

The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays

*Edited, with an overview and checklist,
by Jackson J. Benson*

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of fishing a meaning and order on which to rebuild his life. Leaving the burned-out town of Seney behind as he had left behind his burned-out world, he hikes up into the hills, makes camp by the river, and spends a day fishing. And in the end, he finds in these activities and in the manner in which he pursues them, at least the beginnings of the spiritual renewal he so desperately seeks.

The story functions in the tension between the threat of psychological and emotional eruption rumbling just beneath the thin crust of Nick's self-control and his almost obsessive efforts to strengthen and extend that discipline by concentrating on every detail and the sequential order of his activities. "He knew where he wanted to strike the river" (182); and even though he becomes tired and hot, he refuses to turn towards it sooner. When he gets there, he makes camp and knows that "he was there, in the good place" (186). In the morning, he forces himself to cook and eat breakfast: "he was really too hurried to eat breakfast, but he knew he must" (195). He fishes with a craftsman's devotion to detail and sequence and keeps a careful brake on his emotions: "he did not want to rush his sensations any" (204). He avoids the swamp; "in the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure," and he "did not want it" (211). Still, in imposing the human meaning and order of camping and fishing on the primal realities of nature, Nick begins to heal. Like the grasshoppers around Seney, who have adapted to their changed environment by turning black to match it (181), Nick readies himself for adaptation to his changed world: "there were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (212). The world in our time, it would appear, is not one most of us made or would have made; but we can nevertheless, if we will, live in it with meaning and order and value.

v

Many writers on Hemingway have pointed out that "My Old Man," one of his earliest stories, reflects the influence of Sherwood Anderson and that *The Torrents of Spring* (1926) is at least partly a lampooning declaration of full independence from Anderson. Between these extremes, however, *In Our Time* testifies to the deep and continuing influence of the older writer. In 1925, the year in which *In Our Time* was published, "Hemingway told Scott Fitzgerald that his first pattern had been Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*";⁶ and in its complex unity, in Hemingway's avowed intention "to give the picture of the whole between examining it in detail," *In Our Time* turns the clear light of an ironic and contradictory actuality on the world of the first quarter of the twentieth century as *Winesburg, Ohio* had shone it on mid-western America.

Like its model, then, *In Our Time* is neither anthology nor novel but a

6. Fenton, p. 149.

new form, a literary hybrid, with something of the variety of the anthology combined with something of the unity of the novel. Moreover, in its view of the world and of man's efforts to live in it with meaning and order, in its conscious and intricate structure, in its ironic and symbolic method, and in its lean, intensified style, Hemingway's first book reflects the central intellectual and esthetic concerns which dominated his life and writing from beginning to end. Grow and develop, broaden and deepen, these concerns may, but change essentially they seldom do; and the later harvest is implicit in these, its first shoots. Better than any other single work, more than any one or few of its stories and vignettes, the unified whole of *In Our Time* introduces Hemingway's world and the art in which he creates it.

"Big World Out There": The Nick Adams Stories¹ / Philip Young

I proposed publishing this book almost 25 years ago; maybe I should be excused for taking a special interest in it. Bring out all of Hemingway's Nick Adams stories in one volume, I presumptuously suggested in a 1948 letter to Charles Scribner, and print them in the chronological order of Nick's advancing age. There were 15 of these stories then, several of them pretty well known, like "The Killers" and "In Another Country," and all of them in print for 15 years or many more. But Nick himself was scarcely known at all; people had practically no idea who he was or what he was like, the main reason being the jumbled ages at which one met up with him in the various collections of Hemingway's short fiction. He would surface as a soldier, say, then as a boy, then a child, a married man, and a soldier again. The coherence of his adventures was obscured, you might say, and their overall significance was just about invisible.

Mr. Scribner replied that since he did not think Mr. Hemingway would approve of the idea there was no point in pursuing it, and the matter was dropped as far as I was concerned. There it lay, as in a corner, twitching once in a while, until the fall of 1967, when I began going through the Hemingway

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1. This essay was initially conceived as an introduction to the new chronological collection—including eight unpublished tales and fragments—involving Hemingway's hero, Nick Adams, called *The Nick Adams Stories* (New York: Scribner's, 1972), 268 pp., \$7.95. A brief preface by Philip Young now introduces the collection.

manuscripts in an attempt to identify things. It was rather early in the game that I happened on something called "Summer People," 40 sparsely-covered sheets of pen and ink—a Nick story, and very likely the first one. Mary Hemingway had already given me a typescript of a much later and longer, though unfinished, piece of Nick fiction—the last one—which she called "The Last Good Country." And it was at just this time that Scribner's asked me to "have an idea" for a book. I don't quit easy, and soon found myself proposing to Charles Scribner, Jr., what I had prematurely recommended to his father—*The Nick Adams Stories*, with two new entries.

I didn't have that title in mind, and it was certainly not my idea that the rest of the new material that was uncovered (much of it by Carlos Baker, at Princeton) be printed here. The notion that We Must Have It All—every scrap that turned up and had Nick in it—has prevailed, which is to say that the trade publisher has out-pedanticked the academy. (The fact that Hemingway never destroyed these bits and pieces means little; he didn't throw out grocery lists, and didn't plan to print them someday either.) A lot of people are wondering how the author would have felt to know that such trivial fragments as "Crossing the Mississippi" and "Wedding Day" have been presented to the public as "stories," and that his new book opens with something called "Three Shots," which he discarded as a completely false start before beginning again from scratch to write "Indian Camp." It's a pretty safe bet that he wouldn't be happy about it.

One last disclaimer for the record: I didn't edit anything, either. Indeed there has not been much editing, except in the case of "The Last Good Country," where a good deal has been cut from what Hemingway wrote. But here the judgment is favorable: the cuts were either necessary, to piece together two long and different openings present in the manuscript, or desirable, where the text was wordy, or the pace slow, or the taste dubious. The job has been done skillfully by Scribner's.

Beyond the trivial Preface, the only other things I am indeed responsible for in this book are the selection and ordering of the "real stories"—matters that are not as simple as may first appear. Actually there isn't any completely satisfactory way to arrange them all, as readers are going to discover when they confront Nick as an adolescent veteran of the great war; and on that puzzle, one of those debates that delight some of us, and enliven (a little) the lesser critical journals, is already getting under way. But enough of the record; if we back away from it to take the large view of this book it is clear, whatever else may be said, that as we follow Nick across the span of a generation in time we have got a story worth following. As it turns out, Hemingway arranged it (consciously or otherwise) in five distinct stages—that is, the original fifteen stories occur in five segments of Nick's life, three stories to each part. "The Northern Woods," as the first section is called, deals with heredity and environment, parents and Michigan Indians. "On His Own"

is all away from home, or on the road, and instead of Indians, prizefighters. "War" is exactly that, or as the author put it later on, "hit properly and for good." Then "A Soldier Home": Michigan revisited, hail and farewell. And fifth, "Company of Two": marriage, Europe revisited, and finally looking backward, a sort of coda.

Maybe it will also appear now and at long last that in Nick Hemingway gave us the most important single character in all his work—the first in a long line of fictional self-projections, the start of everything. Later protagonists from Jake Barnes and Frederic Henry to Richard Cantwell and Thomas Hudson were shaped by Nick, were all to have (if only tacitly) his history behind them. So had Hemingway. Not that everything that happens to Nick had happened to him. Indeed the author remarks right here, in the fragment called "On Writing," that "Nick in the stories was never himself. He made them up." To an extent that is of course true; the autobiography is transmuted. But it is bemusing that at the very moment when the writer is categorically disassociating himself from his persona he makes him interchangeable with himself, as the "he," the consciousness of the piece, shifts from Nick to Hemingway back to Nick again (pp. 237–40). But the real point is that this extended and disciplined self-portrait became a significant story in its own right: the story of an American born with the century, complicated in boyhood and badly hurt in a war, who came to terms with what happened and turned it to lasting fiction. And now, after all these years, it's time to have at this episodic narrative for the last time—to uncover, with the help of the biographers, its roots in the author's experience, assess the new material, remark what has not already been remarked to death about the old, and attempt a new judgment of what it all adds up to.

I

The earliest scent of Nick's trail can probably be picked up in a little story called "Sepi Gingan" which the author published when he was still at Oak Park High. A juvenile but already violent tale, apparently set in Hortons Bay, Michigan, the heart of Adams country, it is told by an Indian (who will appear in a mature Nick story) to a nameless boy who is Nick in all *but* name, about another Indian who was killed by a dog and left on the Pere Marquette railroad tracks, where a train "removed all the traces." Another Indian, drunk, who had "laid down to sleep on the Pere Marquette railway tracks and had been run over by the midnight train," figures in a new Nick "story" (it has no plot) that is here called "The Indians Moved Away," and relates how that happened. (An early piece, it was found in the manuscripts without a title; also found was an early title, "They Never Came Back," without a story; they probably should have gone together.)

Indians figure as well in all the stories Hemingway published alive about

Nick as a young boy, of which "Indian Camp" is first in several ways. It was the first Nick story to see print; it is the earliest according to his apparent age; it is the opening story of *In Our Time*, the first real book of stories. It is also perhaps the most violent, and unintentionally portentous, of all Hemingway stories, and it lays down what was to become the basic pattern of all his fiction, which is to expose a character to violence, to physical or psychological shock, or severe trial, and then to focus on the consequences. The consequence of violent birth and death in "Indian Camp" is muted—a calm discussion of suicide between Dr. Adams and his small son, the portent being that the originals for both of them were destined eventually to commit it. The story itself, with its jack-knife Caesarian, is invented. "Of course," Hemingway once remarked (again in the piece called "On Writing") "he'd never seen an Indian woman having a baby. . . . He'd seen a woman have a baby on the road to Karagatch and tried to help her. That was the way it was."

The way it started, however, in the eight longhand pages that Hemingway discarded but Scribner's prints as "Three Shots," was on a fishing trip. Uncle George (Ernest's uncle) and his brother, Dr. Henry Adams, were out fishing at night. Nick was back at their tent and frightened. But he was not so much afraid of the dark as "of dying. . . . It was the first time he had ever realized that he himself would have to die sometime." In throwing out this section of the story Hemingway was struggling, successfully, with what he once called the most difficult problem for writers: "knowing what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel. . . ." Thus at the end of "Indian Camp" as we have it, Nick "felt quite sure that he would never die." What you were supposed to feel has given over to something subtler and deeper. Children don't really believe in their own demise. Death is obviously something that happens to other people.

Perhaps it was because he had been camping that Dr. Adams set off to deliver a baby with no better equipment than a knife and some gut leaders. He is an ambiguous figure generally, who does not unwrap his medical journals; and on his next appearance, in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," it's his courage that's in question. Two Indians, Dick Boulton and Billy Tabe-shaw (of "Sepi Gingan"), come to cut wood for him. When Boulton tries to pick a fight, only to have the doctor walk off, the problem of whether his exit was sensible or unmanly can be left to the reader. The author probably did not intend a choice; he said that the story, based on an actual incident, is about the time he discovered that his father was a coward. On the other hand Dr. Hemingway said he liked the piece, and at the end when Nick has to choose in a small way between the doctor and his wife (who is a Christian Scientist) he immediately chooses his father.

"Ten Indians" appeared two years after the story of the doctor's dilemmas and in a different book. But a little something was lost before the two stories were brought together, and tensions in the Adams family are seen against

the cheerful ease with which the neighboring Garners get along. This pair of tales must also have been linked in the author's mind in another way. As the Garners return in a wagon from Petoskey with Nick aboard they pass the slumbering bodies of nine Indians, who have excessively—and inappropriately—celebrated the Fourth of July. ("Them Indians," says Mrs. Garner.) The tenth Indian is Prudence Mitchell. And now there are none: Prudie does not appear in the story, but she was Nick's girl, and when he gets home the doctor tells him he has seen her "having quite a time" in the woods with another boy. What we are not told is that in life this Indian girl, who sometimes worked for Mrs. Hemingway, was Prudence Boulton, daughter of the man who perhaps humiliated the doctor—who in turn may take satisfaction in telling Nick what he saw.

As for Nick, he is about to learn again what he really feels. "A Broken Heart" was the original title of "Ten Indians"—an ironic one, since Nick is about to learn that his own heart is quite intact. But we are not done with Prudie, later Trudy. She figures in three episodes of Nick's life, and the author often spoke of her, especially in connection with the loss of his virginity. His authorized biographer, Carlos Baker, put this down as "wishful thinking," which is probably right. But another biographer, Constance Montgomery, reports having been told that Prudence Boulton died young, perhaps in childbirth, and she passes along a rumor that the child was Ernest's. There are *no* grounds for believing this, and it would not bear repeating but for the fact that, before it was cut from "The Last Good Country," it came out that Nick indeed had got Trudy pregnant. And in his last appearance he will think back on this girl who "did first what no one has ever done better." (Them Indians.)

II

Hemingway left home in October of 1917, heading for Kansas City by train, and some years later he remembered in a very brief sketch how as Nick he first saw the Mississippi from a coach. It had been away from home, or on the road, that Nick's adolescence was spent—but on freights or on foot, not in coaches. And one would be "ill advised," as Hemingway once remarked, to think of the first of these stories, called "The Light of the World," as a "simple tale." He tried once to explain it by saying that although it is "about many things," it is really

a love letter to a whore named Alice. . . . And the point of it is that nobody . . . knows how we were then from how we are now. This is worse on women than on us . . . and that is what I was trying for in the story.

This helps in reading the piece, but leaves out *too* many things, one of which is the religious note sounded by the title. The reference to Jesus is crucial ("I

am the light of the world. . . ."), for it is what points to the fact that the champion prizefighter named Ketchel has become, in the minds of the two mammoth prostitutes, a sort of fire sale Christ crucified: "I loved him like you love God," "His own father shot and killed him. Yes, by Christ, his own father," and so forth. At the end Nick (clearly, though he is not named) and Tom (in life an Indian boy named Mitchell) seem to have nowhere much to go. It is getting dark, and as they leave the railway station where they listened to the whores arguing over which of them had been loved by Ketchel it looks as if the point of the story is really that the light of the world has gone out. In *Winner Take Nothing*, moreover, Hemingway put this story right after "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," the most pessimistic of all his stories ("Our nada who art in nada. . . ." and so on). With the breakdown of faith and "light" in both stories, it is a good bet that he thought of these as another pair, thematically related. He coupled them again when he said of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "May be my best story. That and 'The Light of the World,' which no one but me ever seemed to like."

Perhaps no one but he ever seemed to understand all of it. For that we need an answer to the unresolved question of Ketchel's first name. Alice and Peroxide agree that it was Steve; a homosexual cook asks if it wasn't Stanley. It is usually assumed that there was only one Ketchel, that everyone has in mind the same fighter, and that in the argument over which woman had actually loved him it is Alice who is telling the truth. But the point this time is that both women are lying (it's worse on them than on us): neither one of them has got her lover's first name right. The facts are that the boxer who "knocked Jack Johnson down" was Stanley Ketchel, as the cook thought. He was murdered in 1910, but not by his father. In 1915 Steve Ketchel fought Ad Wolgast to a draw.

The facts are further that Ad Wolgast had won the lightweight championship of the world from Battling Nelson in the year of Stanley Ketchel's death. It was one of the bloodiest brawls of the era, and Wolgast eventually became punch-drunk. In 1917 he was declared legally incompetent; ten years later he was committed to an asylum in California where he died in 1955. From small-town Cadillac, he was known as the Michigan Wildcat, and when Nick encounters him in "The Battler" Hemingway calls him Ad Francis.

Nick is traveling alone in "The Battler," but along the same railroad (The Grand Rapids and Indiana) as before. Hiking along the rails after having been knocked off a freight, he encounters Ad and a companion in a sort of two-man hobo jungle. It turns out to be a tough experience, and for the first time—but as a striking forecast of things-to-come—we see Nick definitely shaken at the end. When in "The Killers" he meets up with some gangsters and Ole Andreson, the fighter who will no longer resist being killed, he is shaken a bit more.

Hemingway once said that Gene Tunney had asked him, "Ernest wasn't

that Andre Andreson in 'The Killers'? I told him it was. . . ." (This was astute of Tunney; Andreson was so obscure that, next to this story, his best chance of being remembered was for falling clean out of the ring and knocking himself out—or so he claimed—when boxing a much smaller man in 1915.)² Hemingway also once explained what his story does not—"why the boys were sent to kill" him:

the Swede was supposed to throw the fight but didn't. . . . All afternoon he had rehearsed taking a dive, but during the fight he had instinctively thrown a punch he didn't mean to.

He is also said to have told Tunney that "the town wasn't Summit, New Jersey, but Summit, Illinois. But that's all I told him because the Chicago mob that sent the killers was and, as far as I know, is still [1955] very much in business."

Exactly what at that late date he might have said that would have meant a thing to any gangster if Tunney had passed it along is very far from clear. The point seems to be that Hemingway continued to spin fictions about his fiction even after the fiction was in print. On many occasions he presented actual events as tales, and sometimes he told tales as fact. "The Last Good Country" is a good example of the latter practice. The final story of Nick on the road, and hitherto unpublished, Hemingway used to tell it (invent it, actually) about himself—about how *he* as a boy had escaped the game-wardens by taking off into the Michigan forest. It was good practice, and in 1952 he began inventing the tale for Nick.

The way it all got started is that about a week after his sixteenth birthday Ernest was working at Longfield, the family farm across the lake from Windemere, when two "beastly, insinuating, sneering" wardens came to the house "on business": "How about that young man about eighteen . . . ?" (Mrs. Hemingway is writing this to her husband, back in Chicago practicing medicine; the letter is mentioned in the story.) "They had two witnesses that he had shot a big game bird—had it in his boat, and they were after him." As soon as they went, she sent his year-older sister Marcelline "to row at top speed to the farm and warn Ernest to go to Dilworth's and stay until further notice."

Now here's what happened. He shot a crane. . . . He wrapped it up and left it in the launch. . . . When he returned . . . he found it gone and a young boy who said he was the game warden's son came up to him and asked about the bird . . . "just drumming up business for my father. . . ." I don't know whether he had best risk it to come back to Windemere or not.

2. Oddly there was also a fighter named *Ole Anderson* whom Tunney knew, since in the third round of a bout held in Jersey City in June of 1920 he knocked him out.

At this point there is a disagreement on details, but the result was that Ernest paid a fine and the incident was ended. He identified the bird as a great blue heron, biggest he had ever seen, and explained that he had taken an impossible shot at it only to drill it right behind the eye. (Why in writing the story he changed it to a deer is hard to understand.) But the older he got the more he embroidered things, until he had the narrative of a runaway boy and his sister Littless—probably based on both Ursula Hemingway, who used to run away and “meet Ernie in Petoskey,” and Madelaine (or Sunny) Hemingway, who was the family tomboy.

Familiar voices, familiar rooms. Prominent in the story, Packard’s general store and post office at Hortons Bay on Lake Charlevoix appeared in “Up in Michigan” and in “Sepi Gangan.” The Dilworths, to whom his mother sent Ernest, lived there, and there like Mrs. Packard in the story Mrs. Dilworth served the public fried trout or chicken dinners. Like Nick, Ernest brought her rainbows (illegal if he sold them) and split wood. The girl of “Up in Michigan” was a waitress there; so was Marjorie, with whom Nick was to have an affair later on. The hotel the Packards also run in the story must be the Echo Beach Hotel on nearby Walloon Lake, where the Hemingways used to stay before it burned down and they bought Windemere. Trudy we have met before. Mrs. Tabeshaw is probably Billy’s wife. Michigan was a small world.

Although we may read “The Last Good Country” as a short story it is obviously not one. Rather long already, it is nowhere near finished when it simply stops. If the plot at its original pace were to be resolved, Hemingway was clearly headed for a full-length novel. For once, however, there is a “plot plant,” so that one can guess, at least, how Nick is going to get out of the jam he is in: a warden with curious feet is going to have to call off the hunt—and his son, if the boy is on the trail—in exchange for continued silence on Packard’s part regarding a far more serious and unpunished offense than Nick’s. And though we leave off in mid-air, Hemingway has already accomplished a great deal. We get to know Nick better here than we have ever done before. And the “Hemingway heroine” is never more real than in her youngest appearance as his kid sister. Right down to the short hair, Littless is the wonderful if slightly unreal child that grew up to be Catherine Barkley and all the others. Indeed the piece immediately attracted, on publication, such damaging epithets as “mawkish” and “puerile.” And it is true that here, for the only time with Nick, Hemingway treads the boundaries of sentimentality (his characteristic brinkmanship), occasionally trampling them.

But this does not automatically disqualify or cancel out the story; its real distinction lies in the fact of its genre, which is related to sentiment and unprecedented for Hemingway: sky-blue pastoral, with but one cloud in sight to keep things real and moving. Up to now, “idyllic Michigan” has been

mainly an exaggeration on the part of his critics. But we leave these children on a level of peace and contentment he never occupied before—in mid-air suspended. And in this sense if in no other the story does “end.” There is nowhere to go from a dream. Or from a myth: the familiar American story, most notably Huck Finn’s, of a magical journey from the irritants of civilization to an unspoiled state of nature, an odyssey of a loving couple in escape of society—and of its epitome, the law. A Michigan forest was prefigured by the Mississippi River, and the kids’ camp in it by a raft.

In this passage one is never alone. Van Winkle in the Catskills, Thoreau at Walden, are incomplete. To make it work there must be love. But the love must be forbidden: two males, Huck and Jim, Ishmael and Queequeg, Deer-slayer and Chingachgook—or siblings, Nick and Littless. Only in Hemingway’s version are sexual overtones explicit (some were cut), and only here is the partner of another sex rather than race. But as she says, Littless is not *really* a girl yet. Indeed she is something of a boy. For just as Huck dressed as a girl, in calico gown and sunbonnet, and “practiced around all day to get the hang of things,” so Littless wears overalls and a boy’s shirt, cuts her hair short, and moves around “practicing being a boy.” But in all these stories, hints of physical love serve always to highlight the innocence of actual relationships. Without the overtones, we would never think to realize how immaculate is the conception. “The Last Good Country” is at one with its precedents in expressing a yearning for escape from ordinary life into a charmed kinship under the ennobling conditions of earth or water in the new security of a new home: raft, ship, or campfire.

And if it seems a stubborn truth that these are after all a boy and his sister in the forest, different overtones are also audible. Hansel and Gretel were not entirely happy with their mother either. They lived by a great forest, where they too picked berries and bedded down in a sort of “cathedral,” as the Adams children call it, where an evil witch (or warden’s son) may find them. Hemingway gets by natural means the magic that the fairy tale achieves with fourteen white-winged angels and the sound of heavenly music.

III

There is a time limit on adolescence and enchanted forests. And the title of an unpublished poem, “Killed. Piave—July 8, 1918,” indirectly conveys the reversal in Nick’s fortunes whereby after leaving him at Camp Number One, as happy as he will ever get, we pick him up again as a soldier, miserable and badly wounded, in Italy. The date commemorates the night on which the author was hit “for good” (“killed” is what almost, or metaphorically, happened; Piave is the river where it happened) at Fossalta, which is north of Venice. Hemingway did record the fact of Nick’s wounding directly, but he slighted the event by entering it in an untitled, one-paragraph sketch (here

reprinted from an inferior early text), placed between two actual stories of *In Our Time*, where readers scarcely noticed it. A more effective transition between Michigan and Italy was severed when in 1925 he abandoned at page 26 a novel called *Along with Youth*, that appears in this book as "Night Before Landing," in which Nick was crossing to France in May of 1918 on the liner *Chicago*. Hemingway had, of course, been in Italy as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross, and a week after his wounding he was shipped to a Red Cross hospital in Milan. The most badly damaged part of him was a knee; after two months he could walk to the Ospedale Maggiore for physiotherapy. Returned to the front to see his friends, he came down with jaundice and was sent back to Milan, where he had fallen in love with an American nurse he hoped to marry. Out of these events and their effects he wrote, in addition to *A Farewell to Arms*, three stories of Nick Adams.

In "Now I Lay Me" Nick is suffering from insomnia, one result of his wounds. As befits the title he thinks back to his childhood and says his prayers "over and over." The reader is meant to recall a later line of "Now I Lay Me"—"If I die before I wake"—as Nick remarks that he

had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way . . . ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and then come back.

This story, set near the front, is closely linked to "In Another Country," which is set in Milan. Both stories—which were originally two parts of a single one, as the manuscript shows—deal with the effects of Nick's wounds, psychological and physical. In the first of them his Italian orderly tells him he'd be all right if he'd only get married; in the second a bereaved Italian major tells him he must *not* marry, must find things he cannot lose.

In "A Way You'll Never Be," which falls chronologically between these two, it is clear that the psychological damage is more severe than the physical. Hemingway once explained his title saying he wanted to show a girl who was going crazy that Nick had been "much nuttier" than she was going to get. The story deals, he also said, with "things that happened to me in a trench outside Fornaci," which is near Fossalta. If so, things were really grim; Nick's mind goes utterly. And it may be that what particularly "frightened him so that he could not get rid of it . . . that long yellow house and the different width of the river," is the scene of his wounding—and Hemingway's, Lt. Henry's, and Col. Cantwell's, who also "had been hit, out on the river bank."

But the best of these, and one of the best of all Hemingway stories, is "In Another Country." "It opens," Scott Fitzgerald wrote long ago, with "one of the most beautiful prose sentences I have ever read": "In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more." It was like a sport one has

lost interest in. The visiting team was the Austrians, meeting the Italians, at home; Nick, a ringer, is benched as befits his incapacity. He takes his therapy in Milan, but the focus is on that major—"in another country," as Marlowe's famous lines go—whose "wench is dead." Hemingway himself was not to make out much better with his girl, Agnes von Kurowsky, the Red Cross nurse who became Catherine Barkley. She did not follow him home to the States as he expected, and he turned his bitterness into a "sketch" which he later named "A Very Short Story." He did not call the jilted soldier Nick, however, and the piece remains more sketch than story. Thus Hemingway returned to Michigan from the war, "blown to pieces," according to a Peto-skey doctor, and still alone.

IV

"It's the account of a boy on a fishing trip," to call again on Scott Fitzgerald, writing this time about "Big Two-Hearted River." "Nothing more—but I read it with the most breathless unwilling interest I have experienced since Conrad first bent my reluctant eyes upon the sea." In 1926 Hemingway was happy to settle for such published praise. But Fitzgerald might have asked himself why nothing more than a fishing trip should have galvanized his attention. If he had done so he might have discovered that he was responding perfectly to what Hemingway called in those days "my new theory that you could omit anything if you knew that you omitted . . . and make people feel something more than they understood." The things he had left out before were never really crucial, but this time an omission made all the difference. As he pointed out years later, "The story was about coming back from the war but there was no mention of the war in it."

There is no doubt, however, that the perilous state of Nick's nervous system, unmentioned in the story, accounts for the intensity of the writing, which is what arrested Fitzgerald. Here is the quintessential Hemingway style: simplicity, forged under great pressure, out of complexity. The trout, "keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins," reflect as in a mirror. He decides not to fish "the swamp," which would be to complicate things; besides, that's where "the river narrowed," which may remind him of the "different width" of the river at Fossalta. Acting, and not thinking, his trip proves a remarkable success. He will carry his scars, but will never be badly shaken again. Fishing is better therapy than Milan's; for Nick the war in Italy ended in Michigan.

"If he wrote it he could get rid of it," Nick will think later on. "He had gotten rid of many things by writing them." And in his next appearance so much has been purged that he seems—most disconcertingly—less the struck-down veteran of a war than a prewar adolescent. But Hemingway was still writing out of his own experience—seeing himself, at each stage of the nar-

rative, as Nick—and the events that gave rise to the next three stories took place in the postwar summer of 1919, through half of which he was in fact still the teen-ager that Nick seems. Indeed a year later, Marcelline observed, her brother was “more like a boy of sixteen than a man approaching his twenty-first birthday.” Nick at this age will bear her out, and several details in the stories date them as postwar—rum-runners, for instance, and the business about “not thinking.”

“The End of Something” and “The Three-Day Blow” are as closely related as chapters in a novel. In the former Nick breaks off his affair with a girl named Marjorie. Just as Hortons Bay has run out of the logs that made it a lumbering town, leaving nothing but the foundations of the mill, which she calls “our old ruin,” so their relationship has run its course and is left in ruin by Nick—one of the things, perhaps, that he got rid of by writing it. But the break-up, it turns out, was a plot in which a friend named Bill conspired, and in “The Three-Day Blow” they discuss the matter, along with the joys of bachelorhood and literature—especially Maurice Hewlett’s *Forest Lovers*, which at points strikingly resembles “The Last Good Country”—as they get happily drunk on Bill’s father’s whiskey. “Now she can marry someone of her own sort,” Bill tells him, which suggests that what Hemingway omitted this time is that in life, as already mentioned, Marjorie (Bump), though a respectable high-school girl, was a summer waitress at Mrs. Dilworth’s Pinehurst Cottage. Nick is uncomfortable about the whole business, but then he realizes that just as love can run out so estrangement is not necessarily permanent, and he feels better.

“You are constantly aware of the continual snapping of ties that is going on around Nick,” Fitzgerald wrote of this pair of stories—an observation so acute that it reads more like a prediction, since it is in “Summer People” that Nick really begins snapping his ties to Michigan, and there is no evidence that Fitzgerald ever saw the story. At any rate it has never been published before, or even typed.

Ernest went into a church on September 30, 1920, one of his biographers tells us, with a girl named Kate. He burned a candle, prayed for everything he wanted and was rewarded, he wrote in a letter, with a small “Adventure with a touch of Romance.” If the Kate of “Summer People” was the Kate of actuality perhaps she was the reward, which is sexual. In any event, Nick has one last adventure up in Michigan, and it tells us as much about him and his maker as might a chapter of factual biography. Imperfectly paced, and itself rather boyish, it is not the best Nick story we have. Nor is it the least of them, but it is almost certainly the first: the manuscript shows repeated vacillation on the protagonist’s name. Nick, Hemingway writes, and crosses it out; Allan the same; Wemedge, which becomes here as before Nick’s nickname, the same; again and finally Nick, all the way through.

As an apparent first-try at a very early story, “Summer People” is re-

markable for the deftness with which seemingly unlike things are brought together. Nick plunging his arm into a cold spring on a hot night at the start sharply prefigures his small adventure with Kate at the end. Along the way, the swimming, diving, conversations, thoughts, ambitions—as well as the interlude with the girl, and a prayer—are gathered in the boy’s realization that he is “different,” which is presumably the point. Different in all the ways of the story. Even if he does not entirely act on it, his knowledge of girls is “beyond his years”; the manner of his diving is unusual, and another prefiguration of the intercourse later on; he swims underwater, not on top of it, and so forth. All differences culminate in the crucial one, the hope and belief that he will be a great writer.

Evidence in the manuscripts shows clearly that Hemingway intended to revise and publish this story, which raises the question of why he never did. Perhaps he thought it was unprintable at the time, at least in this country. (Gertrude Stein told him that “Up in Michigan” was *inacproachable*, and at the time she was right.) More likely, though, he “didn’t want to hurt living people,” the reason he once gave for why he didn’t write a “wonderful novel” about Oak Park. His summer people were not just living; they had been his very closest friends. Most of all, “Summer People” would have hurt Hadley Richardson, his first wife by the time he wrote the story. It was Kate, Hadley’s close friend, who had introduced her to Ernest. (He was in turn to introduce Kate to a close friend of his, the late John Dos Passos, whom she married.) Indeed in September of 1921 when Ernest married Hadley at Hortons Bay, the town of the story, near Windemere, where they spent their honeymoon, the original for every single character in “Summer People”—Nick, Kate, Bill, Odgar, and the Ghee—was in the wedding party. Kate (sometimes Butstein or Stut, just as in the story) was Katharine Smith, a bridesmaid. Bill, the same Bill as in the two previous stories, was her brother, William B. Smith, Ernest’s best friend and an usher (who eventually became a speechwriter for Harry Truman). Odgar, or Carl, also an usher, was J. Charles Edgar, an older man but long-time friend who had housed Ernest when he worked in Kansas City for the *Star*. The only person involved who would not be hurt was another usher, the Ghee (significance unknown)—Jack Pentecost, who was along on the trip to the Fox River that became “Big Two-Hearted River.”

Kate Smith was eight years older than Ernest, and her brother states categorically that “Ernesto did not have an affair with my sister.” But Hadley was just as old. Anyway it didn’t matter, Hemingway thinks for Nick later on, that the best of his writing was “made up.” “None of it had ever happened. . . . That was what the family couldn’t understand.” (Perhaps because a lot of it had happened.) But “Summer People” was far too close to home. And by the time the family was mostly gone, and Kate decapitated in an automobile accident, her husband and brother and Hadley still lived, and

Hemingway was in far other country. He published no Nick Adams fiction after 1933; by the time Kate died his manuscripts were widely dispersed; he may even have forgotten the story. But it is a significant one—of Nick's graduation into a bigger world. Summer people are insulated; they matter but for a season, don't really belong. Nick is at the center of this transient population, but he has a secret that neither summer nor year-round people are in on: because he is different he can have what he wants, as he thinks. And that entitles him to belong elsewhere. If his final prayer comes true he is not temporary at all, but the man for all seasons he became.

At this point, however, Nick can only aspire to be a writer. He's not old enough yet, and, as he remarks, doesn't know enough. ("Wait.") As with Hemingway, the wait proved short, and it's a reasonable guess that the end of "On Writing" records the very moment when the mature career began. Irrelevant anachronisms concerning bullfighters and so forth set aside, the piece emerges as Hemingway's Farewell to Michigan. Nick is Letting Go: relinquishing the past, the Northern Woods, summers, friends, and even fishing. At the end the piece moves into action. Nick releases the trout he has caught and kept alive, simply cuts the line he had been fishing with that snagged, then relieves the rabbit of two ticks on its head that were killing it. He is freeing everything for one thing, "work." This because he has a sort of tick in his own head—very different from the one that agitated "Big Two-Hearted River," to which this material was once illogically appended. It has dawned on him that he has learned (from Cezanne, as explained) how to build in prose the land and landscape that contain "Big Two-Hearted River." Nick, in other words, is off to start the story that Hemingway had just finished. It won't be long now.

v

Meanwhile Nick has married Helen (Hadley in the manuscript of "Wedding Day"), and once again the scene shifts abruptly to Europe, where things turn out to be relatively uneventful—two episodes only, loosely connected in that both involve skiing and touch on marriage. "An Alpine Idyll," about the peasant who used to hang a lantern from the mouth of the frozen corpse of his wife, is said to be a tall tale told tourists by natives in Austria. (Nick asks his friend, "Do you think it's true?") In "Cross Country Snow" it is again the stubborn reality of a woman's body that impinges on the skiing; Helen is pregnant and Nick is taking her back to the States to have the child. (If he remembers what Bill told him, "Once a man's married, he's absolutely bitched," we do not hear about it.) And on this dying fall, taking "the run home," Nick's adventures—but for a reprise—are abruptly ended.

They needn't have been, had Hemingway chosen to pursue that marriage to Helen, for he wrote several stories in which Nick could have easily been

the husband, and Helen the wife. But he tended to smuggle certain things away in his fiction; if they were compromising or shameful and he wanted to get rid of them he chose masks less transparent than Nick's. In "Soldier's Home" he had disguised his misery on returning to Oak Park from the war by giving Harold Krebs an experience of battle different from his own or Nick's, and by moving both his mother and Oak Park to Oklahoma. "Up in Michigan" was based on personal experience at Hortons Bay, and he set it there, but cast himself as Jim Gilmore, a short blacksmith with big mustaches. Similarly he skirted the breakdown of his marriage to Hadley, but did write a group of stories which are set abroad and show a marriage very like his own in a state of progressive disarray. He once called "Out of Season," where there is only a hint that things may go bad, a "literal transcript" of himself and Hadley. And although he said that the man and wife of "Cat in the Rain" were a "Harvard Couple," they sound like much the same people. In "A Canary for One," "I and my wife" are separating, and in "Homage to Switzerland" Mr. Johnson is being divorced.

That child, however, was born—a son called Schatz in "A Day's Wait," a story which could have been included in this book, except that it is really about the boy. In life John, or Jack, or Bumby Hemingway, he figures prominently in the Bimini section of *Islands in the Stream* as Schatz again, or Thomas Hudson, Jr., oldest son of the last major protagonist. He is also the son in "Fathers and Sons," in which Nick looks backward to his boyhood and rounds it off. Nick is now thirty-eight and a writer; the son is about the age of Nick when he first appeared in "Indian Camp." The action has covered a generation. The doctor who discussed suicide with his boy in the first story has now committed it, though we are told only that he is dead—another important omission. And as Nick remembers how useless his father was on the subject of sex, which he learned about from Trudy instead, so now he cannot talk to his boy about the doctor's death, though he knows that sooner or later they will have to visit "the tomb of my grandfather" (the boy has been raised abroad). A son is now father to the son, things have come full circle, and in his collected *First Forty-Nine Stories* Hemingway put this one forty-ninth.

The tale is told, but if Nick's history seems in retrospect to amount to slightly more than the sum of its chapters it may be because his progress through the first third of our century is at once representative, distinctive, and personal. Representative as a national passage from the innocence of a shaky prewar security through the disillusionment of a European ordeal-by-fire, and the rejection of much that a previous age had stood for, to "normalcy." Distinctive for memories of specific experiences the exact like of which we never had. And personal as the recreated autobiography of a culture hero of his time. But if anyone still feels more than he can account for

in remembering Nick, he might ask what if anything Hemingway omitted from the story as a whole. The answer is so obvious that it might never dawn on us. The Nick Adams fiction is about leaving Oak Park, but there is no mention of Oak Park in it.

The text may be taken from Marcelline. When Ernest was flopping loose in their suburban house on his return from the war he spoke to her one day about "all the other things in life that aren't here. . . . There's a whole big world out there. . . ." What he omitted is what he escaped from. What he escaped to, for the rest of his life and all of his career, moves against a background he expunged. Oak Park was rejected for Michigan, and when that became a small world it was in turn put behind for a greater one. All that is simple to understand. But it is hard to realize today how great was the need for rebellion—how preposterous were things *At the Hemingways*, the name of Marcelline's affectionate book. Home was a Victorian matriarchy, and it has been said more than once that Hemingway was the only man in the world who really hated his mother. She had considerable pretensions to the arts; she sang, composed, and later painted. Her response to *The Sun Also Rises* was "I can't stand filth!" Her husband, though a busy doctor, kept house far more than she did. ("Dr. Hemingway did most of the cooking. He'd fix the kids' breakfast and then take the Mrs. her breakfast in bed.") She raised Ernest as closely as possible as a twin, a twin girl, to Marcelline. They looked alike, and were "dressed alike," his sister writes, in "gingham dresses and in little fluffy lace-tucked dresses. . . . We wore our hair exactly alike in bangs." (Harold Loeb, Robert Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises*, traces the source of Hemingway's insistence on his masculinity to this. It was as if he were forever saying "Damn it, I'm male.")

Few could have outdone Grace Hemingway in the intensity of her middle-class respectability, but for all his profession, and love of the outdoors, Clarence Hemingway was one who did. A lifelong teetotaler, he "abhorred" the playing of cards in any form, and would not permit anyone in his presence to say darn or gosh. Dancing school was morally repulsive—"leads to hell and damnation," he kept muttering. When *in our time* was published he sent back six copies, returning even the single one his wife wanted to keep. "He would not tolerate such filth in his home, Dad declared." Later on when his son was becoming famous he is known to have answered sadly the question of how the boy was making out: "Ernest's written another dirty book."

What Hemingway called "Mr. Young's trauma theory of literature" is not retracted: the wounds in Italy are still climactic and central in the lives of Hemingway and all his personal protagonists. Nor is there any reason to withdraw the notion, which the author also objected to, that he wrote chiefly about himself; he was not lacking in imagination, but to live his life as he wished, then to write about it, was the way he basically operated. Neither is

there any reason to abandon the idea that the adventures of Nick Adams were foreshadowed by *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

But a different emphasis can be put on this combination. Huck's rebellion was of course from Aunt Sally—and St. Petersburg, which Twain did not omit. Nick's rebellion is a given—omitted but as basic as the wound, and prior to it. Almost nothing Hemingway ever wrote could be set in Oak Park; it is extremely doubtful that he could have written a "wonderful novel" about the place. What he could write about happens "out there"—an exact equivalent for what, departing "sivilization" for the last time, Huck called "the territory." In the overall adventure, life becomes an escape to reality. No reward whatever is promised, and the cost in comfort and security is high. Out there can kill you, and nearly did. But it beats "home," which is a meaner death, as Ernest tried to tell Marcelline.

The Two African Stories / Carlos Baker

In the other two stories which grew out of his African adventure, Hemingway abandoned his experimental attempt to see whether an "absolutely true book" like the *Green Hills of Africa* could compete on terms of equality with a work of the imagination. In "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" he was still determined to tell "the truth"; but now he was ready to invent the characters, and to imagine the circumstances in which they were to be entangled. The circumstances in these two stories differ markedly. At the same time they share certain inward thematic stresses. Both deal, for example, though in varying ways, with the achievement and loss of moral manhood. Both look further into the now familiar men-without-women theme. The focal point in each is the corrupting power of women and money, two of the forces aggressively mentioned in the *Green Hills of Africa* as impediments to American writing men.

Francis Macomber does not write. He is a wealthy American sportsman hunting the Tanganyika plains with his wife. But he must nevertheless wrestle with problems relating to women, money, and moral manhood. Easily the most unscrupulous of Hemingway's fictional females, Margot Macomber covets her husband's money but values even more her power over him. To Wilson, the Macomber's paid white hunter, who is drawn very reluctantly

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