

THE BURNING EARTH

A Novel By

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"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

-- George Santayana.

CHAPTER 1.

The saloon stood on the west side of Main Street in Chippewa, Michigan. The entrance door was in the middle, and on either side of the door there loomed tall potted ferns supported by sticks, standing in the tall windows in front of the suspended cloth curtains. Just inside the door there was a broad standing mirror, framed in ornate mahogany and serving to screen the iniquities within. On this mirror, in gold leaf, was printed the following:

Oliver Biegler -- Saloon
Fine Wines and Choice Liquors
Beer -- Free Lunch

North of the saloon, on the corner next to the town square, stood the brick Miners' State Bank. There were fourteen saloons on the town's Main Street, and many more on the other streets. Today all of them were busy. For it was pay day at the town's iron mines, and hundreds of miners were downtown cashing their checks, paying bills, buying new boots and socks and heavy miner's underwear -- and most of them, to the dismay of the local temperance workers, "sneakin' a few dollars on the ol' woman for a bloody drink or two!"

Oliver Biegler stood at the front end of his bar, up near the cigar counter, playing smear for drinks with three miners. He was a tall, big-boned man, slightly over fifty. Occasionally he glanced up from his game, looking the length of the smoky bar at his three perspiring bartenders -- the two regular bartenders, French-Canadian Charlie LeRoy and Cornishman Will Tregembo -- and the relief bartender, who helped out on pay days and Saturday nights, George Douglass. The big Swiss music box, against the opposite wall, was working overtime, obedient to nickels, the shuddering metal discs creaking up and down between each selection. Some travelling saloon artist had filled the entire wall, opposite the bar, with his alcoholic visions: a sinister, dank, malarial woods scene at night, dripping gloom, of no forest which ever grew in Michigan, and relieved only by a troubled moon which peered from racing, troublous clouds.

The long, high room rang with the clink and buzz of drinking men. The worn mahogany bar ran nearly half the depth of the building. At the far end

of the bar stood the free lunch counter, covered by cheese cloth against the droning flies. This was flanked by the massive ice-box. Beyond that was the partitioned, green-tabled poker room. At the back of the saloon was a small kitchen and the "Sunday door," leading out into the alley at the rear.

Behind Oliver, against the bar wall, stood the square iron safe, with the dish of colored fruit painted on its door, which was slightly ajar. It was a warm afternoon in early August. Oliver had been cashing checks all day. He kept them in a smooth, worn "Green Seal" cigar box, in the safe. Each check cashed meant that he had to take at least one drink. The cuffs of his shirt were turned up once on his big wrists. Oliver's face was somewhat flushed; he was gently drunk.

Charlie LeRoy edged up along the bar and whispered to Oliver. He mopped his dark Indian face with his soiled bar apron. "Polly's here, Oliver -- says Mrs. B. wants you to come home an' not to forget the package -- it's the kid's birthday -- havin' a little doin'. Go 'head, Oliver -- I can handle alone during the supper hour." Oliver's bartenders had a great deal of respect for Oliver's wife, Belle. "That Mrs. B. -- she's a real lady, I tell you." They always said this to each other with a sort of quiet belligerence, as though someone had challenged the proposition. Oliver slowly nodded at Charlie and glanced down the bar at his youngest son, Paul. Oliver smiled, tossed down a drink, and turned to finish his game of cards.

Paul had come in the alley door. He stood by the free lunch counter drinking a bottle of cream soda one of the bartenders had given him. His gray eyes rested on Old Man Dyson and "Gineral" Gaynor playing a timeless game of cribbage at one of the card tables next to the tall coal stove by the opposite wall. "Fifteen-two, fifteen-four," they droned. Paul drank slowly, out of the bottle, savoring the liquid's cool sweetness, enjoying the tingling sensation in his nose as he regurgitated. All the while he listened intently to the music box. To Paul its tinkling trills were compounded of the music of the spheres. The laboring machine was playing "The Eva Waltz" -- one of his favorites, by a composer whose name he could never learn. Paul swayed his

head ever so slightly, closing his eyes. He drank in the delicious, stale, boozy smell of the place, a combination of beer, mustard, cold ham, old cheese, brine of pickled herring, spilt whiskey, tobacco smoke, over-loaded spittoons, and sweating men. It was heavenly, rivalled only by the tantalizing smell of Tilford's Drug Store...

Oliver finished his card game in a crescendo of shouts and knuckle-rapping plays. "One more, Oliver. Jus' one more!" He grinned and shook his head. He turned and closed the safe door, spun the dial, took his battered Panama hat from the top of the safe, and nodded to Paul. Outside on Main Street Paul had to run to keep up with his father's long strides. He glanced up at his father. "Mom wants you to bring home the paper -- and a -- a package from Joachim's hardware, Pa."

The large frame Biegler house stood on a corner at the bottom of Blueberry Hill, just a block north of the Northwestern tracks, which ran through the center of the town. As Paul and Oliver approached the crossing, Paul clutching his birthday present, old Dan Kane hobbled out of his shanty on his wooden leg. He resolutely held his warning flag aloft in his one good arm, glaring at Paul and his father, as a long, slow, iron ore drag cut him from their view. The train had two locomotives in front and pusher behind, as it hissed and cursed its weight of raw red hematite ore towards distant Escanaba and the ore docks, there to be loaded into the waiting ore boats. Paul stood there beside his father, listening to the rhythmic rattle and din of the fleeing car trucks.

Old Dan Kane was one of the many fantastically injured industrial cripples in which the town abounded. He had got his on the railroad. One leg on one side; an arm on the other; a neat trick. Dan had an Irish brogue as rich as mulligan stew. He had the face of an old pirate, and he always shouted his most idle comment. He and Paul were good friends. Sometimes it

pleased old Dan to fancy himself a wounded Civil War veteran, and he held Paul enthralled as he recounted, always in great and colorful detail, the desperate campaign in which he was so gallantly wounded. Paul could hear the very rumble of artillery. Each engagement was different but was always concluded, with a wink and a nudge, with a shouted "We routed the divils!"

One day he told Paul he had got his injuries when he had yelled "To hell with Ireland! Down with the Pope!" in a Dublin whorehouse. "They almost assassinated me," he declared. Paul laughed uncertainly and ran home to ask Belle, his mother, what a whorehouse was. "Where did you hear that, son?" Belle asked, brushing back the hair on her high broad forehead in white Presbyterian horror. Paul told her Dan's story. She pursed her lips into a horrible grimace in her efforts to keep a sober face, but laughter welled up in her plump body in gusts and gales, and she had finally sat on the floor and Paul ran to get her a glass of water and her bottle of favorite red Vericolate pills. "Don't listen to that immoral old blatherskite!" she finally chortled. "What's 'immoral,' Mama? What's 'blatherskite!'" Paul asked, and Belle was away again. Paul had fled the house and reported back to Dan. Old Dan grinned, muttered 'Protestant pups' under his breath, dug in his long leather purse, winked at Paul, and had given him a dime. Another time ---

Oliver prodded Paul in the ribs. "Are you going to stand there dreaming all day, son? The train is by."

"Hello, Oliver!" Dan shouted. "Who's that foine young bye ye got wit ye?"

Oliver winked broadly at Dan. "Hello, Dan. He's my new bartender --- just up from Green Bay. Yup. It's his birthday today. He's --- he's --- how old are you, son? Eleven? He's eleven years old today, Dan."

Dan's mirth was uncontrollable. He slapped his good leg with his flag and reeled and almost fell. "That shure is a good one, all right all right!

Oliver Biegler!" he shouted. Dan beseeched the neighbors to bear witness. "Bejaysus, he's got so many byes he can't keep thrack of them!"

Oliver and Paul turned into the Biegler back yard. Oliver expertly flipped a clove into his mouth and stalked into the house with the afternoon newspaper, "The Iron Ore," for Belle. Paul ran around to the fenced side yard with his birthday present. Gunnar Taleen was there waiting for him. Gunnar helped Paul claw open the bundle. There in a box lay a brand new baseball and bat and a black leather pitcher's glove.

"Bats!" Paul shouted, asserting the youthful prerogatives of ownership. "I borrow to pitch," blond Gunnar sensibly concluded. Paul lined up at home plate at the front of the yard, under the drooping box elder tree. He spat in his hands. Gunnar faced him halfway down the yard, scowling professionally as he elaborately wound up. Gunnar pitched. Paul swung. There was a clear wooden 'bonk' as the bat struck the ball. With a fatal premonition they watched in frozen horror as the ball sped in suspended, dream-like flight towards the house, under the open porch, and into the sitting-room window. The crash and rain of glass attracted Mrs. McGoorty who was taking down her washing across the street. Paul, in the clarity of his horror, saw her cross herself. She knew Oliver Biegler's temper. From long experience, all of the neighbors did.

Paul noticed that Gunnar had developed a greenish-white pallor as he turned and fled the premises. Paul saw that he himself was still holding his new bat out in front of him, at the end of its swing. Then he observed his father standing on the side porch, looking at him. Paul winced and waited for the tumult to start. His father was speaking. In a low voice. It was a miracle.

" -- she's laying on the sitting-room floor in a dead faint. An' not a drop of liquor in the house. Run up and get Doc Gourdeau. Run! Oh, for Christ's sake..."

* * *

Paul's mind raced with him as he ran up Blueberry Hill for Doctor Gourdeau. He was filled with terror. Had the baseball struck her? he thought. What if Mama should die? I killed her on my birthday with my little bat. Why wasn't there some whiskey in the house? Or at least some wine? But Paul knew why there wasn't. Belle had never permitted a drop of liquor in her house since Paul was four years old. On that fateful day brother Nicholas, aged eight, had found a tall bottle of port wine, "company" wine, hidden behind Belle's washstand. By this time she and Oliver occupied separate bedrooms.

Nicky had opened the bottle of port and craftily inserted his thumb in the neck. He pretended to toss off a manly portion. He then passed the bottle to little Paul, who still wore his yellow curls. They had sat on the floor near Belle's large wooden bed. Paul needed both hands to tilt the big bottle to his mouth -- whereupon, not to be outdone, he downed his first drink, a mighty draft. It also developed that it was his first drunk. For four days and nights friends and neighbors had come to view the tiny sot, lying unconscious on his mother's bed. They suggested all manner of "cures" for Belle to try. She was nearly frantic with remorse and fright. But Doc Gourdeau had shrugged his French shoulders and shaken his head. "Doan worry, Mis' Beeglair -- from dat dey always wake up."

As he was running by the Ridge Street school, Paul was suddenly caught and held in his tracks. With a throaty, preliminary jungle cough, the steam whistle at the Blueberry Mine had begun its evening Angelus. Then, as Paul stood there, another mine whistle growled its answer to this challenge, then another and another and still another, gathering volume, gradually swelling and filling the town with their mighty symphonic roar. Paul was always deeply stirred by the vast calliope chords of the mine whistles. Through this great wail of sound there always ran a surging, vibrant pulse, a throbbing overtone,

which prevailed until the last whistle had hurled its echo at the lonely, bald iron hills which surrounded the town. Paul exhaled sharply, and darted on towards Doctor Gourdeau's house.

Old Doctor Gourdeau had asthmas, and he was puffing and wheezing dreadfully as he and Paul hurried into the Biegler sitting room. Belle was sitting by the broken window calmly reading *The Iron Ore*. The curtains billowed gently in the evening breeze. Paul was glad to observe that Oliver was nowhere in sight. One of his brothers and his half-brother Gregory were eating in the dining-room.

"Good evening, Doctor." Belle smiled pleasantly. "I'm sorry we had to bother you. I guess I must have fainted."

Doctor Gourdeau clutched at his moustache and earnestly shook his big, shaggy head. He had delivered Belle of her three sons -- and the little girl, the one that had died, who was born before Paul, her last child.

"W'as mattair, Mis' Beeglair," he said wrathfully in his hoarse, froggy bass, "'isteria, no? Was dat 'usban' of yours bodderin' you again?"

Belle watched the plump doctor standing there clenching and unclenching his fists. With a little sigh, her gray eyes rolled up in her head, and her body began to shake. She snorted and vaguely waved one plump hand toward the broken window. Paul could see things were coming to no good. It always frightened him when Belle got one of her laughing spells. "Doctor," he said, "I batted a ball through the window glass. I -- I guess I knocked Mama out or frightened her." Paul turned to his mother. "What happened, Mama? Please tell us."

"War," Belle muttered helplessly, rocking in her chair as the newspaper fell from her lap. "Th-though we were being sh-shot at."

The fallen newspaper lay open on the carpet. Paul and Doc Gourdeau stared at its headlines.

"FRANCE, ENGLAND, RUSSIA AND GERMANY AT WAR!"

Old Doctor Gourdeau continued to stare at the newspaper. Paul looked at him. As he looked, the doctor seemed to shrink and sag and to curiously age. He held out towards Belle his dry physician's hands, cupped and close to his body, one shoulder slightly hunched. She had stopped laughing and was watching him intently, her face white and drawn.

"God, God, God," he said wearily, closing his wet eyes. "De eart' -- eet is burning ones again." He turned and slowly went past the stares of Paul's brothers through the dining-room, out the side door -- the screen door slammed -- trudging along the wooden porch past the broken window and out of sight.

Paul was eleven years old on August 5, 1914.

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CHAPTER 2.

Even at this age Paul was perplexed, as he was always to be, by the part that raw chance played in his life, in the lives of his parents, his brothers and friends and, as he gradually came to see it, in the lives of every person who ever lived upon the earth. Why, why, why? he would ask himself. Why am I here? Where am I bound? Where are all of us going? What strange destiny drew my mother and father together in this boisterous mining town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan? He pondered these things and found no answer.

Sometimes he would haltingly confide his troubled questionings to Belle, but she spoke sharply to him and told him a boy so young should not entertain such thoughts. "It isn't healthy to dwell upon yourself so much, son. Run out and play. Bounce your ball off the roof." Belle had a fixed notion that in physical action lay a panacea for all ills of the spirit. She had had to seek its solace often enough herself. Paul gradually grew secretive and kept his own counsel. But the strange thoughts still persisted.

Paul knew, from Belle's constant repetition, the surface story of how his mother and father had met; the manner of their courtship and marriage; of how his father, Oliver, had brought Belle to live in his big frame house with her three step-sons, Paul's half-brothers: young Oliver, Emmett and red-headed Gregory. They were the children of Oliver and his first wife, the sweet Irish girl who had died of "the consumption."

Ever since he could remember, back when Belle would give him his daily bath downstairs in the dining-room, in a large porcelain washbowl, by the soapy warmth of the surging wood stove, she had told him stories of her family, his father's family -- of his Uncle Karl, Oliver's brother, who was in a sanitarium for those who were sick in their minds. "That means," Paul slowly puzzled out, "that my uncle Karl is crazy, he's in the nuthouse." This intelligence made him feel vaguely proud and gleeful, somehow different from and

superior to his little playmates who could not lay valid claim to uncles languishing in insane asylums.

Paul had a shadowy, babyhood recollection of his uncle Karl -- a tall, slender, brooding man, younger than Oliver, with dark wavy hair, who would come and look intently down at Paul in his crib, with large staring blue eyes; who sometimes suddenly laughed in a high frightening falsetto, and made graceful wand-like gestures in the air with his arms. Paul did not know, then, that at these times Karl was leading a symphony orchestra.

The last memory Paul had of Uncle Karl was a bizarre scene on a boat. When Paul grew older, he asked Belle to confirm his childish recollection, but she laughed uncertainly and said he must have been dreaming, he was just a toddling baby, nothing as fantastic as that had ever happened. "It's just that imagination of yours, son. You read too much. You should play more. My, my -- what am I ever going to do with such a dreamer!" Paul knew she was lying to him -- "for your own good" -- and that it had really happened.

Oliver and Belle had taken Uncle Karl on a voyage on the Great Lakes for his "nervousness." They had taken Paul along. Grandma Fraleigh had come up to Chippewa from Detroit to take care of the other boys while they were gone. It was all very hazy in Paul's memory. Boat, water: this was about all he could remember.

But there was one part that was clear, with a deadly stereopticon brilliance: The boat was docked at a wharf. Paul and his parents were in their stateroom looking out of the portholes. He saw a sidewalk and water. The sidewalk was held up by tall wooden piles. There was a strange, fishy smell and the sound of lapping water. Oddly, there was water under the sidewalk. A large turtle, with raised, reptilian head, was slowly swimming under the sidewalk. Small boys were diving off the wharf into the water to recover coins tossed by the boat's passengers. They would climb, dripping, up on a ladder and dance and shout and then dive again. Suddenly there was shouting and sounds of wooden scuffling. A grown man had leaped off the boat into the

water. He was all dressed up and even wore a hat. There was a furious splashing...

"Oliver!" Belle had cried. "It's Karl -- he's in the water!" Oliver had said "Christ God" in a weary, low voice, and had run out of the stateroom, slamming the door. Belle had tried to get Paul away from the porthole, but he had clung there, howling, and would not leave until Oliver and some sailors had fished the dripping, shouting man out of the water. The diving boys and the turtle had gone away. The people had stopped throwing coins. Paul never saw his Uncle Karl again...

"Soap yourself, Paul," Belle would command, as she gave him his bath, wringing out the washcloth and pushing her graying hair back on her forehead with a damp hand. "It's 9:30 and I've got a piano lesson to give at ten." Shortly after Paul had been born, Belle had started giving piano and vocal lessons in the little music room just off the sitting room, on the old ebony Bechstein upright. Paul learned every piece in Czerny by heart -- and he never played a note. Even from upstairs he could detect some hapless child's error, and visualize Belle's impatient admonition and the occasional rapping of uninspired knuckles. "One and two and one and two," he would hear her droning and chanting hour on end to the disconsolate throng of aspiring little Rachmaninoffs and Paderewskis who filed in and out of the Biegler house with their black leather music rolls, haunting his boyhood with daily sounds of discord and a million sour notes.

"Tell me, Mom, how you and Oliver came to get married," he asked Belle one rainy day. All of the boys called their father Oliver or "the old man" when he was not around -- a practice which Belle vainly tried to halt. Paul must have been six or seven, which meant he had quite recovered from his epic

wine jag. Belle was in the kitchen ironing the last big washing while the Finnish hired girl was down in the cellar laundry, banging the wooden tubs about and muttering over the next washing. Paul sat on the high wood-box, next to the warm kitchen range, watching his mother iron. He loved the starched, burnt-cloth odor of ironing. "Tell me, Mom," he repeated, "how did you and Oliver meet?"

Belle smiled at him, coloring slightly. Her skin was usually white, almost waxen. She never used any powder or makeup. "Oh, I've told you that already, youngster -- a dozen times. Now you run along and play."

"No you haven't, Mama," Paul lied steadily. "Not all, you haven't. There was a snowstorm -- I remember that," Paul started, urging her on. "Let's see -- you were lost in a snowstorm, wasn't that it? And Oliver found you." This was violently incorrect and Paul knew it.

Belle got a hot iron off the kitchen range, tested it with a moist finger -- psst -- and started on one of Oliver's shirts. They were so large that Paul always aspired to use one of them as a tent.

"I had just finished my course at the Detroit Conservatory of Music" -- Belle began, smiling to herself, almost talking to herself -- "and your Grandpa Fraleigh" -- Belle's father -- "had just come in off the road and told me that they wanted a music teacher for the public schools, 'way up in the northern peninsula of Michigan -- in a place called Chippewa -- --"

"Chippewa!" Paul cried. "Why -- why that's where we live, Mama!" It was part of the formula; he said it every time, just at this juncture, like a veteran trouper.

"That's right, son," Belle ran on, as Paul settled back on the wood-box and smiled to himself. "Grandpa had just got back home from Chippewa, and Mr. Scribner had told Grandpa about it himself." Mr. Scribner was the superintendent of schools at Chippewa. "Grandpa was the out-of-town representative of the Ferris people, you know," Belle ran on. Paul always resented

Belle's efforts to make her father's employment sound genteel. Somehow it shamed him. "Grandpa was an underpaid travelling salesman for a tight-fisted seed company, more like it," Paul thought to himself, being something of a small realist at seven.

"So I sat down and wrote Mr. Scribner about myself -- and guess what happened?" Belle went on.

"They didn't take you," Paul quickly said. This was a variation of the theme, and was clearly not cricket, and Belle looked at him closely.

"They did too take me," Belle said, pursing her lips and folding the shirt and spanking it smartly with the hot iron. "Out of seventeen applicants, mind you, they accepted your mother." Paul wondered, as he had wondered scores of times, where he would have been if they hadn't; if his grandfather Fraleigh, "The out-of-town representative," had not run into a schoolman called Scribner. If -- --

"The beautiful maple leaves were tinted and falling when I arrived in Chippewa," Belle went on. The cycle of the northern seasons had always affected Belle deeply, and she rhapsodized a bit, falling into the easy conventional literary cliches of her girlhood. "The hills and woods were a veritable riot of color." Belle paused over her ironing, and her gray eyes grew unseeing. "Yes, the place was wildly beautiful, a strange, rugged, harsh land. I loved it at once -- and always have. It was like" -- she paused again -- "it was as though I were coming home..."

Paul drew in his breath sharply and hugged up his knees on the woodbox. She has never said that before, he thought. That was a beautiful thing she just said -- why, it's true, it's true!

"What happened after that, Mama?" Paul softly said.

"Oh yes, son." She was working on one of Oliver's nightshirts now. His dress shirts could contain only a side-show, but his nightgowns could house the entire main attraction, Paul thought.

"Well, I got a lovely front room at dear old Mrs. Donovan's --- and I started my new music work. That's all there was to it, son."

Belle glanced at the crazily ticking kitchen clock. One of those damned piano kids are coming, Paul thought. I just know they are. "No, Mama --- that isn't all there is to it. You haven't met Oliver yet," Paul said to his mother.

"Well, sir," Belle went on rapidly, "with my first November here came the first big blizzard I had ever seen. It was so big --- why, son, you know the kind of snowstorms we get up here," she concluded lamely.

"Yes, Mama, I know," Paul said.

"I was coming home from school. It was during the noon-hour. The blinding snow was streaming out of the northwest. I was holding an umbrella out in front of me, like this." Belle motioned and laughed. "You know, son, no one up here ever uses an umbrella in a snowstorm --- I was that green. I was on my way to Mrs. Donovan's, passing the backyard of our house --- where we live now --- and I bumped right into a tall man coming out of the backyard." Belle was talking rapidly now. "I stumbled. He caught me in his arms. He held me tightly. It was snowing. We looked at each other. He said he was sorry. He let me go." Belle paused and sighed.

"When I got to Mrs. Donovan's, I asked her who lived there --- where we live now --- and the dear old lady crossed herself and told me it was a widower with three little sons. She told me his name. Now who do you think it was?" Belle asked.

"Oliver Biegler --- my old man," Paul responded loyally, curiously regarding his mother, who had become strangely beautiful and young again as she stood bending over her ironing.

By the time he was eleven, Paul had heard the story of Belle's romance many times, and had grown somewhat weary of it. Sometimes he became irked with

Belle, thinking to himself: Why on earth did Mama ever marry such a crabby, vile-tempered man as Oliver? Why couldn't my father have been a gentle, considerate, generous man? One who played games with his children, like other fathers? Paul had another thought too, one that colored his entire boyhood: Why couldn't my father have been almost anything but a saloon-keeper?

Paul knew, with quiet dismay, that his playmates' parents must have discussed his low estate at home, because when he would have one of the fierce, fleeting childish quarrels with one of them, the worst they could seem to think to say was: "You're nothing but a dirty saloon-keeper's son!" Or: "Polly's old man keeps a saloon! Red-nose Polly, red-nose Polly!" No one ever thought to shout at his playmates: You're a dirty miner's son -- or a vile minister's son -- or even a street-cleaner's son. Saloon-keepers were the lowest of the low.

Even the very school books of the time taught Paul that there was little hope for him. Anyone that dabbled in alcohol inevitably became a social pariah as well as a mental and moral degenerate. His spawn was doomed to be naught but gobbling idiots and lurching, shambling imbeciles. Why, it was printed right there in the book. Some of the school books would even show startling pictures of yards and yards of human intestines, every inch a glowing, healthy red. These were the guts of the righteous, unsullied by the demon rum. On the next page would be an illustration of a sorry gray mess, looking something like a platter of deflated liver sausages. These were the dreary bowels of the boozers. Paul smarted over these experiences as though he had been struck with a lash. He never told Belle about them. His older brother Lincoln had done so once. Paul had witnessed the scene...

So insistently was the conviction of his inevitable mediocrity borne upon him, that Paul felt that he annually became a sort of embarrassing curiosity to his teachers and classmates each time he perversely managed to move from one grade to the other. The fact that he found his school work easy, and

that he was always among the leaders of his class gave him little comfort. He supposed that he and his brothers were merely the exceptions to prove the rule. At times Paul felt like a Kallikak who had made good.

Paul, then, knew all too well how his parents had met and married. But he still did not know why. Why, why, why? Belle loved to sit and talk with her boys, and time on end, as she talked, Paul pondered the fickle destiny that had mated the son of an immigrant German brewer -- his grandfather Biegler -- with the daughter of a New York Dutchman -- his grandfather Fraleigh -- whose family had settled on the Hudson River long before the American revolution. And why did this German brewer meet and marry the tall, imperious German woman, Katrina Zien, whom he had met on the ship, coming to America in 1845? What sly play of fate had brought the budding young seed salesman to meet and marry a young Scotch girl, Margaret Broun, and bring her from New York out to Detroit? Was he hurrying West so that he could be in Chippewa in time to hear of a teaching job for a daughter yet unborn? No, Paul decided, that would be at once too comforting a thought and too monstrously egotistic.

When Belle first came to Chippewa, she "had an understanding" with Will Lamoree, a rising young Detroit photographer. In her affections he seemed to be the most successful of her cluster of deserted Detroit swains. Paul had seen his picture in Belle's album -- a hirsute, be-moustached, wing-collared young man standing in an attitude of heroic self-abnegation, who looked exactly like all of the pictures of all of the young men in all of the albums he had ever seen. There seemed to have been a separate race of album-men. Paul would wince when Belle would say, "That's the young man ^{who} that might have been your father, son." Sometimes she would musingly say: "Will was very much in love with me. He was so sweet -- I -- I wonder what it would have been like if I had married him?" Paul often wondered, too.

* * *

Belle Biegler was the family historian, recorder, recollector, and arbiter in all things intellectual. She was the court of last resort on all questions pertaining to grammar and usage. She really had an amazing recollection. Her mind was a patchwork of things remembered. And she could parse a sentence so that it bristled like a battleship on war maneuvers. It was more than Paul could ever learn to do. In the language department the boys early found that Oliver rated A in emphasis but was deplorable in pronunciation, spelling and syntax. "Ask Mom, she knows."

Belle, as was her way, had saved all of Oliver's few love letters. She had carefully stowed them away in a shoe box tied with traditional blue. Then she couldn't find them. "Tsk, tsk, tsk -- now where did I put those letters?" It took the combined efforts of Paul and two older boys to unearth them -- under a mattress in his discarded crib in the dusty attic. Nestling with them they had found a cracked old hot-water bottle. Love must not cool, Paul thought. When the family spirits were at a low ebb (and Oliver was safely out at camp), Belle would occasionally read some of the love letters at the dinner table. They never failed to start a wild Bieglerian hooting.

Oliver had once taken a six-week bookkeeping course in Milwaukee, the intellectual advantages of which he never tired of expounding. Oliver's beautifully written double-entry love letters were gems of cloying copybook sentiment, tiny hymns to unsullied womanhood, as warm and pulsating as a notice of overdue box rent. Belle had even found in the tall bookcase in the music-room the book out of which he had copied them. "Professor Cuyler's 'Letters For All Occasions.'" A pretty tome it was, with shameless little cupids swimming naked all over the cover. In all of these letters Woman was a shrine, the lofty keeper of the stork, to which evil Man tremulously addressed his abject petitions.

Belle would sit at her end of the table, near the pantry door, endlessly smoothing the tablecloth, brushing away imaginary bread crumbs, adjusting her

nose-glasses, drinking her steaming Bulgarian tea -- one of the endless assortment of dreary health brews and formulas which she consumed with a touching, child-like faith -- and reading Oliver's old love letters. Most of the time she would laugh heartily, but sometimes her gray eyes would grow misty. Again, she would read from Professor Cuyler's book -- excerpts of letters which she really thought Oliver should have sent her. One of Oliver's classics ran as follows:

"The grave beauty of your mien, your sweetly solemn smile, distracts me so that I cannot properly attend to my duties as (here state business or profession)." Oliver had gone the whole hog and copied everything, directions and all. Perhaps, Paul thought, he shied at the word 'saloon-keeper.' The only original note that had crept into this one was in the salutation. "Dear Angle," it ran.

But "Dear Angle" had married her Oliver. He had proposed to her on a Sunday drive around beautiful wooded Iron Cliffs Drive. "He looked so big and strong, driving his fast horses," Belle told her children. She had forsaken Will Lamoree and her orderly little regiment of suitors in Detroit. The advice of all her new Chippewa friends had gone unheeded. "I tell you, Belle, he's nothing but the keeper of a low dive. He cheats at cards, he chases fast women -- and he beats them, too. And he -- he's not even your own religion!" Oliver was nominally a Roman Catholic.

Kate Donovan, who ran the Donovan House where Belle lived in Chippewa, was chief among Belle's self-appointed saviors. She was a wispy, good-hearted, hank-haired little widow of sixty, with the thin, busy wet lips which seem peculiar to certain Irishwomen. When Kate was excited she had a slight brogue, which was to say that she always spoke with a slight brogue. "Don't marry that man, Belle! No good can come out of it. Those there Bieglers is all crazy. He's a pup, he is! (Kate's pups always rhymed with 'hoop'.)

"I tell you he kilt his first wife, that he did. A fine Irish girl she was. Three sons in four years! God help ye, lass." Belle had pursed her lips and quietly nodded.

Belle married Oliver on Midsummer's Day in St. Xavier's church. The ceremony was blessed by Father Keul, and Oliver took his music-teacher to his big frame house on Hematite Street and told his three young sons, "Here is your new mother." They had stood and stared at her. Red-headed Gregory had burst out crying. The following March Belle presented Oliver with their first son. Grandpa Fraleigh, the seed salesman, had fought in the Civil War, and had been a prisoner in notorious Andersonville prison. So the first child was Lincoln. In less than two years Nicholas was born. That appropriately took care of the memory of Grandpa Nicholas Biegler, the brewer. Then had followed Katherine, the little girl who had died of "convulsions" while teething. Then Belle had gone to Chicago where Doctor Murphy removed her left breast; a cancer of the breast, he said it was. On her return Doctor Gourdeau insisted that she have a separate bedroom and not to have, under any circumstances, another child.

When Paul was born Belle had nearly died. Grandma Fraleigh had hurried north from Detroit. "Our Belle lies like a poor, broken reed," she had written the Detroit relatives. "The new baby is another fine boy -- the plumpest of the lot." It was a distinction which was not to stay long with Paul. As for Doctor Gourdeau, he was beside himself with rage.

"Dat 'ulking brute -- dat 'uge German beast -- I tol' you 'e should 'ave wan beeg t'rashin'!" he said, flashing his dark French eyes.

It was a sentiment which Paul was to warmly share with him many times.

CHAPTER 3.

The summer that Paul was eleven he was as usual shocked and surprised to discover that he had been admitted into sixth grade, into the room of Miss Eddy, the principal of Ridge Street School. "I passed, Mom, I passed!" he shouted, waving his "promotion card" that fine June day. But he was even more gratified at this evidence of advancing manhood. Paul was anxious to grow up for three reasons: He wanted to be able to play with his older brothers; he wanted to be a big, strong man like Oliver; and he wanted to be a great writer like James Oliver Curwood.

There seemed little prospect that any of these ambitions would soon be realized. Paul was a gangling, big-eyed youngster, small-boned like Belle, and his thin arms and spindly legs, in their corduroy knickerbockers, looked like the stems of old Pat Lyons' clay pipes. He also had weak kidneys, and still occasionally wet the bed at night, a condition which Belle ruefully lay, like the indictments in his school books, to his early bout with alcohol. Belle sought to use him as a walking laboratory for her latest health concoctions -- "Mother's got to put some flesh on your poor little bones, son" -- and she once even tried to persuade Oliver to buy a goat. She had just read an illustrated newspaper account in "The Iron Ore" of a 115-year-old Turk who had got that way from drinking and eating vast quantities of goat's milk and cheese. After studying the picture of the venerable Turk, Paul was for ^cone humbly grateful to hear his father's thunderous no.

"You read too much, son," Belle would say to him constantly, and it was probably true. Too much, that is, but not always too well. Long ago Paul had read all of the Brownie Books, the Billy Whiskers series, and every book of fairy tales in the Chippewa Carnegie Library. "Andrew Carnegie's library!" Oliver would roll his eyes and shout, being a slavish admirer of Teddy Roosevelt and his big stick. "Out of all the millions of tons of ore he took out of this bloody town, that's the only goddam thing he ever sent back!"

Paul had romped through Horatio Alger until he thought that some special destiny lay ahead for his little schoolmates who wore a certain kind of clothes -- clothes that were "threadbare but clean and neatly patched." Poverty became the golden spring from which all ambition flowed... His shabby schoolmates, Paul concluded, were all hellbent for marrying the boss's daughter and getting elected to Congress -- a prospect which even then left Paul quite cold. Then had come the saga of Tom Swift and his adventures with miscellaneous giants, fantastic inventions and infernal machines, which ran into many volumes. Nor did the groaning library shelves devoted to the checkered boyhood of the Rover Boys escape him -- Dick, Tom and Sam Rover. Serious-minded Dick was the oldest, and timelessly in love -- in a pure, Eagle Scout sort of way -- with a curiously sexless creature named Dora Stanhope. The brothers Rover and little Dora were constantly being harried and badgered by the diabolical machinations of a bully called Dan Baxter, ably assisted by a "toady" whose name had finally escaped Paul. There were so many...

Paul waded through the opium dreams of Jules Verne and a gelded version of "The Arabian Nights." Then came the thralldom of Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer; Belle couldn't even get Paul to his meals during that magic time. More lately he had discovered, much to Belle's approval, the Great Out-of-doors -- "Run out and play, son -- don't read so much" -- and by turns Paul became Hopalong Cassidy, who could whirl and shoot the eye out of a gopher at seventy paces; a big game hunter on the South African veldt; then the slugging hero of "The Spoilers." He soon became a vicarious authority on all manner of cattle brands, breeds of Alaskan sled dogs, and the manifold forms of successful placer mining. Tarzan had not yet emitted his first curdling jungle shriek to a startled and expectant world.

As he read these floods of books, and many more, Paul yearned to see these far places -- and then to write about them like the gifted authors he had read. It seemed to him the ideal life: to see; to experience; and then to tell. It was easy. All one needed was a stub pencil and a Big Chief writing

tablet... James Oliver Curwood was his latest literary idol. Paul shivered with Curwood's stalwart heroes as they munched out of the frozen North, their frosty dragon breaths trailing after them as they shouted to their faithful dogs -- racing, ever racing to get across the big Mackenzie before the spring breakup... The closest Paul had yet got to achieving the burning thrill of literary expression was a story he had written the year before in fifth grade. After considerable pencil biting he had finally entitled this effort, "Lost All Night In a Swamp With a Bear." Following that there had seemed but little to add, except possibly "gr-r-r," but Miss Welch had liked it and had even read it aloud to the class. After all, it was a start...

Paul felt that Belle was partly to blame for these incipient literary yearnings. Just two summers before she had written a scenario for the moving pictures. There was little that Paul doubted his mother could not do -- she could make the best orange sherbet in the world, run a big house full of boys, give scores and hundreds of music lessons, not to mention two recitals a year -- and even live with Oliver. And now she had added authorship to her accomplishments. It was true. Paul had actually seen her in the desperate throes of literary creation, had even hefted the heavy finished manuscript tied with blue ribbons which had been typed at night by Miss Casey, Lawyer Belden's stenographer. There was one thick copy for a breathless Hollywood, another copy for Belle, and the third for Orville.

"Orville" was Orville Trembath -- "my collaborator," Belle called him -- the son of spry, deaf little Mrs. Trembath, one of Belle's old friends and neighbors. Mrs. Trembath dyed her hair and ^{used} ~~wore~~ the only ear trumpet Paul had ever seen. Her son Orville was an actor. He had been "in stock" and was home "resting between engagements." He was a pallid, languid young man, with dark patches under his eyes, who reminded Paul of a picture of the man who shot Lincoln which he had seen in Leslie's Magazine Yearbook. Paul never warmed up very much to Orville. And he had finally been insulted by him.

* * *

Paul had been swimming all afternoon out at distant Cooper Lake. The walk home had been hot and dusty. He was late for supper and he was hungry. His brothers were even later than he. Of course they all knew that Oliver was out at the South Camp on another of his endless fishing trips. Paul ran in on the side porch into the dining-room. There was no supper on the table. It was Thursday, the hired girl's afternoon out. "Mom must be having one of her sick spells," Paul thought. It was quiet in the big house and smelled of freshly baked cookies. Paul peered anxiously into the front rooms. There were Belle and Orville. Belle sat at her high secretary in the parlor writing furiously. Sheets of paper lay scattered on the parlor rug. A slanting shaft of light from the sinking sun poured upon the parlor floor. Orville had maneuvered himself into this glow of dusty light, holding the precious script in his hands. He cleared his throat. Belle stopped writing and removed her nose glasses. She sat looking dreamily out the side window at Lindstroms' woodpile. Orville's hands were trembling, he began to speak, his voice was low and vibrant, like Reverend Hayward's at the Presbyterian Church. On and on he read. Paul was held, fascinated, caught in a fiend's clutch. He was witnessing the birth of Literature. Orville paused, glanced down, and shifted with the sun. He had come to the part:

"(Old Doctor Simpson removes his stethoscope and gently pulls the white sheet over little Ella's still, white face. He turns to Ella's weeping mother, throws out one hand and bows his head.)

"(Caption) 'Mrs. Worthington -- this is the end -- little Ella's suffering is finally -- --'"

At this point Paul shouted, "Ma, I'm awful hungry -- please give me something to eat!" As a matter of fact Paul had quite lost his appetite, but some irresistible impulse had compelled him to speak.

Orville wheeled on Paul -- Orville never executed mere turns -- and looked at him, slowly, scornfully, up and down. There was a pregnant pause.

"Listen, kiddo," he finally said, " -- go peddle your papers!" Then he turned abruptly on his heel. Paul waited for a curtain to drop. Instead Belle had dropped everything and rushed out to the kitchen. Paul saw that her fingers were stained with ink. She had a smudge on her cheek. She had given Paul a fine supper, one of her magical suppers, with not a single one of her health recipes in it -- a supper topped off by fresh cookies and toast and tea and her own grape marmalade. As he lazily ate, Paul reflected disloyally that perhaps Belle might be a better cook than she was a writer.

The death of little Ella had had to wait... In fact as far as Hollywood seemed concerned this particular Ella seemed destined to live to a ripe old age. In despair over repeated rejections Orville had finally gone back on the road. Hollywood! Hollywood was the home of the morally warped, the intellectually blighted, the artistically dead. Belle was convinced that the crafty moving picture people, full of envy and low cunning, had stolen her brain-child. After that every time she went to a picture in McNulty's Opera House in which a small child departed this life -- and the infant mortality rate in the movies of the time had reached epidemic proportions -- she would indignantly whisper "Plagiarism!" and take Paul's reluctant small hand and hurry from the place. Once she even went to see Lawyer Belden about it...

Yet these dreams of virile manhood and literary fame were fleeting and seemed far off. They could wait. Most of all Paul wanted to grow a little and be able to play with his brothers Link and Nicky and their jolly companions. His brothers and their friends always did such wonderful things: Building shacks in the woods for the "gang"; or making big, greenish, foul-smelling wet-cell batteries to run their telegraph sets; or selling magazines to all their parents' friends to win some big prize, just as illustrated: a new bat and catcher's glove or an erector set or a magic lantern; or giving carnivals

and circuses at which they sold lemonade; or perhaps gathering and selling empty whiskey bottles back to the saloons -- four cents for quarts, two cents for pints... But grow as he might (and Paul was nearly as tall as Nicky, who was fifteen), his brothers always kept ahead of him. And they didn't seem to want him around. Nicky was the worst. Link was rarely gruff with Paul, and sometimes tolerantly let him tag along when the gang went swimming. But Nicky, two years younger than Link, was jealous of his seniority over Paul. Nicky used all sorts of clever ruses to get rid of Paul. All of them did. Paul had lately guessed that the gang did not really want him. "That's it," Paul bitterly thought, "they don't want me." It was always the same.

School was to open in just a few weeks. Link and Nicky and the Cooley boys and Dick Crabbe were going out to Fire Center near the Big Dead river to tent for a week and pick blueberries. Paul wanted to go. Belle had finally said he could if it was all right with Oliver. It was all right with Oliver -- "I'll be glad to get the lazy whelps out of my sight!" -- but Paul didn't go berrying at Fire Center.

"Listen, Mom," Paul had come in and overheard Nicky pleading with Belle. They were in the sitting room. Belle was sitting in her rocker by the window, to the left of the tall mirror. Paul quietly breathed through his mouth and stood by the dining-room stove and listened. "Listen, Mom, please don't make us take Polly along. Please!" Nicky was saying. "He'll spoil it all. Mrs. Cooley don't make us lug Edgerton all over. Dick Crabbe's Ma don't make us nursemaids for Donny. Why don't he play with the kids his own age?"

"The word is 'doesn't'," Belle said. Paul could hear her rocker creaking.

"Anyway, Mom," Nicky ran on hopefully, shrewdly trading on Belle's concern for "her baby," "there's bears out there -- big, black bears!"

Paul quietly leaned and peered and saw Belle purse her lips to keep from smiling. "Well, Nicholas, if that's the case maybe it's too dangerous to let any of you⁹⁰ -- don't you think?"

"No, no, Mom -- they ain't that bad -- the bears, I mean," Nicky said. "It's just -- you know he's scared of the dark -- it's just that Polly will get lonesome at night and bawl. And he'll -- he'll pee all over the bedding -- oh, can't you see, Mom!"

Paul tiptoed out to the kitchen, and slipped out the back door, letting the screen door gently close. His ears were hot, his cheeks were flaming. He walked over and sat on the clothesreel platform, dangling his legs, back and forth. His corduroy trousers made a noise as they rubbed at the knees. His thoughts were racing, his heart was filled with bitterness. "They don't want me. They don't like me. Nobody likes me. I'm a stranger in this house. I'm not even their child... They found me one morning when I was a baby -- lying on the back porch... Maybe my father was a famous author passing through Chippewa on his way to Alaska. But they won't tell me -- they're keeping it from me. I might as well run away... Nobody wants me... I don't belong here -- --"

"Why don't you run and skip and play, son?"

It was Belle; she had come out and was standing on the back porch smiling at him. She was forever trying to make a bounding little faun out of him. "Go bounce your ball off the roof. Don't sit there dreaming to yourself."

Paul sat watching his mother. She was smiling at him, making eager little nods. She was wearing a house dress -- it was cleaning day -- and had neglected to put on the false corset thing she usually wore after her first operation -- when her breast had been removed. The left side of her chest was flat like a man's. Paul looked away. He saw an ant rapidly carrying a dead fly towards the clothesreel. The fly was twice as big as the ant.

"I was just thinking, Mom," Paul slowly said. "I was just thinking that I don't want to go berry picking." Paul watched his thin legs as they kicked back and forth. "I was just thinking it was a lot more fun staying at home."

Paul looked up at his mother. Belle stood on the back porch smiling brightly and still nodding at him, with her head slightly tilted. A long dimple showed in her right cheek. "I've got the same dimple in my cheek," Paul thought. "Everybody says I look like Mom. I'm really her son. They didn't find me on the back porch."

"Listen, son, your father's out at camp -- he won't know," Belle said. "Do you want to take his field glasses and go out on Pilot Knob?"

Paul leapt off the clothesreel and ran towards his mother. "Oh, Mama, can I really take Oliver's field glasses?" Oliver's imported, German-made binoculars were among his most cherished possessions -- like all of his fishing and hunting equipment -- and high on the long list of the Biegler boys' taboos. Mama must be in a fine mood today. He and Mama were conspirators. The old man's field glasses! Who the hell wanted to go picking blueberries, anyway?

13
CHAPTER 4.

Paul the Explorer walked west on Hematite Street carrying Oliver's field glasses in their frayed leather case carelessly slung over his shoulder, hanging from a thin leather strap. Oliver used the glasses mostly for deer hunting. Paul held himself straight as he walked, and kept sighting the sun for direction, ever on the alert for signs of danger. This was all in a manner that was becoming to one of the early explorers of the U. P. For he was really Douglass Houghton, the young geologist, searching for ore deposits. It was the summer of 1841 and great numbers of passenger pigeons whirred overhead. Anyway, there were seven. Poor birds, little did they know that they were doomed to early extinction. Alas! Paul and Audubon knew, but they didn't... Paul walked along with an odd, shuffling gait, keeping his feet close together and pointed straight ahead, even a little pigeon-toed. For the woods-wise Indians always walked that way. It was kind of hard to do, but you were supposed not to tire so quickly.

Two blocks west of his house Paul came to the east boundary of the large Blueberry Mine property. It was the largest iron mine in Chippewa. Everything about the mine shone a dull red from the ore. Even the leaves of the scraggly poplars seemed stained with ore. This was before landscaping formed a part of industrial budgets. The nearest towering shafthouse, which enclosed the skips and cages which transported the men and ore from far underground, stood near the west end of Blueberry Hill and loomed high above the neighborhood, dwarfing the surrounding houses. Its twin tower rose west of it, nearly a quarter of a mile away. These were evidently some of the old Indian mine workings he had heard about, Paul thought. He heard a great rumbling sound from the shafthouse of falling fresh ore being dumped from the ore chutes into the crusher cars. He nodded wisely. Some old Indians must be still pottering about, Paul concluded. He must remember to make field notes of this phenomenon...

At the top of the hill, on the corner of Ridge and Lake Streets, stood a little frame house literally in the shadow of the great shafthouse. One of his playmates, Bernard Redmond, lived there. His father, Dennis, was a

cigarmaker and also the esteemed treasurer of the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Bernie had told Paul so. Bernie was an altar boy in the Catholic church. Paul studied Bernie's house. This must be the crude log home of an early pioneer, he thought. I will stop and ask my directions and perchance quench my thirst. Ah yes -- maybe one of the male members can be persuaded to guide me. After all, a man of Douglass Houghton's ability didn't mope around in the woods all alone.

Mrs. Redmond came to the kitchen door, holding a broom which had a dusting cloth tied around the straw. She was a plump, near-sighted, motherly little woman who wore thick, gold-rimmed spectacles. Behind her Paul could see a small statue of the Virgin Mary and an alarm clock standing on the kitchen shelf.

"Is the head of the house in, Ma'am?" Paul asked, casually shifting Oliver's binoculars to the front.

"Hello, Polly. Why ^{Dinny's} Jerry's down at the cigar shop. If there's anything I can do..."

Paul had to be very patient with these backwoods people. "Are there any other male members of your household at home?"

Mrs. Redmond peered at him anxiously through her thick spectacles. Then she smiled at Paul. She wasn't quite sure just what the game was, but she would try to play it -- after all, she had three children of her own...

"Well, perhaps -- now perhaps if you will tell me --," she began.

"I'm looking for someone to guide me to Pilot Knob, Madam. I'll make it well worth his while," said Paul.

Paul saw that this simple, good-hearted pioneer woman was crushed. She pursed her lips like Belle. "I'm so sorry," she said. "My son is assisting his father to harvest the tobacco." Paul knew this meant that Bernie was helping his old man strip tobacco leaves down at the musty old cigar shop on Pearl Street. "The Indians around here are great smokers, you know," she added, nodding her head earnestly. "Great smokers!"

Paul bowed his head. "I'm sorry if I have disturbed you, Madam," he said with quiet dignity. "I shall proceed on my way alone." He turned to go.

Little Mrs. Redmond was getting into the spirit of the thing. She stepped out in the stormshed, still carrying her broom, and motioned to Paul to follow her. Out on the sidewalk she stood and pointed her broom handle north.

"You see that there lake down at the end of this road there?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"Well sir, that's Lake Bancroft -- named after an old Indian chief," Mrs. Redmond said. "You wouldn't of guessed it -- few do -- but that's a typical Chippewa Indian name -- like Sussex or Yorkshire -- or even Dublin."

"Why, Mrs. Red -- why Madam, that is indeed a -- a surprise," Paul said.

"Yes, isn't it? And do you see that there high rocky bluff just on the other side of it?" she went on, pointing.

"Yes, Ma'am," Paul said in a small voice.

"Well that's your Pilot Knob -- so get along with you." She was smiling as she patted him on the shoulder, giving him a gentle push. "Get on with you, Polly. I've got my cleaning to finish. You're a worse pixey than my Bernie -- and he's bad enough, the Lord knows."

"Thank you, Mrs. Redmond," Paul said, smiling. His smile was a trifle wan. "Please tell Bernie I was looking for him -- tell him I had got hold of my father's field glasses. I'll try to get out and come up and see him tonight -- my father's out at camp, you see."

Paul started to walk down Lake Street. He walked rapidly, then he broke into a run. As he turned, running, into the mine road which ran around the lake, he looked over his shoulder. The hospitable old pioneer woman was still standing on the path looking at him, holding her trusty musket. A kindly soul she was, Paul thought -- the stuff from which a great America was being forged... She waved her hand at him and turned toward her lonely

wilderness home. Paul waved at her, still running, as he darted out of view by the side of the long one-story brick mine dry, where the miners changed to and from their ore reddened mine clothes and bathed their ore-reddened bodies. Looking, Paul almost ran into a walking miner carrying his shiny "Lisk" dinner pail. "Looking out vare you be running," the big miner said, smiling at Paul. As he ran on Paul reflected that if he didn't know his Indians so well he would have sworn this one had a Finnish accent.

Pilot Knob was a steep bald bluff, with a sheer drop of cliff on the lake side, composed largely of low-grade iron-bearing rock. It was one of the highest points in Chippewa and Paul could see for miles in any direction as he stood looking through Oliver's field glasses. Despite his temporary rebuff, he was Douglass Houghton again -- cool, calm, and collected -- once again a dispassionate man of science making careful mental notes.

Paul studied the towers of the twin shafthouses of the Blueberry mine which rose like narrow ancient pyramids on the hill south of him. Between the two shafthouses stood the tall ore crusher, connected to each shafthouse by a narrow trestled railway. As one loaded dump-car of raw ore emerged from the bottom of the shafthouse onto the trestle, another ore car would just be leaving the crusher from the other side to get a new load from the opposite shafthouse. The two cars were connected by steel cables. This went on, hour after hour, day after day. "First one ant went and got a grain of sand, and then another ant went and got another grain of sand..." had run the endless story in the fairy tale. There were the little cars now, looking strangely like the train set Paul used to play with ^{in his sandpile} under the clothesreel...

Paul could see the slate roof of the Ridge Street school which stood on the top of Blueberry Hill. As he looked Paul could fleetingly smell the familiar school odor of varnished desks, the geraniums on the window-sills, and the red powdered stuff the janitor used to sweep the floors with after school. Paul knew his house lay at the bottom of the hill, among the tall

trees somewhere below the school. Belle would be there, working with the hired girl, finishing up her cleaning. Far, far south and east Paul could even make out the tall ski scaffold on Suicide Hill where they held the ski jumps each Washington's Birthday. A portion of Iron Cliffs drive skirted the ski hill. Oliver had asked Belle to marry him as they drove around the Iron Cliffs drive... Turning north and east Paul could see little but woods and hills and trees, beyond which lay a bright mountain of dumpling clouds marking Lake Superior. West of Paul sprawled the wide farming valley through which flowed the Chippewa River. Everything looked so trim and neat, divided into little squares by the fences of the Finnish farmers. Paul could even see their cribbed, ventilated haybarns and log "saunas" or steambaths, just as they built them in Finland. And everywhere he looked, it seemed, were the tall smokestacks and shafthouses and red stock piles of the iron mines...

The town lay in a broad, undulant valley between serpentine chains of ancient iron bluffs. Some of these bluffs were covered with thick maple groves which flamed into color each fall, but most of the hills near town were virtually bald save for low bushes and occasional patches of gnarled, wind-scarred pines. So irregular was the topography of the country that some of these hills erupted in the town itself, giving it Badger Hill and Grammar School Hill and Blueberry Hill, among many others. Paul was now standing on Pilot Knob, one of the tallest bluffs of all. He could see the clock on the Grammar school tower. It was nearing six o'clock.

In truth, the town was just one hill after the other, in turn surrounded by still more hills. With boyish acceptance, Paul had once charitably ascribed this pleasant circumstance to the concern of the town's planners for their children's coasting and skiing fun. That was before he had heard Oliver's dilations on "that goddam greedy Wall Street Scotchman," meaning, of course, Andrew Carnegie, the Steel King. It seemed that the town had simply grown up haphazardly around the iron mines. It was all sheer accident. If the ore had instead been found under a flat plain, then Chippewa would have

been a flat plain. As Paul wrote in a fifth grade theme: "Chippewa grew up like a crazy quilt." Thinking, perhaps, that the daring originality and color of this figure might be too confusing to his teacher he had added " -- or 'grew up like Topsy.'" This distinguished bit of whimsy had garnered Paul a grade of 98 and clinched his growing conviction that one day he would become a famous writer...

The course of part of the stream of European migration to America could be roughly reconstructed in the successive settlements in the town. All of the mines had their own "locations," tiny villages within the town which had sprung up around each new mine as it had been built. Frenchtown Location lay clustered near the old, abandoned Angeline mine against the south range of hills. It was the first settlement in Chippewa. The log houses of these early settlers still sheltered the families of their descendants, most of whom were miners.

Near the old Angeline mine Paul could see the spot where his Grandfather Nicholas' first brewery had stood; the wooden one that had been built by his grandfather before Oliver had been born, even long before the Civil War, shortly after Grandpa Biegler and his young bride had completed their long trek across the Peninsula by ox team. This first brewery had been destroyed by fire in the summer of '72. The new brick brewery had not been built till '81. In the meantime there had been a panic or something, Belle had said. Belle knew more about the town's history than Oliver did. Belle seemed to know everything. Paul could not see the new brewery, but he knew it was there by the old firehall, whose bell tower he could see. The last brewery now housed the horses and shiny carriages of Burke's livery stable.

Swedetown Location lay clustered around the Blueberry mine, and part of it reached the foot of the hill upon which Paul stood. Then the coming of the Nelson mine gave Chippewa Cornishtown Location. In the late 80's and early 90's the advent of the Trembath mine on the eastern outskirts brought Finn Town, and the Laughlin mine on the west finally flowered into "Little

Italy" or "Dago Town." When you asked a boy where he lived he did not say Chippewa, but "Swedetown" or whatever location it was. The rest of the town represented a gradual, inching junction between the various mining locations. Paul lived in one of these twilight zones, but his house was closest to Swedetown. For some obscure reason, the residents on Paul's street were composed largely of Irish and Germans.

The Irish had early settled in the town, coming in large numbers, but, like the relatively few German and Scotch saloonkeepers and tradesmen, they rarely worked down in the mine but contented themselves with becoming railroad men or diamond-drill runners, or firemen in the mine boilers, or operators of the huge clanking steam shovels whose angry dragon snortings could be heard all over the town as they hoisted the raw iron ore from the mine stock piles into the string of waiting ore cars. As Paul thought of it, it occurred to him that some of these Irish even became the town's politicians and policemen.

By and by the town, with its mixed population, came to support quite a few churches. Even then Paul did not understand nor concern himself too much with the niceties of the various religious dogmas. But he did know there was no shortage of churches... There were several Scandinavian churches; two or three more Finnish churches; separate shrines for the Congregationalists and Baptists, who seemed to be composed largely of religious strays and individualists; an English Methodist church for the Cornishmen; the vine-covered Presbyterian church to which Belle firmly sent Paul to Sunday school, and which was also a sort of stray sanctuary; and the "swell" Episcopal church, which the "mining crowd" attended for their devotionals. Even the good Catholics had two churches, the Irish and Italians attending the "Irish" church, and the French worshipping in a big frame church all by themselves. Each church had a bell, and on Sundays, when the mine whistles were quiet, the town would be filled with the wild music of clanging, tumbling bells. "O come all ye faithful..."

* * *

Virtually all of Chippewa was undermined by a maze of stopes and drifts made by the burrowing miners. The actual mine diggings were so far down in the earth that the mining-company engineers had long ago assured the townspeople that there was no danger of a cave-in. Since the mining crowd seemed to live placidly enough all over the town, in "company" houses, the townspeople gradually forgot about the possibility of danger. Like Paul, most of them had never thought of it because they had never lived anywhere else. Even the dull giant thuds of blasting heard regularly each day, shuddering and reverberating far underground, gradually became so common a part of the daily round as to excite no special notice -- unless too many dishes rattled and fell in the pantry. If the dishes were broken, as they occasionally were, some of the braver and more articulate of the townspeople might write an irate taxpayer's letter to the editor of *The Iron Ore*. "Dear Mister Editor: The other day my Aunt Minnie's china bowl was broken..." The lion-hearted might even write to H. Hall Keith, the stern-visaged superintendent of Chippewa's biggest iron mines, who lived in a large house on the big wooded estate at the south edge of town. Paul had often stood in awed silence as the great man whirled by the Biegler house to the Blueberry mine office driven in his fine rubber-tired carriage. With his pointed beard, H. Hall Keith looked like the pictures of the reigning head of the House of Windsor. Even more so, Paul thought. Oliver, in his more charitable moods, loudly called him "Carnegie's graspin' tool!"

The town's planners, being practical ore diggers, had not gone in for conferring difficult, romantic and guttural-sounding Indian names on everything, as had so many other Michigan towns. There were available no picture postcards of quaint Michimillimackinac Hotels or romantic Ossingowanamacahoo Lakes which tourists could mail from Chippewa; just plain Taleen House or Mud Lake or Commercial Hotel or Lake Bancroft. In fact there were no tourists. At the time no efforts were made to lure other restless Americans to the

place; there was no cheering Chamber of Commerce or Chippewa First League; the town's soothing properties for hay fever had not yet been properly appreciated. The only travellers that came to Chippewa were mining people, occasional relatives of the townspeople, or single-minded hunters and fishermen. The U. P. had one of the largest deer herds in the country. And fishing... Oliver fished so much that Paul sometimes feared he was going to develop gill slits.

Paul reflected that the town was only a sort of permanent mining camp -- rich and seemingly inexhaustible, but nonetheless a mining camp. What would there be there without the mines? Nothing but the lonely woods and Lake Superior. Oliver's saloon depended on the miners, Bernie Redmond's old man made cigars for the miners -- why most of Paul's schoolmates were the sons of miners, and would themselves one day probably grow up to be miners. Was it true? Did every boy do what his father did? Would he some day wear a starched white apron and work behind Oliver's long bar? Would -- --

"Hello. Could I have a look through your binoculars?"

Paul lowered Oliver's glasses. A plump, chesty, red-headed boy dressed in a cowboy suit stood smiling at Paul. "My name's Fritz Bellows. I'm new in town. What's yours?"

Paul saw that Fritz had a broken tooth in front -- and that he smiled all the time, an engaging, wide smile that made his pale blue eyes wrinkle at the corners. He did not seem to have any eyelashes.

"My name is Paul Biegler. Yes, you can look through the glasses," Paul said. "But be awful careful -- they belong to my father."

With elaborate care Fritz took the glasses from Paul and adjusted them to his vision. Paul watched Fritz as he scanned the town. Fritz wore a leather holster, from which a nickel and black handle protruded.

"Is that a real revolver you're carrying?" Paul said.

Fritz lowered the glasses. "Sure. It's a thirty-two and loaded. Would you like to try it?"

"Sure," Paul said, eagerly. He had never shot a gun before in his life. Belle wouldn't hear of it. "What'll we shoot at?"

"See that tin can behind you? Shoot that. Here you are. All you got to do is pull the trigger."

"Yes, I know," Paul said. Paul turned and saw a small can lying on a rock about twenty paces away. His back was towards Fritz. Squinting his eyes like Hopalong Cassidy, he raised the revolver in the general direction of the can. He wanted to block his ears. "What'll I do now?" he thought. He closed his eyes and pressed the trigger. "Spang!" Paul blinked his eyes. Like the fragile and inexperienced ladies in the Sunday supplements, who always seemed to be unerringly drilling their husbands and lovers, he had made a bull's-eye.

"Why that's swell, Polly," Fritz shouted. "Right on the button! Say, you can shoot! Want to try it again?"

Paul shook his head. He swallowed. His ears were ringing. His nose wrinkled from the smell of burnt powder. He gingerly handed the revolver back to Fritz. "No thanks. I don't want to waste your bullets. Anyway, it's nearly my supper time," Paul said. "Nice little gun you've got there," he carelessly added.

Just then the mine whistles began sounding their evening call, and Fritz and Paul stood together on Pilot Knob silently listening to the great symphonic waves of sound which surged over the town, followed finally by the haunting forlorn echoes. Then it was still. It was always thus. The two boys looked at each other. Fritz spoke first. "Say, those whistles sure get me, Polly. I've never heard whistles like that before in all my life. They give me a lump in my throat -- and goose pimples, too."

Paul turned quickly to Fritz. "Do they? Do they really?" he said eagerly.

"They sure do," said Fritz.

"They do me too, Fritz. I often wondered if... I guess that's right. Let's go -- it's supper time," Paul said.

"All right, Polly. Let's go," Fritz said.

On the walk home Fritz told Paul that his father was the new jeweler that had come to town. Daddy had married a town girl, Fritz's mother, but they had never lived in Chippewa. You see, when Daddy married Mama he was an actor, an actor who had come to McNulty's Opera House with "The Mikado." That was a light opera by -- well -- by a couple of fellows. Daddy had an important part in that show and could sing the whole thing through, every one of the parts. It was a very funny opera, but Mama never liked Daddy to sing it. The show had kind of gone broke in Chippewa, but it wasn't Daddy's fault. He'd heard Mama remind Daddy about it when they quarreled. Sometimes she accused Daddy of marrying her because the show went broke. It seemed everybody's parents quarreled once in a while.

"Yes, that's so," Paul judicially agreed. He was relieved to learn that Belle and Oliver were not alone. Still and all, he thought, he'd bet that few fathers could rival Oliver in a downright family row. In the first place, few of them could shout as loud.

Fritz told Paul that his grandfather was old August Jaeger who owned the big store in town. Yes, that was the same Jaeger that lived on Hematite Street. Oh, so Grandpa and Grandma lived on the other corner on the same block as Paul -- it must be them because they were the only Jaegers in town. Yes, his Uncle Richard was the one that played the piano. Fritz guessed that Grandpa Jaeger didn't approve much of Daddy. He thought Daddy was too happy-go-lucky. He claimed Daddy never stuck at one thing long enough. Besides being an actor Daddy had also been a salesman, an optometrist, and had even taught elocution. And other things, too. He could do almost anything. Daddy also played the mandolin and guitar. Fritz was learning to play the mandolin. "Can your father play anything?" Fritz said.

Paul stopped walking and then Fritz stopped. They were standing in front of the now deserted mine dry. Paul shook his head. "No, Fritz, my old man can't play anything -- he's a saloonkeeper. He keeps a saloon." Paul watched Fritz closely.

"Why that's swell, Polly," Fritz said. "Just think -- all the ice-cold pop you want. Free. And fights -- I suppose your Dad sees lots of fights?"

"Yes. Sometimes he gets in them," Paul said. He felt an odd surge of pride. "You see, he's the -- he's one of the strongest men in the whole world. And there's a swell music box in the saloon."

"Holy smokes! Have you ever got it nice. I wish my -- I wish my old man ran a saloon and was big and strong like that. My dad is pretty strong, but he's got asthma. That's one of the reasons we moved here. Daddy wasn't very anxious to come here. He said the place was nothing but a dirty mine-stained dump. But I guess maybe it's because the opera went broke here. I like it here. I don't know many kids yet. I sure like those I've met..."

Paul and Fritz had got to the corner of the Ridge Street school. "This is going to be my new school. Do you go here?" Fritz said.

"Yes," Paul said. "I'm going into the sixth grade."

"That's great, Polly. So am I -- why, we're in the same room."

It was growing dusk. "Well, I've got to be going down this way," Paul said.

"Where do you live?"

"Down here on Hematite Street," Paul said.

"Oh yes, you told me that. Well, I live on North Main. Yup. Well -- I hope I'll see you again, Polly," Fritz said.

"Come on over," Paul said. "Any time. Say -- I wanted to ask you, Fritz -- how did you bust your tooth?"

"A billiard ball. My little brother Harold did it with a billiard ball. You ought to see my little brother Harold. If you think my hair is red... He threw it at me. We've got a pool table home. Mama says I've got to grow more before they fix it -- my tooth, I mean."

"You've really got a real pool table? At home?" Paul said.

"Sure. Come on over and we'll play on it, Polly," Fritz said.

"You bet I will," Paul said.

"Say -- there's just one thing I wanted to ask you -- you said your daddy was one of the strongest men in the world. Do you know someone stronger?" Fritz said.

Paul was silent.

"Do you?" Fritz repeated. "I was just wondering."

"Yes," Paul answered, "My oldest brother is stronger. His name is Oliver like my father. But we call him Roge. He's stronger than my old man. He really is. Roge is the strongest man in the whole world."

"Is that so. Gee, you're lucky. Well, so-long, Polly," Fritz said.

"So-long, Fritz. Come on over and see me," Paul said. "I'll show you my old man's boats and stuff. Maybe -- maybe I can even show you his saloon."

"So-long, Polly. I'm glad I saw you today."

CHAPTER 5.

At the time the war flamed over Europe there were but four of the six Biegler boys at home. The two oldest boys, Paul's half-brothers Oliver and Emmett, were working in distant Butte, Montana. Paul must have been about six or seven when his half-brothers had left Chippewa. As time went on they became, like his Detroit relatives, little more than names to him -- serious-faced young strangers (each marked with the typical Biegler cowlick, as were all of the boys) who stood gazing so mutely at Paul from the family group picture which hung obscurely on the wall next to Belle's writing desk, "the secretary," in the front parlor.

This photograph had been taken at Childs Art Gallery shortly before Belle had her second and last operation -- this time for the removal of a tumor. It was while she was away in Chicago for this operation that the two boys had fled, run away. Belle kept the family picture in the little used parlor so that Oliver would not destroy it in one of his fits of temper. She dared not actually hide it; she knew he would have raged at that, too. It was one of the many things about the Biegler home that required a nice but wearing calculation. After young Oliver and Emmett -- young men then -- had run away their names were never mentioned when Oliver was about the house. They were gone. They might have been dead. All they had left behind was Emmett's name, which he had scratched with Oliver's diamond stickpin on the glass of the kitchen door. "Welcome to the home of Emmett Biegler, age 12, Chippewa, Michigan." At the time Emmett was roundly thrashed by Oliver for this gesture of errant sentiment.

When Belle had married Oliver she had developed a deep affection for the three quiet, motherless boys. She not only washed and baked and ironed and mended for them, and nursed them when they were sick; she saw to it that they regularly attended their mother's church, the Catholic church. Swallowing her girlhood Presbyterian suspicions of the Church of Rome, she helped the boys with their catechism and with their lessons at the Convent school --

"Their poor mother would want it so" -- and later in the high school. But most of all she acted as a buffer between them and Oliver's frequent rages.

All during Paul's boyhood there hung over the Biegler home a constant pall, a dark cloud -- Oliver Biegler's temper. No one could predict when the storm would break, how long it would last, or how destructive its fury might be before it spent itself. There was but one sure storm signal: When the little blood blister on Oliver's lower lip would begin to pout and grow purple, it was time for all good mariners at 205 West Hematite Street to scurry for cover.

Paul would grow chill with terror at Oliver's outbursts. And his very insides would shudder convulsively as he watched his mother at these times. Belle's features would seem to take on a waxen pallor, a mask-like expression, to grow sharper, sort of pinched and frozen, as she tried to placate her ranting husband. Her efforts were always in vain. "Oliver, please, please, Oliver, the children -- think of the dear, innocent children!" Belle's earnest calm, her very stillness, seemed only to goad Oliver to further heights of ecstatic fury. The initial cause of the outburst would be abruptly forgotten, lost. Belle would now become the red banner that had come to torture him.

"Don't 'Oliver' me!" he would roar, turning on her, his face working and livid with rage. Belle would face him with her clear unblinking gray eyes. She was all of a foot shorter than he. "O woman, take your hateful false Dutch face out of my sight, I say!" he would howl. Then he would roll his blazing eyes up to the ceiling, the nearest Paul ever saw him approach an attitude of prayer. "Why in the name of merciful God was she -- she! -- ever blown into my arms during that fatal Christly storm!" This bitter allusion to their first meeting always made Belle wince, her bloodless lips would tremble ever so slightly, and Paul's heart would turn to solid stone. Paul knew -- and he sensed with dismay that his father in his rages also craftily knew -- how deep was her hurt, this trampling of her cherished romantic dream.

"This madman is my father, this madman is my father, this madman is..." Paul would murmur to himself, over and over, like a litany, as Oliver would lash himself into a purple frenzy over some trivial domestic mishap. A whole complex series of household taboos had grown up in the Biegler home to avoid and appease Oliver's wrath. Don't be late for your meals! Don't leave your sleds or coaster wagons about the yard -- put them carefully away in the woodshed or under the back stoop! Don't leave your coats and caps lying about the house! Don't disturb the old man when he is taking his nap after lunch! Don't breathe! Don't! But all these ruses and careful avoidances were of no avail; like the picture of the geyser in Paul's school geography, Oliver's temper would periodically erupt and foam over, nothing could ever seem to stop it, and that boy was fortunate who was not around... Perhaps the soup was too cold, or too hot and had scalded Oliver's sensitive tongue; or the woodbox was empty, the taxes were due; or the boys had used one of his many shotguns (reason enough), and had -- "O merciful God!" -- neglected to clean it. Or perhaps, as was most usual, one of his "worthless whelps" had done something wrong at the farm.

The Biegler farm was several miles out of town, beyond Chippewa River. This broad river had once carried Indians to Lake Superior but now it exclusively conducted the town's sewage to that restless sea. The farm lay in a broad mucky valley at the foot of the second range of rocky bluffs north of town. Oliver had purchased the land from one of the mining companies when he was a young man, and Paul suspected it pleased his father to regard himself as a gentleman farmer. Oliver had cleared and drained but a relatively small part of the land, which he planted each year in hay and oats and potatoes and truck vegetables. He cut the ice for the saloon and the house off of Cranberry pond; the firewood for the house came off the uncleared land. In her darkest hours Belle would always say: "You must give him credit, boys -- your father is always a good provider." This oft-repeated plea would be greeted with cynical snorts. "That's right -- give the devil his due, Mom!" Belle was ever generous

in extending credit to Oliver. With pathetic eagerness she seized upon anything which she thought might put him in a better light with his sons.

In the course of the years Oliver had acquired quite a complete farm, as farms went in and around Chippewa. The long, bitter winters, the short growing seasons, discouraged all but the most hardy farmers. "How many bushels of icicles did you grow on the farm last winter, Oliver?" some brave soul might ask Oliver, in the saloon. Oliver would give the foolhardy wag a brief, cold-blue stare, and that would be the end of that brief exchange of conversational punts. Oliver always had several Jersey milk cows, from whose yellow cream Belle made rich butter and heavenly orange sherbet. Paul had served his apprenticeship turning the big ice- and salt-packed freezer on the back stoop. Oliver kept at least one work team and a team of fast-stepping driving horses, and a single horse which was used for the daily trips to and from the farm and for Oliver's shorter camping trips. (Even the old house itself seemed to join in the general sigh of relief that went up when Oliver went to the woods.) Then there was the inevitable herd of drooping, nondescript nags and plugs which Oliver maintained solely, as far as Belle and the boys could see, so that he might trade them for still other nags.

Paul had never forgotten the time he had stood by the Miners' Bank waiting for his father to come home from the saloon for lunch. Oliver stood on the curb deep in a conversation with old one-eyed LeMay, trumpeting in his ear, extolling the virtues of some spavined nag he was trying to sell the crafty old Frenchman. At this inopportune moment Matti Kauppila, a Finn farmer who lived out by the Big Dead river, came down the busy Main Street in a lurching buckboard drawn by a shaggy beast called Charlie. The poor horse was obviously suffering from the "heaves," the horseman's picturesque name for consumption. Even Paul could see that. Matti had got the horse in a trade with Oliver the week before.

Matti spied Oliver talking to old LeMay. He pulled up the tottering horse -- "Whoa, Sarlie!" -- and pointed a gnarled, work-soiled finger accusingly at Oliver.

"Oleever," he shouted, " -- dat horse you sell for me las' veek -- he's to be dat heevy horse!" The benighted animal stood there in front of Oliver and old LeMay, swaying and wheezing horribly. But Oliver knew old LeMay's hearing and eyesight were not what they used to be.

"Oh, hello Matti," Oliver said pleasantly, smiling and nodding and stepping off the curb. Oliver's delight was unbounded. He raised one big hand as though in greeting -- then brought it down smartly on the beast's sagging rump, genially shouting, "Yes, Matti -- he's a nice, big heavy horse. I'm glad you like him so well -- Say, what's your hurry! Well sclong, Matti..."

Whenever Paul would awaken in the night to the sound of galloping hooves, and hear his father's muffled curses as he lit the breathing gas lamp in his bedroom to route the older boys, he knew that the neighbors were resentfully awake, whispering, "That Oliver Biegler's horses have broken loose and come to town again. There ought to be a law!" As regularly as Oliver's fits of temper, the horses would break out and race wildly into town, past the house, and on to Oliver's town barn. They always followed the same route. Oliver's barn stood in the block east of the house, next to the Taleen House. The horses would be led there by oat-craving Fred or Chief, one or the other of the big white work horses.

Milling and neighing and biting each other, all the horses would gather in the barnyard, between the barn at the rear and Oliver's "warehouse" which faced on Canada Street. The two-story warehouse had been built by Paul's grandfather for beer storage. It now housed Oliver's fringed, rubber-tired carriage and buggy and cutters and sleighs, and his boats and canoes and

tools -- even an old racing sulky... By and by one or two of the older boys would come down to the barnyard and light a lantern. Oblivious to Gust Taleen's awakened and cursing boarders, they would sleepily round up one of the leaders with a pail of oats. Then they would leap upon Fred or Chief, bareback, and thunder all of them back to the farm and lock them in the big farm barn until the broken fence could be found and mended the next day.

When his older boys were smaller, Oliver used to keep a hired man or two on the farm to do the chores. But as young Oliver and Emmett and Greg graduated into their teens, they also found that they had graduated into hired men on the farm -- hired, that is, but never paid. Oliver even tried to take them out of school. "When I was a boy of twelve I was through school and could load a beer car alone in one day!" This was a familiar refrain, this harking back to the days when Grandpa Nicholas Biegler had run the brewery. Men seemed to have worked regularly twenty-five hours a day in those days, Paul concluded. Belle, in her quiet way, fiercely fought Oliver's efforts to take the boys out of school.

The second year young Oliver had worked on the farm, he was just fifteen. He was a silent, short, broad, thick-wristed boy, with curly, bushy black Irish hair, but which had the usual Biegler cowlick. Even then he was as strong as the average grown man. His playmates had already nicknamed him "Rajah" for Barnum's successor to Jumbo. "Ladees and gentlemen: Rajah -- the biggest elephant in the world -- four inches taller than Jumbo!" Except for his age and lack of whiskers Paul concluded that young Oliver was the exact duplicate of Paul's short, barrel-bodied German grandfather, mild Nicholas, whose large velvet-framed picture hung so squarely and uncompromisingly from the sitting-room wall. His brothers and playmates called him "Roge" for short.

This second summer on the farm for young Roge was one of the high points in his father's epic rages. The farm was so low and swampy that it had to be ditched to drain it. One summer day one of the driving horses had gone to the main ditch to get a drink. Maude, a spanking, high-spirited bay. Her trim

forelegs had sunk in the treacherous peat, and the doomed animal had evidently leapt to free herself and had only managed to land in the deepest hole in the ditch. Young Roge was alone on the farm, milking the cows. He had run out of the barn when he had heard the frantic screams of the drowning animal. He raced across the lumpy damp fields but when he got up to the ditch only the tail of the stricken animal, like Ophelia's hair, could be seen floating on top of the turgid water.

Paul must have been so young that he was in his crib when Roge reported the loss of Maude to Oliver at the hushed supper table. Paul was awakened and lay cowering, listening to the frightful noises and shouts downstairs, and his mother's mingled screams, "You've killed him! O, you've killed him!" Oliver had beaten the boy nearly into unconsciousness and had pushed him down the cellar stairs. Later that night Belle had come and tearfully gathered Paul into her arms and taken him, and all the boys, to the Taleen House. This old schoolhouse-red brick hotel faced the Northwestern tracks and was run by Gustav and Sophia Taleen, the parents of Paul's boyhood playmate, Gunnar Taleen. There Belle and the boys had remained for a week. Belle went to see a lawyer about a divorce. He was drawing the necessary papers...

Oliver was full of contrition and self-abasement. He haunted the Taleen House, sending sheaves and sprays of flowers to Belle, and bringing extravagant gifts for all the boys. Paul got a crying teddy bear as his share of the loot, and wistfully thought Belle should do this more often. Paul had a shadowy picture of his father, on his knees before Belle, in a strange high bedroom, denouncing himself as roundly as he usually denounced others; pleading, promising, cajoling. Belle sat in a creaking rocking-chair. "Think of the children, the poor children," Oliver had mistakenly said. Waxen-faced, Belle had turned on him a look of infinite scorn. "I am, Oliver -- my God, I'm doing just that..."

But Belle had gone back, and there was a period of strange calm in the Biegler house. This creaking stillness reminded Paul of the time Belle had

carried him up Blueberry Hill to the Donovan House to look at Kate Donovan lying so white and still on a high couch, surrounded by tall lighted candles and flowers... Paul almost missed the shouted curses and wild tumult. Then by and by it had all started again, and the old frame house resumed the uneven tenor of its ways -- rang once again with the familiar shouts and mingled cries and wild curses. "O merciful God! O false-faced woman!"

Belle was in Chicago again recovering from her second operation. "I have been blessed with another fine doctor," she had written, "a poet with a medical degree -- young Doctor Max Thorek." This time Grandma Fraleigh was unable to come up from Detroit, and the boys, being older, had been left to the indifferent attentions of Amanda, the large Swedish hired girl. Amanda had her hands full, trying to take care of the big house as well as the amorous attentions of a big miner called Axel.

Paul was now regularly attending the Ridge Street school and had written Belle in his childish rounded scrawl:

"Dear Mama:

I am a good little boy. I am glad you are well again. Come home soon. Don't forget my button shoes and the popgun -- the kind with a cork in it. There was a big fite and Roge and Emmett have gone away. Hurry home. I am a good little boy.

Your son,
Paul.

I love you, Mama. Don't forget the button shoes and the popgun."

Belle had sent a frantic telegram to Oliver. What had happened? "I kicked the ungrateful whelps out," he had replied. His account was not strictly accurate.

* * *

It was supper time. Outside it was dark, a windy fall night. Oliver and five of the boys were seated around the long dining-room table. There was one empty place -- the chair of Lincoln, the quiet one; he was late. Paul sat in his junior high chair, as usual on his father's left, next to the chimney-sighing dining-room stove. Paul could smell cloves on his father's breath. With her bounding grace, red-faced Amanda had brought in the boiled dinner, and Oliver and the boys were eating in stony silence. Devoutly all of the boys wished that Lincoln would stay away until Oliver had finished supper and returned to the saloon. Then there was the familiar click of the kitchen door, the rattle of the loose pane, the whish of clothing carefully hung on the rack over the woodbox, and Lincoln slipped into his seat at the table, his gray eyes fixed on his empty plate.

With terrible calm Oliver turned and glanced up at the old Seth Thomas clock. His lower lip began to pout, the blister on it turned a mottled dark purple. The boys had given up any pretense of eating. Their food gagged them. They simply sat and waited. Biegler-wise Amanda had quietly locked herself in her bedroom off the kitchen. "Ay vill marry Axel nex' veek!" Paul heard the inside door lock of her bedroom softly click. The tenseness had whipped his perceptions to an uncanny acuteness. The boys waited for Oliver to speak. Or was this to be one of those awful silent scenes? Paul sat in an agony of awareness of impending disaster. Here -- it was coming...

Oliver had put down his knife and fork so that they slanted off the edge of his plate. With his big hands he pushed his chair back and circled the table. He stood over abject, numbed Lincoln. Paul held his breath, his throat was dry and constricted, he wanted to swallow. Then Oliver raised his hand and struck Lincoln flush on the face with the back of his hand. Lincoln reeled from the blow, then recovered and looked up swiftly, briefly, at Paul. Their eyes flickered in mute misery -- there had always been an inarticulate bond between them. Lincoln's cheek had turned a patchy greenish-white pallor

where he had been struck. Oliver raised his hand to strike the boy again. Lincoln hunched himself, waiting for the blow. Paul closed his wet eyes. The blow did not fall.

"Don't do that, Pa." It was Roge, young Oliver, speaking in his low, nasal voice. He was over twenty, now, a grown man. He had his own mug and shaved regularly.

"Who's going to stop me!" Oliver turned on Roge with a deadly calm.

"I am." Roge had risen and moved quickly before his father. "I am, Pa," he repeated.

Oliver's mouth twitched loosely with incredulous rage. He raised the great beam of his arm to brush this rebellious vision from his maddened sight. Young Oliver reached out his short right arm, his thick blunt fist gathered in the lapels of Oliver's coat, twisting, high up at the throat. Slowly, implacably he pushed and lifted his father back against the stair wall, next to the stove, holding him out with one knotted, straining arm. The other boys slowly turned and watched as in a dream. Oliver's long arms flailed wildly at his son, he kicked with his legs, his eyes rolled up in his head, glaring insanely; he grated his teeth, he gurgled and foamed, he muttered horrible, guttural curses...

But there was the miracle, the immutable fact: young Oliver held his father nailed against the wall. "Cool off, Pa," he said in his low voice, occasionally relaxing his grip so that Oliver could take a rasping breath. "Calm down, Pa. ^{LINK} Freddy didn't do nothing." Thus spake Rajah, "the biggest elephant in the world -- four inches taller than Jumbo!" Paul knew at that time, in that frozen instant, that young Oliver could easily have killed his father.

Paul sat in his high chair chilled with ripples of goose pimples, gripped in an icy trance. The scene, in all its nightmare reality, was being irrevocably scarred upon his memory with hissing irons. His mind and heart surged with a shuttling rush of wild thoughts and emotions... His father, the

man who regularly pitched drunken miners and lumberjacks into the middle of Main Street -- his father, the strongest man in the world, had been vanquished! The tiger and the bear... Good for you, Roge old boy -- give it to him, give it to him! Why don't you knock his bloody block off, Roge? Why don't you? Now's your chance, boy! Have you forgotten all the times he used to beat you? Have you? Don't you remember when he threw you down the cellar stairs? You can't forget! You can't, you can't, you can't forget! Give it to him! Don't -- you're killing him! Good! I'll wear my new button shoes at his funeral -- I'm glad poor Mama isn't here -- I wish I had my popgun -- I'd shoot him! -- Where are the heroes of yesteryear? -- O God, I never thought anyone could do the old man...

The next day Amanda had found a scribbled note on Emmett's and young Oliver's undisturbed bed:

"Goodbye, kids. We're heading West. Give our love to Mom -- she was sure swell to us.

Emmett
Roge."

CHAPTER 6.

The day that Paul had been once again rebuffed by his brothers, when they had not wanted him to go berrying with them, was also the day that he had met Fritz Bellows on Pilot Knob. In some way, which even Paul could not understand, it had marked a turning point in his boyhood. He could not recall that he had made any solemn resolutions or sworn any rebellious oaths. In fact, he could not remember that he had given the occasion any particular thought. There seemed only that some vague instinct had been awakened which told him that he should become more self-sufficient, that he must not depend so much on other people, on his brothers, even on Belle...

Anyway, wasn't Belle always telling him he must "stand up for himself" -- ever since the time three years before when Danny Gaynor had called Paul a "dirty saloonkeeper's son" and given him a black eye and sent him home crying? Belle had raised a terrible rumpus, and had twice gone and seen Mrs. Gaynor. Little Mrs. Gaynor had five boys of her own and the two women had finally wound up crying in each other's arms. Paul was filled with shame... The following summer Danny had kept his hand in by again beating up on Paul. It was beginning to look like an annual event. The last time Paul had told Belle he had fallen off Jaeger's barn while playing "chase." Paul had never fought Danny back. He had simply stood in a spell of sick horror while Danny pummelled him until he grew tired. What was the use? Danny's father worked at the firehall and was an ex-boxer. He gave all of his sons boxing lessons, standing them on a chair to beat the firemen's punching bag. Paul had enviously watched the Gaynor boys train. Danny even travelled about the Peninsula, fighting other youngsters at the annual firemen's tournaments. "Danny Gaynor, the pride of Chippewa," one of the placards had read. It hung by the punching bag in the firehall. So what was the use?

Paul had slept in Belle's big wooden bed with her until he was nearly eight. After that he had occupied a small cot in her bedroom. It was a pleasant room, full of heavy varnished furniture, the largest bedroom in the

house, and looked out on the tall Lombardy poplar trees which lined the side yard. For eleven years Grandma Fraleigh's sweet Scotch face had watched him from her picture on the wall. There was another smaller picture of Grandma, Belle and Paul on Belle's dresser. Paul had curls and wore a white dress. But Paul wanted to get out of his mother's room. It had grown hateful to him. He did not know exactly why. He loved Mama as much as ever. He only knew that it had become terribly important that he move his bed. He could not seem to be able to bring himself to speak to Belle about it.

It was November. School had reopened in September and Paul was comfortably situated in the A class of sixth grade. This was in Miss Eddy's room on the second floor, just over first grade. Fritz Bellows sat two seats ahead of Paul in the same row. Elizabeth Gluyas, a lame Cornish girl, sat between them. She was a quiet, dark-eyed girl, with heavy dark eyebrows, who wore large bow ribbons in her thick braided hair. She also passed notes between Paul and Fritz. Bernie Redmond, the cigar-maker's son, was also in the sixth grade, but he attended the Convent school across the tracks by the new firehall. Gunnar Taleen had moved up to the Grammar school, in seventh grade. Bernie and Gunnar had not yet met Paul's new friend, Fritz. Paul hoped they would like each other. Miss Eddy was writing in Palmer method on the front blackboard. "Abou Ben Adhem, may his tribe increase..." The class was learning the fruits of Ben Adhem's rectitude. Paul and Fritz already knew the bawdy parody.

Paul passed a note to Elizabeth for Fritz. He saw Elizabeth's small ears flush with excitement as she timidly touched Fritz's shoulder with her index finger. Fritz casually itched his back and took the message.

"Dear Fritz (the note read):

Where do you sleep at home? With your brothers? How long with your mother? Please give full information and oblige. This is extra secret.

Your friend,
X x X"

The elaborate series of X's was to confuse and confound Miss Eddy and whatever other uninitiates whose hands might profane their communications. Paul and Fritz were working out an elaborate code, but they had not yet completed it. Paul waited for Fritz's answer. Here it was coming, in another series of itchy backs.

"Dear Polly --

With my brother Kenny as long
as I can remember. Harold sleeps
in a cot. Mother and Dad have twin
beds. How about you?

Your friend,
O o O"

After school Paul avoided Fritz and ran home. Belle was at the piano giving a music lesson to an unhappy child who seemed to lack even a rudimentary sense of rhythm. Sometimes Paul thought he was growing to hate all music. He hurried from the sitting room. He went to the cellar and filled the scuttles with hardcoal for the two coal stoves, the one in the front hall upstairs, between Oliver's and Belle's bedrooms, and the one in the sitting room. They were tall round Michigan Garlands, with bright metal crowns on top, and each had a little kettle of water which rested on a shelf on the back by the damper, and there were small squares of isinglass in the coal door and in the small grate doors on the sides. Paul filled the kitchen woodbox and emptied the ashes from the kitchen range. The dining-room stove had not yet been lighted. For this service Belle gave Paul fifteen cents a week: five cents for following the endless "Perils of Pauline" at the matinee on Saturdays at McNulty's Opera House; five cents for candy at Sjolander's so that one would not grow too weak during the perils; and the extra five cents, Paul supposed, for charities and riotous living during the following week. Sunday school money was extra, something in the nature of a divine dividend.

Belle finished her piano lesson and came out to the kitchen. Paul could hear the hired girl scrubbing the bathroom floor upstairs. A heat register in the kitchen ceiling opened onto the bathroom floor. "Hello, son,"

she said. "Why aren't you out playing?" It was what she always said. Paul did not answer. Belle added water to a stew kettle on the stove. Belle's glasses had become steamed and she stood wiping them with her handkerchief. Paul sat on the edge of the woodbox. Now, he thought, was the time...

"Listen, Mom -- " Paul began. He found he could not continue. There a choking feeling in his throat. Then he began to cry, he couldn't help it. The more he tried to stop the more he cried. Belle quickly put her glasses on the warming oven of the stove and came over to Paul and sat beside him on the woodbox. She held him close to her, resting his head against her side -- her good side. "There, there, son. It's all right. Whatever it is, it's all right."

Paul stopped crying except for occasional convulsive sobs. He pulled away from his mother and went to the kitchen door. He stood scowling in the open door, looking at Belle. "What is it, son?" Belle said. "Whatever it is, it's all right," she repeated.

"Mom," Paul said, and his voice did not sound like his own. "Listen, Mom -- Fritz Bellows sleeps with his brother Kenny. Oh, Mom, he -- he can't remember ever sleeping in his mother's room!"

Belle reached to her nose for her glasses but not finding them she made an uncertain little circle with her hand in front of her face. Her gesture was one of utter helplessness. Her gray eyes stared at Paul. Somehow she reminded Paul of a little girl. Numbed with shame, Paul wished he had not spoken. "I love you, Mama," he blurted, and then he turned and ran outdoors.

That night when Paul went to bed he found his cot in the corner of the boys' back bedroom. There was a clean flannel nightgown lying folded on the pillow. Nicky and Link occupied the double bed. They were not home yet. After Paul was in bed, lying awake and still in the dark room, Belle came into his bedroom. She leaned over and kissed him. She brushed his cowlick back

from his forehead with her hand. "Good night, my little man," she whispered, patting his head, and then she went away.

The first winter of the War was a time of great snow in Chippewa. There was always plenty of snow in winter, but this was unusual. Articles appeared in The Iron Ore and the town's graybeards consulted their diaries for parallels from the past. "I mind the winter that..." they would say. So far the winter of '79 was out in front. There was so much snow that by Christmas the boys had finally despaired of keeping the ice clear on Lake Bancroft for skating. The big horse-drawn gang plows had been out on the streets several times before Christmas. But snow or not there were many other things to do. There was skiing and coasting and best of all, there was bobsledding on north Pine street, on the north slope of Blueberry Hill. Paul could not remember when he had had so much fun in the wintertime.

That Christmas had been unusually good to Paul. Who cared if Santa Claus was an exploded myth if you could get a brand new "Flexible-Flyer" sled, a new Mackinaw coat, a red knitted tassel cap and new "Gold Seal" rubber snow boots? And a new pocket knife from Grandma Fraleigh? Anyway, Santa had never given Paul a new sled before. It was the first new sled he had ever owned. Not that it represented any concession on Oliver's part. Up to that time Paul had used an old sled which had been Oliver's when he was a boy. It was a heavy, low wooden sled with grooves in the ^O painted wooden sides fitted with round iron runners. It was a fast sled. Its name was "Bruno" but Paul and his brothers, from whom Paul had inherited "Bruno," had all dubbed it the "pig-stabber." "Bruno" had finally earned a long rest.

Oliver was forever making things for the boys or buying and trading secondhand articles such as used bicycles, ice skates, coaster wagons, skis and the like. It seemed to Paul even then that it was not so much penury on Oliver's part as much as his desire to have an excuse for tearing the things

apart and putting them together again. And also, of course, to teach his boys "the value of a dollar." Oliver was an excellent carpenter and mechanic, and he had a complete tool shop which he kept under heavy lock and key in the barn at the rear of the Biegler house. This tool shop had once been located in the warehouse on Canada Street, down by the tracks. Oliver had moved it the summer before to make room for a young blond fellow called Elmer Lessard, who had opened a new establishment called a "garage" in the old warehouse. On any Sunday when Oliver was not out in the woods he would spend the day tinkering out in his tool shop, making or repairing something for the house or farm or the saloon -- or remodelling some bit of junk he had traded or bought and which might be made to do for the boys.

Belle knew how much the boys smarted over having to use these made-over plaything. Sometimes she would try to reason with Oliver, but that would only provoke a scene. "I'll learn the lazy whelps ~~to know~~ the value of a dollar!" he would howl. Oliver, the Roger Babson of his day, was forever conducting impromptu shouted lectures on the value of a dollar. "Anyway, the stuff they're makin' nowadays is no bloody good! Everybody's after the almighty dollar... Money, money, money!" he would rant. "Now when I was a boy..." and away he would go on a colorful and profane exposition of the tender love and expert craftsmanship that had gone into all of the merchandise that was made when he was a boy. Then he would extol the sled "Bruno" as exemplifying all these deathless qualities, often dramatically producing the battered sled and thrusting it at Belle for her white-faced inspection. "Lookit that, woman! Love went into that job! Love, I say!" Naturally this blighted love would lead him inevitably to the subject of the gnawing horrors of Wall Street -- the seat of all modern skullduggery -- "an' that goddam graspin' Andrew Carnegie!"

So, as with Paul's new "Flexible-Flyer," Belle would quietly write Grandma Fraleigh in Detroit and tell her what the boys wanted and would send Grandma some of her music-lesson money. Then either Uncle Alec or Uncle

Stephen would ship them north by express as ostensible gifts from the bountiful Detroit relatives, along with their usual gifts, if it was Christmas. All Oliver could do was fume and mutter that Belle's relatives were "spoilin' the bloody boys so's they'll never learn the value of a dollar!" Paul reflected that the whole thing ran in circles, like a squirrel in a cage...

That winter Paul and Fritz and Bernie Redmond and Gunnar Taleen built a bobsled over in Bellows' basement with the help of Fritz's dad, J. Barry Bellows, the jeweler and ex-actor. He was a fine, jolly little man with gray-ing reddish hair, and brilliant brown eyes, unlike Fritz's, and he would try to help them and pound his fingers with a hammer and then laugh, or else just sit in front of the furnace door and watch the boys and tell them stories or sing snatches from Gilbert and Sullivan, accompanying himself on the guitar. "O the flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la..." Paul's heart was filled with envy to see a father like Fritz's... It took the boys eight days to finish the bob, working after school and on nights they could get out. Finally they installed the shiny new bell on the front (no bob was complete without a clanging warning bell) and proudly painted the name along the top, "The Chippewa Flash." Then that last afternoon before the paint was fairly dry they tenderly carried the new bob from the Bellows' cellar and started for the Pine Street bob slide.

"Good luck, boys!" J. Barry Bellows shouted after them.

The boys "shacked" a ride on the delivery sled of Danny McQuiggan, one of Jaeger's teamsters, who was passing by on the late afternoon round. Danny, upon seeing that Fritz, one of old Jaeger's grandsons, was in the group, whipped up the horses and galloped past the homes of waiting, anxious housewives. Paul sat up in front on the dashboard with Danny on the lumpy cushion -- "dry-asses" the teamsters called them -- made from hay thrust into a burlap feed sack. After all, four of them did not need to tow the bob. "Hello, Polly.

What do you hear from your brothers Emmett and Roge?" Danny said. Paul shook his head. As the racing sleigh slewed around the corner near the top of Pine street hill, Paul could hear the kerosene sloshing in the oil tank under them. The spigot was sealed with a potato. Danny delivered the boys and their bob in a cloud of vapor and chiming sleighbells at the top of the hill. "Gee there, Fred, Dick!" Danny shouted, as he wheeled his steaming horses about and slid away. Elmer Lessard's new garage had not yet caught up with Danny...

It was growing dark, but the iced run gleamed in the carbon street lamps as far as they could see. Lucky Gunnar had pulled the long straw to pilot the first ride. They squared the bob around in front of the take-off. Gunnar adjusted his feet on the front sled guides and wrapped the rope around his mittens. Fritz jumped on behind Gunnar, then Bernie, and Gunnar shouted "Ready!" Then Paul pushed her away and leaped on the back. "Clang, clang, clang!" went the bell, Fritz proudly working the bell cord. "Every man his position knew, This stout and battered motley crew."

The bob plunged down the steep hill, the runners rumbling on the ice, gathering speed, as the shouting boys shot past the intersection of Bluff street, then Ely street, then Empire, and finally straightened out on the final bouncing rush into Morgan's Swamp. They let the bob go as far as it would, and were filled with exultation to discover that it had travelled nearly as far as some of the long, heavy twelve- and fifteen-seater bobs owned by the older boys. It was heavenly -- their own bob, made by their own hands. As they ran chattering back up the hill Paul began to sense some of the pride Oliver must feel in making his own things.

As the boys reached the top of the hill for the next ride they saw that another bob was getting ready to take off. It was owned by Danny Gaynor and his brothers. Short, stocky Danny was there with his brother Stevie and some of the "firehall gang" that lived around the Convent school. When Paul saw his arch enemy Danny, he hung back to let him get away. But Danny had spied Paul by the street light. He was not going to let this opportunity

pass. After all, the whole summer had slipped by without his thrashing Paul. And here was an audience. Danny turned to Gunnar. Gunnar didn't like Danny any more than Paul did, but was also deeply respectful of his prowess as a fighter.

"Well 'Swede'," Danny said to Gunnar, "since when did you start chumming around with a baby-killing Hun like Biegler here?" He motioned at Paul with his thumb without looking at him. Danny was a master at disdain. Paul stood chilled in his tracks. His feeling was one of yawning dismay. Something new had come to torment him. It was one of the little unreported casualties of the War. He was now not only a dirty saloon-keeper's son but a Hun as well. At that moment he knew how all the trammelled peoples in the world must feel...

Then Paul saw Fritz looking at him, his pale blue eyes wide with blank astonishment. "So this is my cowardly new friend," he was sure Fritz was thinking. It was written on his intent white face. "Polly," Fritz said in a low, awed voice. "Polly," he repeated. Paul's misery was complete. "Hun!" Danny said.

Paul felt something give way in him, as though some vital organ in his body was being wrenched from him. He became so weak that as he staggered up to Danny he almost fell. Danny could have pushed him over with his hand. There was fear in him, but there was also something deeper than fear alone. Paul had always loathed any offensive physical touching, as he was to all of his life. All he could see was Danny, leering, smiling, squint-eyed Danny. Paul wanted to retch. "Hun!" Danny repeated. It was Danny's tactical mistake. Paul's strength surged back in a wild exultant rush and he was upon Danny, flailing him with his thin knotted fists, hitting and hitting his hateful face in a whirlwind of blows. Then Danny was miraculously lying upon the icy street and Paul was upon him and his hands were tight about Danny's throat and his mind was as cold as the ice he kneeled on. Warm blood was running from Danny's nose on to Paul's hands...

* * *

Fritz went out of his course and walked home with Paul, dragging the new bob. On the way Paul washed the blood from his hands in the snow. They did not speak. When they got to Paul's corner, under the guttering carbon street lamp, they stood there silently regarding each other. Fritz seemed to be pondering something. He finally spoke. "Polly, you hit him and choked him when he was down. You shouldn't have done that, Polly," Fritz said. "You know that."

"Yes, I know," Paul said.

"You won't do that again, will you?" Fritz said, anxiously.

"I don't know," Paul said. "You know, Fritz," he slowly said, "I -- I think I might have killed him if the others hadn't been there to pull me off."

"You were afraid of him, weren't you, Polly?" Fritz said.

"Yes," Paul said. "I've been afraid of him for a long time. You don't know, Fritz, you don't know..."

"But you're not any more, are you, Polly?"

"No, I'm not afraid any more, Fritz," Paul said.

"Good night, Polly -- you're a swell pal."

"Good night, Fritz, you're a swell pal too."

Paul paused on the kitchen porch whistling "I Wanta Go Back To Michigan" very softly. The mine whistles were blowing six o'clock. Paul went into the kitchen and washed at the sink and combed his cowlick at the kitchen mirror. He grinned at himself in the uneven mirror. "The baby-killer of Blueberry Hill," he whispered to himself, distorting his mouth in one of the ripples of the glass. He went into the dining-room and slipped into his corner seat between Oliver and Belle at the supper table. Nobody noticed a thing. Paul did not tell Belle or anyone about his fight. She only found out two days later when Danny's mother, Mrs. Gaynor, paid Belle a belated return call. The two women had a good cry. As for Paul, he had never had so much fun in the wintertime.

CHAPTER 7.

Oliver's love of the woods was a sort of quiet madness tacitly recognized by Belle and all the boys but rarely openly discussed by them. Paul was gradually coming to see that this plunging, impatient man was never really happy unless he was miles from town, far from the sounds of the trains and mine whistles, away from his family, away from his saloon -- always away, away, away...

That summer Oliver began taking Paul to the woods with him, especially to the South Camp. During these trips Paul scarcely knew his father for the same man. Dan McGinnis, one of Oliver's woods cronies, usually accompanied them, and the fashion in which these two carried on and laughed and played grotesque Paul Bunyan jokes on each other reminded Paul of himself and his own playmates. Nor could Paul forget the way his father would throw back his head and show his firm ~~yellow~~ tobacco-stained teeth in a grim smile as he would work a tugging trout into shore over at Blair's Pond. He talked to his fish, coaxing them, flattering them, slowly killing them...

"Come on me speckled darlin' -- no, no, out of dose dere veeds," he would tenderly croon, in a comical mixture of the various local dialects. Oliver's eyes would wrinkle at the corners and his flyrod would be bent into a palsied hoop. "Vat iss diss? 'Ere, naow, com' to yer bloody Pa, me son! There!" And the tired trout would be finally lying in Oliver's sagging net. Paul would stand watching in open-mouthed wonder. "'Vat iss diss' indeed," he thought. Then after they had taken enough fish Paul would follow his father and Dan back to camp, through the wavy high grass of the soggy beaver meadows, across the fallen log on the creek and up the hill to the square camp made of white pine logs which stood on the birch-covered ridge.

Oliver had three camps: two hunting camps north of Chippewa, in the region of Silver Lake and the Big Dead River, and then the South Camp, far out beyond the looming Green Hills. He haunted the South Camp during the summer fishing season. While there were plenty of deer around the camp, Oliver had

not hunted there since Paul was a baby, the fall that Oliver had actually heard the faint rifle shot of some witless stranger who had dared to wander near the fringe of his hunting domain. "Hell, Tom," he had said to old Tom Eckman, one of his hunting partners, "Hell, Tom, it's gettin' so's a man can't step outa the bloody camp without he falls over a couple or two trespassin' deerhunters!"

Each November Oliver and his woods cronies made mighty preparations for the deerhunt up North, which involved assembling blankets and snowshoes, socks and mittens, food and rifles, not to mention whiskey and beer and the "fixins" for the whiskey sours. He spent hours in clove-consuming conferences at the saloon with Tom Eckman and the McGinnis twins, Dan and Dave, making endless lists and lists, and then lists of lists... Finally "the day" would arrive, and Oliver would stoop and kiss Belle, as she stood on the back porch, and the others would respectfully touch their caps to her and say "Goodbye, Mrs. Biegler." Then Fred and Chief, the big white team, would draw the laden jumper out of the back yard. Oliver would be gone for weeks -- much to the boys' delight -- and then one night, always in the black dark, Paul would hear the dull frosty sleigh bells and the clomp of the horses behind the ^{house.} ~~home.~~ The mighty hunters were home from the hill!

Paul would race for the kitchen and run out on the porch and watch the tired and mumbling bearded men in the vaped lantern light as they tossed the deer off the sleigh like cordwood. The frozen bodies of the deer were always rigid in the attitude of their final leap, their bloody tongues waggishly protruding from their mouths, their slotted eyes a shrivelled, sunken blue. On these occasions Paul always pretended dancing ecstasies he never felt. He really wished they would not have a single deer, and dismally reflected that Belle would have roasts and chops and mincemeat enough to last through the winter -- all from these poor deer, so beautiful, so slender, so very dead... The heads of those with good racks of horns would be mounted by

Garceau the Frenchman, and added to those that already thronged the walls of the saloon.

About this time, too, Paul realized with dismay that his father and Belle led no sort of social life together. After a busy day of running the big house and giving music lessons, Belle generally spent her nights alone, darning and mending or ironing, or helping the boys with their lessons, or rocking in her chair by the window in the sitting-room, chatting with her neighbors, Mrs. Trembath or Mrs. Coffey or Gunnar's mother, hard-working Mrs. Taleen. When Belle went to the Presbyterian church it was alone or with Paul. It was the same way with her visits to the movies or the occasional roadshows which came to McNulty's Opera House. It seemed that on these occasions Oliver always found he had to work at the saloon. "Someone around this bloody house's got to have a sense of dooty!" he would wail, drooping his head under the sudden oppressive weight of his cares. Oliver, however, was fascinated by Lyman H. Howe's movie travelogues, with sound effects, as was Paul. Regardless of "dooty" Oliver never missed their annual visits to Chippewa. He would put on his best salt-and-pepper suit and sit in an aisle seat, because of his long legs, watching in hunched absorption as the parade of pygmies and elephants and strange exotic sights flickered across the screen.

Then during the intermission he would remain fixed in his seat, cramped and enthralled, while Lyman H. Howe's pianist came out and bowed and then played a series of brilliant, florid passages on Maestro McNulty's battered upright; selections fairly dripping with glissandos and rippling arpeggios, and usually taken from Liszt or some fiery Italian. Oliver would lean across Paul, smelling of cloves, and sibilantly whisper to Belle, "Genius!" Belle would smile and nod and whisper, "Yes, Oliver." For once Paul was in accord with Oliver. Any man was indubitably a genius who could wrench music from Mr. McNulty's piano.

Belle still occasionally tried inviting other married couples over to spend the evening, but had gradually abandoned the practice in silent horror after one or two grim experiences. Oliver, resigned and stoic in the salt-and-pepper suit and starched collar and diamond stickpin, his thinning cowlick pushed back on his head, would sit through the evening like a caged lion, his powerful hands clenching and unclenching his knees, responding in grunted abstracted monosyllables to the timid overtures of some unhappy husband of one of Belle's friends. Or worse yet, Oliver would sometimes be drawn into sudden conversation by some chance word and would launch into a thunderous, eye-rolling monologue on the iniquities of his two pets: Wall Street and Andrew Carnegie, or -- since the War had started -- on a scheming and villainous Great Britain.

Oliver never discussed his views with any man; he simply announced them. Where he got them Paul never really knew because he rarely discovered Oliver reading anything other than *The Iron Ore* or Grover's definitive work on the "Diseases of Horses" which stood in the high bookcase in the music room. Yet he seemed to know all about Carnegie and the iniquitous steel tariff, Eugene Debs and labor injunctions, Henry George and the single tax, and all the rest. Belle and the guests would sit in a stunned silence, nodding their heads in automatic agreement as Oliver hurled his sweeping charges of graft and corruption, of dark cabals and foul alliances, both foreign and domestic, national and international... He rarely stooped to buttress these indictments with facts or sources; wagging his finger, he merely shouted the dire conclusions. "You mark my words -- John Bull and Wall Street will have us in this bloody war yet!" Paul could hear these thunderous forbodings distinctly from his cot upstairs. "Don't, Oliver," Belle would plead with him after the startled guests had fled. "Please don't get on those sore subjects when we have people over. Please, Oliver -- I don't ask much of you..."

The very next time Belle "had people over" gave Oliver his chance to demonstrate how meekly mindful he was of Belle's plea. Before the visitors

fairly had their wraps off Oliver began dilating on the uncontroversible merits of the sitting-room coal stove; this time to Mr. Trembath, the book-keeper at Jaeger's. Oliver glanced at Belle. He would show her he could bandy small talk with the best of them... There certainly wasn't a belligerent coal in this topic. Belle waited, smiling uncertainly, nodding brightly, anxiously pursing her lips. Little Mr. Trembath and his wife, who at this juncture had no earthly need for her ear trumpet, sat in spellbound, gulping silence as Oliver heaped ringing tributes on the stove. As he warmed to his subject, so intense became Oliver's desire to convince his neighbors that all modern stoves were trashy junk compared with this venerable tall queen, that he finally stalked out to his shop in the woodshed and came back with an armful of soiled tools and sprawled on the floor, salt-and-pepper suit and all, and virtually dismantled the lighted stove before their horrified eyes. Then, to Belle's utter and final shame, he wound up trying to sell the stove to Mr. Trembath. "Mind you, I'm doin' you a favor, neighbor! You'll never get a better bloody buy, Trembath!" he shouted, waving a wrench in the air, " -- not if you scour the hull damn Peninsula! I'm tellin' you, man..."

That was the end. The Trembaths hurried home, without the stove, and in the future Belle resigned herself to "having just the ladies over," which was quite all right with Oliver. "Hell, woman," he ranted, "them grubbin' husbands of your lady friends! All they can think to talk about is their goddam stocks and bonds and money -- how they made money here, or lost money there, or how they're goin' to make more money next week or next year. There's no goddam fun in their miserable shrivelled souls! How can you put up with it, woman! Answer me, I say! Don't stand there -- O merciful God, answer me!"

"Yes, Oliver," Belle said. "Yes, Oliver." That was the way it always was. "Yes, Oliver."

It was not that Oliver hated people or was unsocial. In fact, as Paul pondered as he grew older, it seemed to him it was because the man was so tremendously alive and full of wild vitality that he could not bear to waste a

moment of his time on the gentle, noncommittal sparring that commonly passed for the social amenities. That summer Paul overheard a snatch of conversation between Oliver and Dan McGinnis out at the South Camp. Oliver and Dan were having "just one more" whiskey sour. "Christ, Dan," Oliver laughed, "when I spend my time talkin' to a woman I want to be figurin' how I can get her into bed!"

Paul thought, even then, that this casual ribald remark held one of the keys to the man's character. His father seemed to live only for the high moments of life -- for the curbing of the runaway horse, the final shot at the mortally plunging buck, the hooking and landing of a fighting trout, the subduing of a high-spirited woman... The conventional concepts of Family and Home, of Work and Duty, were simply not meant for the man. They were without his ken, and their manifestations all about him drove him frantic with a lashing impatience. He could not abide even the thought of the restraints they would impose on him. In the woods he could be free... The man's unconventionality was not mere ignorance, Paul gradually realized, but was, with all its raw crudeness, a deliberate and inevitable expression of his philosophy of life.

If Oliver found his only true happiness in the woods, Paul thought, then surely Belle found hers in her home and in her family, especially on those rare occasions when she and her husband and all her boys were together. These usually occurred during those periods of uneasy domestic truce which Belle called "our Sunday-evening musicales" but which quiet brother Lincoln irreverently referred to as "The Cremation of Sam McBeethoven!" Belle clung to the notion that no household was completely a home unless both parents spent time in it, together contributing to the cultural development of their children. Such had been her girlhood in Detroit and, so help her, so would it be for her boys in Chippewa -- even if one of the parties to this proposed

cultural revelation was a man called Oliver Biegler. "It gives a home a feeling of security," Paul once heard his mother say to Mrs. Taleen.

So when, after the Sunday night supper, Belle would hum to herself as she popped up a bowlful of buttery popcorn in the wire basket over the kitchen range, or cooked a platterful of fudge to cool on the little shelf on the back stoop, the boys would know they were in for another musical evening. Then, in some mysterious fashion which Paul could never fathom, Belle would brave imminent destruction and lurch and tug her snoring husband off of the sitting-room sofa and into the music-room piano. She would sit at the piano and play from memory the melodies of her girlhood, old Scotch airs, the songs of Stephen Foster, while the great rumple-haired man stood behind her silently swaying and sleepily blinking his eyes. When she thought Oliver was sufficiently awake, she would swing into one of the old German songs, usually the beautiful "Still wie die Nacht" as a start, singing the air in German in her clear sweet soprano. Then she would glance over her shoulder at Oliver, still singing, nodding her head for him to join her, which he would invariably do, slowly blundering into the song with his hoarse rumbling bass, Belle pausing for him to catch up or hurrying to overtake him. "Still wie die Nacht..."

Meanwhile the boys, the recipients of this musical feast, would sit clustered around the breathing gas lamp which stood on the sitting-room table, pretending to read, glancing at each other, sluicing popcorn into their grinning mouths and -- when Oliver wandered too far in the "Nacht" -- surreptitiously holding their noses with one hand and pulling the air with the other.

Paul would join his brothers in these subtle criticisms of the Biegler musical appreciation hours, holding his nose with the rest of them. Yet rarely did one of these Sunday evenings draw to a close that his heart was not clutched with a feeling of ineffable sadness, a sense of wry and unutterable gloom, as he watched his mother in her feverishly gay efforts to bring "security" and "culture" into the home of herself and her boys...

How can there be security? Paul would ponder, staring sightlessly at his book. How could such an illusion be fostered in a home where one did not know, from one moment to the next, when the head of it might not suddenly become transformed into a raging lion, and stamp cursing from the house or else turn snarling on one or all of its occupants? For some inarticulate reason, buried deep in his tangled childhood memories, Paul was to look back on these Sunday evenings together as among the saddest of his entire boyhood. Popcorn and fudge was not quite enough...

That summer it was Belle who finally got Oliver to take Paul to the woods with him. Paul knew it was part of her relentless campaign to make a little Tarzan out of him. But he did not care. Even Paul had to admit that Belle had always tried hard enough "to put some flesh on your poor little bones." For as long as he could remember he had waged a constant losing battle to avoid Belle's nostrums and vile health brews. Her assortment was endless.

High on the list there was Vinol, which contained a magical new property which every human system craved, called "iron." Paul was so glutted with it he sometimes wondered if he would not be struck by lightning. Iron attracted lightning, did it not? Under Belle's watchful eye he had consumed casks of the stuff. Again there was cod liver oil, which was still worse than Vinol, and then Scott's Emulsion, which brought on waves of nausea when Paul merely visualized the schools of rigid dead fish, one of which adorned the oily label of each of the endless bottles he had emptied. Then of course there were prunes, mashed, boiled and -- well no, never quite fried -- and goose-grease on his chest in the winter, overlaid with a square piece of flannel cut from an abandoned Biegler-ian nightgown. In the Spring, O glorious season, he was tolerantly given his choice of weapons: either a dose of castor oil or a draft of Rocky Mountain tea or home-made sulphur and molasses -- a wearing decision

to have to make. Alphabetic vitamins had not yet appeared to enchant and revive a drooping world which appeared to Paul to be reeling along an abyss of incipient anemia and galloping consumption. Going to the woods, even with Oliver, was preferable to these endless bouts with Belle's deadly decoctions...

Oliver and Dan McGinnis left from the back yard in the old buckboard drawn by a high raw-boned gelding called "Carnegie." Paul had kissed his mother goodbye a half-dozen times, and was sitting on a bale of hay on the back. A lantern was clamped on the dashboard and a battered water pail dangled from the rear axle. "Are you sure you have your long underwear with you in case the weather changes?" Belle asked Paul once again, standing on the back porch, shading her eyes. "Ye-e-es Mom," Paul answered, somehow shamed by this anxious maternal concern for a hardy woodsman. "Giddap, 'Thousand Dollars,'" Oliver said, raising a big tanned hand in farewell, and away they clattered out on the street, south across the tracks, out of sight of Belle's waving handkerchief, past the alley behind the saloon, and out South Pine street, beyond the old Angeline mine, up the steep Frenchman's Hill, past the last of the Finnish farms, finally turning off on a two-rut sandy road which Oliver called the "head of the plains."

They stopped at the bridge over the sweeping oily flow of the Escanaba River, where Paul launched his Tarzan-hood by dipping out two pails of water for perspiring Carnegie. He noticed that the brook trout were quietly rising in the river, just below the bridge, but he said nothing to Oliver and Dan. He knew they'd never get to camp. During this interlude Oliver and Dan improved their time by stuffing and lighting their pipes with "Peerless," and hoisting two drinks apiece out of a pint bottle. Paul was enchanted at the genteel manner in which Dan combed out his moustaches, after his drink, the right hand neatly caring for the left side, the left hand for the right... Then began the long climb up the sandy hill out of the river valley. Paul half closed his eyes and listened to the sand sifting off the metal rims and

wooden spokes, concluding that the sound more nearly approximated that made by the sea shells on Belle's what-not which stood in a corner of the parlor -- --

"Look, Dan!" Oliver said. "A fine running shot!" Paul wheeled to the front and watched a running buck and two does, flags up, leaping across an open stretch, finally bouncing into a cover of jackpines and out of sight. To Paul the white-tail deer were the most innocent and graceful of all of Nature's forms of animal life, including man. He wondered, as he was always to wonder, what high courage could prompt his father or any man to crumple their bounding flight.

At birch-surrounded Brewery Hill Spring the ritual of water, Peerless and bottle was rapidly assuming the force of immutable tradition to Paul; then a few more miles and they entered the dense woods, putting up two coveys of partridge, then they crossed the log bridge over the creek, partially flooded by the backwater of a beaver dam, then a little way and there was a fleeting glimpse at Biegler Lake -- Oliver's lake -- through the tall spruces. Then they came out into a small clearing on the ridge on which stood a log camp and a log barn. "Whoa Carnegie, you ol' buzzard," Oliver said, throwing the reins out on the ground. This was the South Camp. Paul heard the hot click of grasshoppers and crickets in the sun-lit clearing. A groundhog ran frantically from the side of the little outhouse to its burrow on the edge of the woods. "I'll fix him tonight, Oliver," Dan said. "In the meantime I suggest we have ourselves a little snort."

As Oliver and Dan unharnessed and ministered to the tired horse, Paul went down the hill to the creek for water. Shadowy trout darted away as he dipped the first pail. When he got back up the hill with the full water pails he stood panting outside of the camp. The sun was sinking in the northwest. Oliver and Dan were inside the camp having "just another one." Oliver was talking to Dan. "Christ, Dan," he was saying, "when I spend my time talkin' to a woman I want to be figurin' how I can get her into bed..."

CHAPTER 8.

That fall Gunnar and Fritz and Paul were reunited in the Grammar School. Gunnar was now in eighth grade; Fritz and Paul were in seventh. Miss Lindquist was their teacher. Bernie Redmond still attended the "Irish" school, but every afternoon the four would meet after school, usually in Fritz's basement, but sometimes at the old Pearl Street cigar factory of Bernie's dad. A weathered sign swung out over the door: "Dennis J. Redmond -- Fine Havana Cigars." The place reeked of tobacco, and hung with waving cobwebs and old leaf-tobacco calendars. It had once been a Finnish bagnio and the flamboyant flowered wall paper still shown through the dust. It was a great hangout for the local Irish of all ages. Most of them were railroad men, and lodge brothers of Bernie's father in the Hibernians. For some obscure reason nearly all these Irishmen wore soft dented black Stetson hats. Some of them would smoke cigarettes to tease "Dinny," who would glare malevolently at them and mumble over his bench. "Smokin' those goddam coffin-nails..." The boys would help Bernie strip the stems from the dampened tobacco leaves and spread the leaves on the drying racks in the back room so that Bernie could get away early and play. Paul had entered the world of commerce: he had started banding cigars for Dinny, for which he received five cents for each hundred cigars from Bernie's easy-going father. Fifteen cents an afternoon -- sitting down, mind you -- was making Paul view Carnegie in a new light.

Sometimes when Paul had caught up on his banding he would watch Dinny make cigars. Dinny would sit hunched over his square work block, his faded greenish-black derby pushed back on his bald head. He wore this hat only when he worked. First Dinny would cut out a double binder leaf, then reach into his stock box for the filler leaves -- this was where the "Havana" came in -- expertly shaping them in his nimble fingers and then roll them with his palm into the binder leaves. Quickly this "bunch" would be fitted into the propped wooden cigar mold, until the mold was filled with twenty-five bunches. Then Dinny would suddenly kick back his chair, which always fell clattering to the

floor, and clamp the wooden cover on the mold, and then squeeze it in the large iron press. At the same time he would remove another mold, right his chair and glare at his watchful Irish compatriots -- "who the hell knocked that there chair over!" -- and then sit and roll these pressed bunches up into finished cigars in the fine-veined, delicate wrapper leaves which came from distant Sumatra. All the time that he worked Dinny hummed and chanted a mysterious song, a song without words, without meaning, without tune, without end. "Yanh, yanh, yanh...di di dum...col sor roll de ol..." This song would occasionally be punctuated with an occasional chanted oath if a bunch broke or a wrapper tip tore while he was pasting the end of a finished cigar. "Yanh,yanh, yanh...goddam, goddam...rum si razza rol..."

Paul would sit and watch and often wonder why it was that the fathers of all his playmates were always so disgustingly good-natured. Unlike Oliver, Dinny's bite was unequal to his bark. Paul's heart was gnawed by envy. Could his schoolbooks be right? Was whiskey the seat of Oliver's canker? Yet there were lots of good-natured saloonkeepers on town. Paul and the other boys had sold crates of salvaged whiskey bottles to these great, chuckling, purple-veined men. When the cause was just and the necessity was grave, they had even stolen bottles from Oliver's saloon and resold them to his competitors.

During the past summer there had been a number of changes made at the old frame house on Hematite Street. Paul's half brother, Greg, had married his sweetheart, Eileen Deasy, the Irish girl he had gone through school with, and they had a little house of their own on Bluff Street, on the north end of town. Red-headed Greg had left high school in the eleventh grade and had started to work as an electrician for the Chippewa Ore Company, which operated the large Blueberry mine. That summer the company had made Greg a foreman of one of the electrical crews, so he had celebrated his good fortune by getting married.

Paul's brothers, Link and Nicky, moved into Greg's bedroom, leaving Paul to occupy their double bed in the calsomined back bedroom. Paul's cot was stored in the dusty attic. Paul missed the companionship of short, quick, laughing brother Greg. Greg had really paid more attention to Paul than either Link and Nicky did. Nearly every evening after supper Paul would follow Greg up to his room and watch him get "spruced up" for his date with Eileen. "What'll we sing tonight, kid?" Greg would say. Paul sat on the edge of Greg's bed and sang in a piping tenor as Greg carried the air. "Now some people say that a darky won't steal..." Greg would begin. They went through all the verses, piling up the damning evidence to negative this charitable assumption, Greg *adjusting his colored elastic armbands,* getting into his blue serge suit, prying his necktie into his hard collar, currying his swooping red cowlick with stiff military brushes. "But I caught two in my corn field!"

Paul hoped that some day he would have a room like Greg's. Pennants on the walls: "Cornell," "Michigan," "Ferris Institute," "Chippewa High School" -- beautiful pictures of Maude Adams and Geraldine Farrar, of Lillian Russell and Pearl White; kewpie dolls and crossed bamboo canes and ticklers from a host of forgotten carnivals; a pair of pearl-handled hunting knives and a Navajo blanket he had won on a punchboard at Gill's candy store -- --

"Diggin' up potatoes row on row..."

Greg always kept mint candies and Yucatan or square-shaped Bloodbury gum in his top dresser drawer or in his best suits hanging in the little clothes closet. During the day while Greg was working Paul often very casually reviewed the contents of this exciting room. He pretended he was just sort of helping Belle to keep the room clean. Sometimes Paul suspected that Greg did not always go out with Eileen when he said he was. Once Paul found a nearly empty pint of whiskey and some toy balloons in a small box which read "Sold for the prevention of disease only." Another time Paul found an envelope containing an exciting series of photographs of women without any clothes, including one of a man and a woman in a most curious attitude...

"Now if that ain't stealin' Ah doan know!"

Greg had finally adjusted his tie, carefully inserted his stickpin, brushed a flake of dandruff off his shoulder -- "Listen Polly, do you know the best way to stop falling dandruff? I'll give you a nickel if you can tell me." Greg rattled the loose coins in his trousers. Paul pursed his lips and wrinkled his brow. Greg was ready to go. This was always the pay-off. Greg was at the bedroom door. "Wear a blue serge coat!" Paul blurted, poised on the bed to catch the nickel which Greg tossed to him.

"Way down yonder in the cor-r-r-n-n field..."

Before he had left the old house Greg had installed electric lights throughout, dangling magic bulbs that glowed instantly when one snapped the buttons on the wall marked "On" and "Off." Gone were the gas lights and the tall old kerosene lamp which stood for so many years on the chiffonier in the back hall to light Oliver into his bedroom when he came home from the saloon late at night and creaked heavily up the back stairs. Discarded was the long-handled lighter that had a paraffin wick and a notched metal end so that the gas lights could be turned on and off without standing on a chair.

That fall Oliver installed a secondhand furnace; an asbestos-clad hot water furnace bristling with doors and dials, whose long fingers probed into every room of the house. Belle raised Paul's allowance to a quarter a week for taking care of it, although it was much easier than ministering to the old coal stoves. Paul eased his conscience by putting it down to war profiteering, a gently growing social phenomenon of the time. The two tall Michigan Garland coal stoves -- "The finest bloody stoves in America, I tell you!" -- were finally sold to old Moses Schwartzberger for junk, and in November Oliver carted the dining-room woodstove, under which a generation of mittens and socks had been dried, up to the Silver Lake hunting camp and oblivion...

But the advent of a furnace and electric lights was as nothing compared to the purchase Oliver had made just after school opened that fall. Oliver -- the lover of horses, who'd always said automobiles were a "goddam

crazy fad" -- Oliver had bought a Model T Ford touring car! It was second-hand, of course, and belonged to Ed Schwemin, the local distributor of Schlitz beer. "Whistling" Ed Schwemin had got it new the summer the War broke out. Then he found he could not learn to drive it. So it had stood in his barn until Elmer Lessard had opened his new garage in Oliver's warehouse. Elmer had given blonde Emma, Ed's buxom daughter, two lessons on how to drive the thing. That was enough for capable Emma. All summer long Emma had been careening around the hilly streets of Chippewa in Ed's Ford, leaving a string of startled citizens and rearing horses in her wake. She lived on Ridge Street, the street north of Paul's house. Paul's brothers called Emma their "Great Big Beautiful Doll" after the song.

The day Oliver bought the car flaxen-haired Emma came racing up Hematite Street, honking the bulbous rubber horn at Paul and Fritz, who were playing in the street. When Emma saw Paul she applied the brakes and almost stood the car upon its brass-nosed radiator. "Want to come for a spin, Polly?" she smiled at him, showing her even, milky-white teeth. "You and your friend there?" She was a good-natured big girl, who always seemed to be blushing. Oliver and Emma's father were good friends. Oliver bought beer from Whistling Ed and occasionally took him to the woods when Ed's tall wife would let him go.

Paul and Fritz huddled on the edge of the cool leather seat in the back. They clutched the robe rack on the rear of the front seat, grinning at each other, as Emma whirled around Jaeger's corner, ^{bounced} down across the tracks, past the firehall, out South Pine Street and onto the curving hematite red dirt road that led past Old Frenchtown. "With a squealing of brakes like a stallion in May, She scattered the peasantry out of the way..."

On a sunny afternoon in September 1915 several small boys and some miners' wives in their backyards taking down clothing in Frenchtown Location

were interested to remark the progress of a woman and two boys in a Ford automobile as they watched it leave the road at the abrupt turn into the Trembath mine, careen through a barbed-wire fence, sway crazily across an open field with a portion of the fence, and finally plunge over the yawning crater of an abandoned mine pit.

This was in the days before the people of Chippewa and all America had grown surfeited with the curious pageantry of automobiles careening off highways, ramps and bridges; climbing trees and lamp posts; running against or in front of fast trains; plunging into, through and sometimes out of houses, out-buildings and various public and private structures. So quite a crowd gathered around the rim of the mine pit. The next evening even the Iron Ore recorded the event on the front page, rivalling the news of the startling German defeat of the Russians in Galicia and the Zeppelin raid over England.

"Miss Emma Schwemin, aged nineteen, daughter of Edward Schwemin, local merchant, and Paul Biegler and Frederic Bellows, both aged twelve, miraculously escaped death and serious injury yesterday when Miss ^{Emma} lost control of her father's new Ford touring automobile and plunged down a two-hundred-foot embankment into an abandoned mine pit in Frenchtown Location. Miss Emma was taken to the Chippewa Hospital and treated for bruises but was released this morning. The two boys were none the worse for their harrowing experience. The automobile was badly damaged and was reported purchased by Oliver Biegler, local merchant, for an undisclosed figure."

Belle kept Paul in bed all the next day. She had given up her piano lessons and spent the day hovering over Paul, wavering between anger and solicitude. It appeared that castor oil was a new specific for plunges into mine pits. Towards supper time she brought the newspaper up to his darkened room along with a steaming bowl of barley broth. Paul heard her quick steps on the back stairs. He lay back and closed his eyes and held his thin body rigidly still. Belle came into the room and stood watching him. Paul cautiously raised one slotted eyelid. Belle stood anxiously peering down at him with her gray eyes. She hastily put down the soup bowl and held her head close to his chest.

Paul held his breath. "O my God!" Belle whispered, clutching at his hand. "Wah-wah-what's the matter, Mom," Paul said, blinking his eyes, " -- huh? -- supper time already?" "That stupid, criminal girl," Belle said, referring to Emma. "I never want to see her evil German face again as long as I live!"

Paul sat up in bed and proudly read of his exploit while Belle spooned the scalding soup into him as though he were a baby. "How's Fritz?" Paul asked between mouthfuls. Fritz was going to live. "He was over here before breakfast this morning," Belle said. "I sent him packing -- here, take this broth, you -- you adventurer!"

Oliver had bought Ed Schwemin's wrecked car. Oliver and Whistling Ed had arrived at the mine pit together in Doctor Gourdeau's lather-flecked buggy. Miss Emma, the great big beautiful doll, lay crying on a man's coat, holding her thumb, her blonde hair awry, her great breasts heaving with her sobs. "Papa -- papa," she kept saying. "Oh papa -- papa -- papa..." Some perspiring men were just leading Paul and Fritz out of the pit, from which they had just finished carrying Emma. Whistling Ed looked down at his weeping daughter. He held out his hands and bowed his head in anguish. "I never want to see that hateful contraption again -- oh, my poor baby -- I -- I'll sell the goddam thing for twenty-five dollars -- I'll -- --"

"I'll take it, Ed," Oliver said, walking to the edge of the pit, squinting through narrowed eyes, figuring out the best way to hoist his new car to the surface.

Oliver's elegant carriage, the rubber tired vehicle with the long elliptical springs and fringed top, the one in which he had proposed to Belle, finally went the way of the gas fixtures and the old stoves. In his stormy affections it was promptly replaced by the Ford. The boys were glad to be rid of the carriage and its hateful memories of bleak and wasted Saturdays spent dressing the harnesses, washing and polishing the carriage, greasing the axles, filling the lamps with kerosene and burnishing the reflectors. Then there was the grim ceremony of the Sunday drives.

On summer Sunday afternoons following dinner Oliver would go down to the barn and harness the lively bays, yellow fly netting and all, and drive around to the front of the house under the shade of the rows of tall elms he had planted when he was a young man. If Belle and the boys were not ready and waiting for him he would lean over the side of the sagging carriage and shout for them until they arrived. Belle would sit in the back. "Scrape your feet before you get in," Oliver would darkly warn the boys, who did everything but genuflect before they boarded their father's pride and joy. Then Oliver would touch the quivering rumps of the bays with the tall whip, and whirl all of them around the Iron Cliffs Drive or the Cooper and Deer Lake Drive, or sometimes out to August Schmidt's farm.

Old Schmidt had known Oliver's parents, and he and Oliver would sit and smoke and drink beer and reminisce for hours in Oliver's halting, rusty German, while the boys played in the big barn or tested the progress of old August's apple orchard. Sometimes Belle would play and sing old German airs on the parlor organ. When the sun began to wane and the nighthawks began to swoop they would return home, in stiff and rigid silence. The boys would gleefully wheel the carriage up the ramp into the dusky barn and reverently cover it in its shroud for another gala Sunday, while Oliver unharnessed and fed the bays and bedded them down for the night. That night, if the boys were really unlucky, Belle might initiate another of her Sunday evening musicales...

Elmer Lessard and two of his mechanics helped Oliver tug the stricken Ford out of the mine pit. Brother Link was helping Elmer in the garage that summer but he was not allowed to assist in raising the Ford, much to his relief, because Oliver always maintained that none of his boys "had enough brains to come in out of the rain." Elmer sent to Detroit for parts, and in the interim gave Oliver driving lessons in another Ford. Then one Sunday afternoon before Halloween Oliver was sitting out in front of the house in the rehabilitated Model T, hunched over the tiny wheel, wearing, of all things, a pair of goggles,