he limned great canvases, whose truth all woodsmen loved instantly.

The Philosopher groped after his soul, the Painter strove to express his soul, and the Poet tried to clothe his soul in words. The

half-breed, caring nothing about soul, struck fire from the spirit of the Great Author, who knew what a plain thing the soul really is; this, in fact, was why he was a Great Author.

And so, when he had returned again to his own country, the Great Author neglected to write about the famous Artists. Instead, he penned a wonderful tale about a halfbreed Indian, and the world cried out in rapture.

But the three Artists bitterly termed him an ignorant fakir.

From the "Sonnet" of Felix Arvers

Within my soul there lies a secret, thieved
Eternally from Love, that knows no sleep.
All innocent it she whose name lies deep
Enshrined upon my heart, nor has she grieved
With love's kind sorrow; naught have I achieved
Though always at her side. Thus shall I keep
My secret, while I live. How might I reap
Rewards unsought, when none can be received?

For she, to whom God gave a soul so tender,
Goes calmly on her way, and will not hear
The murmured homage Love would gladly render;
So pure is she, so quiet and austere!
Scanning my lines, "Who can this angel be?"
She smiling asks—and fails herself to see.

THE CLEAR WORD

There has been a good deal of mysticism in the public prints lately—emanations from Point Loma, perhaps; subtle propaganda.

They are interesting, these men with the wide eyes. They write about a multitude of things; they are masters of glowing phrases, golden wordings, witchery of thought.

Eternally invincible are they, being very nebulous and vague. So lofty are their ideals and visions that never by any chance can they be brought down to concrete wordings. Fixed in the abstract, they leave to their readers the interpretation of these sacred thought-gems.

Fine fluidity rounds the paragraphs, and a wizardry of poeticism gilds the pages, until any central idea is lost in dazzled wonder at the pyrotechnics. The type of writing is intoxicating but not tonic. It is impressionistic and owns a very vague sense of philology; "vers libre" is a case in point. Art or music may legally convey impressions, but the business of words is to convey thought; each word in the language is an historical entity. When words are so cleverly conjoined as to present only an impression, something is amiss.

Our mystics have some central thought, spread it across scores of pages, and lose it; they are style et praeterea nihil. They won't play to the gallery, preferring the circle. As a matter of fact, they have no hope of ever reaching the gallery.

It is the great mass of our fiction magazines that reflect the gallery, the vox populi. Magazinedom is aligned in favor of the story related with an artful simplicity—the clear word!

The clear word; that is the thing! The forthright, honest word, signifying something foursquare and definite! When Snorri quilled that great chronicle, the Heimskringla, his words fitted like a mosaic; he left us a perfect example of the clear word.

A work of literature creates a character, then evolves it through the stress of exterior circumstances. The magazine story takes its character ready-made, evolving a plot through the stress of that character upon exterior circumstances. If we regard this as cheapening of a noble art, and decidedly *infra dig.*, then recollect how our grandsires applied like terms to Dumas and other masters.

The past twenty years have here evolved a type of magazine that serenely ignores the ranting of the Elder Brethren. It has created a writer as peculiar to this country as is the *feuilletoniste* to France. These magazines of fiction have filled a gap; and they have been eagerly acclaimed by the reading public.

This reading public, not being confined to the New England states but being comprised largely of *hoi polloi*, does not want character studies. It wants a well-ordered, wholly false and often absurd plot-scheme, progressing in a straight line instead of by zigzag dashes, as in life; but it demands that this plot-scheme be plausible, intricate and fascinating.

A new fiction magazine makes its curtsy by deploring these facts and apologetically devotes its pages only to the highest forms of writing. Stuff! Why cringe to the Elder Brethren? An editor

interprets the wishes of the public; he is not to suit his own whims, but to make money for the owners.

The public knows what it wants, and will pay to get it. The mystics may become the oracles of new cults, may set about remaking their own petty worlds after their hearts' desires; but they cannot make a living by the quill. Even the music critics have come from their misty pinnacles.

Simplicity has cash value. That is why the magazines pay such excellent prices for the clear word—which is the hardest of all to write.

LA CATHEDRALE ENGLOUTIE

Bells far and fine
Lost evermore
To the blue sky,
Yet still implore
And bid us fly
The citted roar,
To seek God's shrine
And hold divine
The rich, deep things
That men decry.
A bell that rings
And echoes o'er
On angels' wings;
Sweetly it sings—
"All life is thine!
Give God an hour

And feel His power
Steal far and fine
Like bells across
The city's dross—”

THE NAKED MAN

A section of the Argonne wood is feebly lighted by distant star shells. Over the mechanical and human wreckage eddies the vapor of poison gas; yet the two men sitting against the ruined gun-emplacement wear no masks, and seem not to feel the gas. One is a husky chap, a marine; his left foot, gone above the ankle, is replaced by an ineffectual tourniquet. The other is a conscript; across his breast is a wide gash of bubbling red.

Nearby lies a German, bayonet-gashed, who from time to time opens his eyes. At his knee lies an empty U.S.A. canteen.

The Marine: You were a damn' fool to give him that bottle! Not that it matters to us, only—

The Conscript, smiling: You gave him yours first!

The Marine: Sure; I figured yours 'ud do us, but we should worry now! Say, Fritzie learned somethin' about fightin' today, huh?

The Conscript: I feel like writing a poem about it; only I'll never write it, of course—

The Marine: Cut the comedy, bo! Say, the way you knifed this guy was one swell bit o' work! After he ploughed you up, too!

The poet-conscript shivers. The German opens his eyes wide and looks at them.

The German: Listen—the music! Can you hear it? The Brunhilde motif; it is the valkyr coming for me—

His eyes close again, his head droops.

The Marine: Plumb nuts; I bet he ain't et a square meal in a year! Say, what d'you figure on seein' next, bo?

The Conscript, blankly: Eh?

The Marine: Why, we don't swallow no bull about fightin' for democracy and goin' to heaven; everybody except the home folks is wise to that bunk. But where do we land on the other side, hey? Fightin' Heinie won't ticket us to the pearly gates, will it?

The Conscript, gazing at the curling trees in the mist: Search me! Religion never bothered me much; and just now I'm sorry.

The Marine: Sorry, hell! Cut out the regrets. If you hadn't give that guy your canteen we might ha' lasted till morning.

The Conscript: If you hadn't crawled to help prop him up, your tourniquet might not have given way—

Suddenly startled, both men turn their heads. Before them appears the figure of a man, nearly naked, an open wound in his side; he is regarding them attentively.

The Marine: Hullo! Where in hell did you come from—front lines? Sit down and take it easy; no Croy Rouge nor nothin' here to hurry you. Got it bad?

The Conscript: Here's an extra first-aid packet—better stop the bleeding.

The naked man moves closer, but refuses the proffered packet.

The Naked Man: Thank you, brother, but it would do me no good.

The Marine: I guess you're right there. Bayonet, hey? Jabbed up an' got you.

The Naked Man: I've come from inside the German lines.

The Conscript: Captured and got away, eh? Stripped off your uniform—

The Marine: What's your division? I bet Liggett's corp's been catchin' hell!

The Naked Man: I am unattached.

The Marine, feebly tossing out his mask: Take this; it can't help me, but there's gas around.

The Naked Man: Thanks, brother, but I hardly think it would help me, either.

The naked man moves, to show them his wounded feet. He opens his hands; and the conscript breaks into a bitter cry.

The Conscript: By God! Crucified you, like they did to the Canucks!

The Marine, pityingly: Aw, hell!

The German soldier opens his eyes, staring about in vacant wonder.

The German: To whom are you talking? There is no one here. Ach, the Valkyr song! It is drawing nearer—

The naked man throws him a glance of stern pity. Then he turns and extends his hand to the conscript.

The Naked Man: Come! I'll help you—

The Conscript, smiling: No use, pard! You chase along—we're here for keeps.

The Naked Man: Take my hand and get up! I've come to take you home.

The Marine, laughing harshly: Home!

With a faint shrug, the conscript touches the extended hand, grips it, and rises. In his face dawns amazed incredulity.

The Conscript: Good lord! I believe I can walk after all!

The naked man turns and holds out his hand to the marine in silent command.

The Marine, roughly: Aw, don't be a fool—can't you see I only got one foot? You guys chase along—

The Naked Man: I tell you, come! Put an arm around my neck; we'll do very well. Take my hand and get up!

Compelled, the marine obeys. Into his bronzed face leaps surprise as he rises. After getting one arm about his helper's neck, he pauses suddenly.

The Marine: Look here, you ain't in no shape to stand us both—

The Naked Man: Be quiet, brother! We are going home, and you need not doubt my strength. Come, let us go.

They start away, the marine moving by awkward hops, but moving. The conscript holds to the arm of the naked man, throwing him sidelong glances of frightened surmise—and at length checks himself abruptly.

The Conscript: I don't know if I'm out of my head—no, no! It's an impossibility. I'm afraid even to think of it—

The naked man smiles. Behind them the German once more opens his eyes and looks about in wonder.

The German: Where are they gone? No one is here—they were talking, yet I see no one. I can see no one!

The naked man casts over his shoulder a look of ineffable sorrow. From him comes a murmur.

The Naked Man: No, you can see no one. You cannot even see ME! And that, as you shall come to know, is hell.

LES DEUX CORTEGES

Within the church two companies are met.
The one is sad and bears an infant's bier,
A woman following; slow steals the tear
On her pale cheek, where grief his mark has set.
The other, a baptism. Protecting arm
Held close, a nurse upbears the precious mite;
Comes the young mother, whose proud looks invite
Praise and allegiance to her baby's charm.
They christen, they absolve; the chapels clear.
Then the two women, crossing in the aisle,

Exchange a single glance at joining there;
And—wondrous mystery to inspire a prayer—
The young wife weeps in gazing on the bier,
The mourner throws the newborn child a smite!

ONE NIGHT AT HEALY'S

We recall many a charming tale, done in the most Lamb-like of accents, regarding the rare and curious old volumes picked up at the farthing stalls. Le Gallienne has reminisced most delightfully and incredibly in this fashion, as have others; but I, for one, long ago decided that these degenerate days never witnessed such discoveries as those recorded in *le temps jadis*.

Many and many an hour have I spent delving along dusty shelves in grimy shops, or by the less alluring ways of the spick-and-span, rebound and furbished, dustless and listed Olde Book Shoppe whose displays are priced at their weight in carets. In both have I been disappointed. Many a catalog have I pored over, only to decide that all catalogs are supplied from publishers' remainders.

One concludes that the old book trade is a thing of the past, at least so far as we none too affluent consumers are concerned. The dealers know too much about their wares and are too eager after excess profits. They fatten upon the rich manufacturer who seeks scholarly polish, or the scholar who has inherited the price of gratification. If they find an Elzevir, however mean, they placard it at a rare price, and await the victim who thinks that all Elzevirs are treasures.

Once, indeed, I found a little shop in New Orleans, off the tourist lanes, where I encountered over a score of delightful volumes in French, filled with hand-tinted plates, at some very low figure. Alas! I had just been entrapped in Royal street and had but little money left. I bought a number of the sweet tooled-morocco volumes at some little sacrifice, and went my way. Later, in funds,

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