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From the author of
Chemical Grammar



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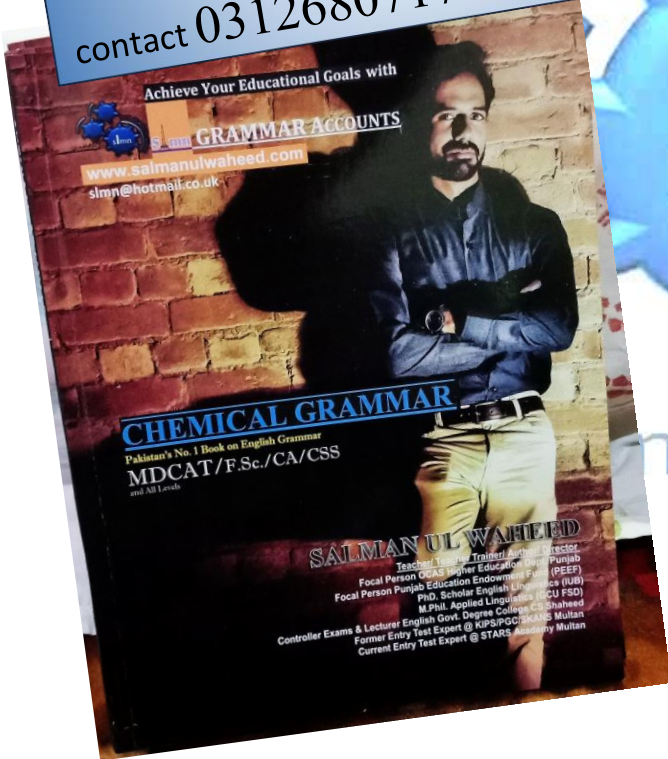


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Foreword

Dear MDCATians,

Through my analysis of Past Papers of MCAT English, I have already laid down the importance of Intermediate books in MDCAT English. No doubt, their reading is prerequisite to the preparations of MDCAT. In my recent efforts, I have compiled many fruitful documents to put my students at ease in their preparations of different Entry Tests.

It was indeed a great challenge for me to provide the analyses of all the books of Intermediate with complete text. After acquiring the full copies, one can read and memorize the important places in the text on one's mobile or computer within the given time. It not only saves more time for Science subjects, but it also accomplishes real MDCAT English study. For the best MDCAT English preparation, you must acquire:

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MDCAT SPECIFIC

BOOK 1

BY

PROF. SALMAN UL WAHEED

Lesson No. 1

BUTTON BUTTON

The package was **lying by the front door**-a cube-shaped carton **sealed with** tape, their name and address printed **by hand**: "Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Lewis, 217-E, Thirty-seventh Street, New York, New York 10016." Norma **picked it up**, unlocked the door, and **went into** the apartment. It was just getting dark.

After she had put the lamb chops in the broiler, she sat down to open the package.

Inside the carton was a push-button unit **fastened to** a small wooden box. A glass dome covered the button. Norma tried to **lift it off**, but it was locked **in place**. She **turned** the unit **over** and saw a folded piece of paper scotch-taped **to the bottom** of the box. She pulled it off: "Mr. Steward will **call on you** at 8.00 P.M."

Norma **put** the button unit **beside** her on the couch. She reread the typed note, smiling.

A few moments later, she went back into the kitchen to make the salad.

The doorbell rang at eight o'clock. "I'll get it," Norma called from the kitchen. Arthur was in the living room, reading.

There was a small man in the hallway. He removed his hat as Norma opened the door. "Mrs. Lewis?" he inquired politely.

"Yes?"

"I'm Mr. Steward."

"Oh, Yes." Norma repressed a smile. She was sure now it was a sales pitch.

"May I come in?" asked Mr. Steward.

"I'm **rather busy**," Norma said.

"Don't you want to know what it is?"

Norma turned back. Mr. Steward's tone had been offensive. "No. I don't think so," she replied.

"It could prove very valuable," he told her.

"Monetarily?" she challenged.

Mr. Steward nodded, "Monetarily," he said.

Norma frowned. She didn't like his attitude. "**What are you** trying to sell?" she asked.

"I'm **not** selling **anything**," he answered.

Arthur came out of the living room. "Something wrong?"

Mr. Steward introduced himself.

"Oh, the-" Arthur **pointed toward** the living room and smiled.



"What is that gadget, anyway?"

"It won't take long to explain," replied Mr. Steward. "May I come in?"

"If you're selling something ——" Arthur said.

Mr. Steward shook his head, "I'm not."

Arthur looked at Norma. "Up to you," she said.

He hesitated. "Well, why not?" he said.

They went into the living room and Mr. Steward **sat in** Norma's chair. He **reached into** an inside coat pocket and **withdrew** a small sealed envelope. "Inside here is a **key to the** bell-unit dome," he said. He set the envelope on the chair side-table. "The bell is connected to our office."

"What's it for?" asked Arthur.

"If you push the button," Mr. Steward told him, "somewhere in the world someone, you don't know will die. **In return** for which you will receive a payment of \$50000."

Norma stared at the small man. He was smiling.

"What are you talking about?" Arthur asked him.

Mr. Steward looked surprised. "But I've just explained," he said.

"Is this a practical joke?" asked Arthur.

"Not at all. The offer is completely genuine. "

"You aren't making sense," Arthur said. "You expect us to believe—"

"Who do you represent?" demanded Norma.

Mr. Steward looked embarrassed. "I'm afraid I'm not **at liberty** to tell you that," he said, "However, I assure you, the organization is of international scope".

"I think you'd better leave," Arthur said, standing.

Mr. Steward rose. "Of course."

"And take your button unit with you."

"Are you sure you wouldn't care to think about it for a day or so?"

Arthur picked up the button unit and the envelope and **thrust** them **into** Mr. Steward's hands. He walked into the hall and **pulled open** the door.

"I'll leave my card", said Mr. Steward. He **placed** it **on** the table by the door.

When he was gone, Arthur tore it in half and tossed the pieces onto the table.

Norma was still sitting on the sofa. "What do you think it was?", she asked.

"I don't care to know," he answered.

She tried to smile but couldn't. "Aren't you curious at all?"

"No." He shook his head.

After Arthur had returned to his book, Norma went back to the kitchen and **finished** **washing** **the dishes**.

"Why won't you talk about it?" Norma asked.

Arthur's eyes shifted as he brushed his teeth. He looked at her reflection in the bathroom mirror.

"Doesn't it intrigue you?"

"It offends me," Arthur said.

"I know, but"-Norma rolled another curler in her hair- "doesn't it intrigue you, too?"

"You think it's a practical joke?" she asked as they went into the room.



"If it is, it's a sick one."

Norma **sat on her** chair and said after a moment.

"May be it's some kind of psychological research."

Arthur shrugged." Could be. "

"Maybe some eccentric millionaire is doing it."

"Maybe."

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

Arthur shook his head.

"Why?"

"Because it's immoral," he told her.

Norma slid beneath the covers." Well, I think it's intriguing," she said.

Arthur turned off the lamp." Good night," he said.

Norma closed her eyes. Fifty thousand dollars, she thought.

In the morning, as she left the apartment, Norma saw the card halves **on the table**. Impulsively, she **dropped them into her purse**. She locked the front door and joined Arthur in the elevator.

While she was **on her coffee break**, she took the card halves from her purse and held the torn edges together. Only Mr. Steward's name and telephone number were printed on the card.

After lunch, she took the card halves from her purse again and scotch-taped the edges together." Why am I doing this?" she thought.

Just before five, she dialed the number.

"Good afternoon," said Mr. Steward's voice.

Norma almost **hung up** but restrained herself. She cleared her throat.

"This is Mrs. Lewis," she said.

"Yes, Mrs. Lewis," Mr. Steward sounded pleased.

"I'm curious."

"That's natural," Mr. Steward said.

"Not that I believe a word of what you told us."

"Oh, it's quite authentic," Mr. Steward answered.

"Well, whatever-" Norma swallowed. "When you said someone in the world would die, What did you mean?"

"Exactly that," he answered. It could be anyone. All we guarantee is that you don't know them. And, of course, that you wouldn't have to watch them die."

"For \$50,000." Norma said.

"That is correct."

She made a scoffing sound. "That's crazy."

"Nonetheless, that is the proposition," Mr. Steward said." Would you like me to return the button unit?"

Norma stiffened. "Certainly not." She **hung up** angrily.

The package was lying by the front door; Norma saw it as she left the elevator.

Well, of all the nerve, she thought. She **glared at** the carton as she unlocked the door.



I just won't take it in, she thought. She went inside and started dinner.

Later, she went into the front hall. Opening the door, she picked up the package and carried it into the kitchen, leaving it on the table.

She sat in the living room, looking out the window. After a while, she went back into the kitchen to turn the cutlets in the broiler. She **put the package in a bottom cabinet**. She'd **throw it out** in the morning.

"May be some eccentric millionaire is playing games with people," she said.

Arthur looked up from his dinner. "I don't understand you."

"What does that meant?"

"Let it go," he told her.

Norma ate in silence. Suddenly, she put her fork down. "Suppose it's a genuine offer?" she said.

Arthur stared at her.

"Suppose it's a genuine offer?"

"All right, suppose it is?" He looked incredulous. "What would you like to do? Get the button back and push it? Murder someone?"

Norma looked disgusted. "Murder."

"How would you define it?"

"If you don't even know the person?" Norma said.

Arthur looked astounded, "Are you saying what I think you are?"

"If it's some old Chinese peasant ten thousand miles away? Some diseased native in the Congo?"

"How about some baby boy in Pennsylvania?" Arthur countered. "Some beautiful little girl on the next block?"

"Now you're loading thing."

"The point is, Norma" he continued. "What's the difference who you kill? It's still murder."

"The point is," Norma broke in, "if it's someone you've never seen in your life and never will see, someone whose death you don't even have to know about, you still wouldn't push the button?"

Arthur stared at her, appalled. "You mean *you would*?"

"Fifty thousand dollars, Arthur."

"What has the amount-"

"Fifty thousand dollars, Arthur," Norma interrupted. "A chance to take that trip to Europe we've always talked about."

"Norma, no."

"A chance to buy that **cottage on the island**."

"Norma, no." His face was white.

She shuddered. "All right, take it easy," she said. "Why are you getting so upset? It's only talk."

After dinner, Arthur went into the living room. Before he left the table, he said, "**I'd rather not discuss it anymore**, if you don't mind."

Norma shrugged, "Fine with me."

She got up earlier than usual to make pancakes, eggs, and tea for Arthur's breakfast.

"What's the occasion?" he asked with a smile.

"No occasion." Norma looked offended. "I wanted to do it, that's all."



"Good." He said. "I'm glad you did."

She refilled his cup. "Wanted to show you I'm not-"she shrugged.

"Not what?"

"Selfish."

"Did I say you were?"

"Well"-she gestured vaguely-"last night"....

Arthur didn't speak.

"All that talk about the button", Norma said. "I think you – well, misunderstood me."

"In what way?" His voice was guarded.

"I think you felt"-she gestured again-"that I was only thinking of myself."

"Oh."

"I wasn't."

"Norma –"

"Well, I wasn't. When I talked about Europe, a cottage **on the Island**-".

"Norma, why are we getting so involved in this?"

"I'm not involved at all." She **drew in a shaking breath**, "I'm simply trying to indicate that-".

"What?"

"That I'd like **for us to go to Europe**, Like for us to have a cottage on the Island. Like for us to have a nicer apartment, nicer furniture, nicer clothes, a car."

"Norma, we will," he said.

"When?"

He **stared at** her in dismay.

"Norma-"

"When?"

"Are you"-he seemed to draw back slightly-" are you really saying-"

"I'm saying that they're probably doing it for some research project!" she cut him off." That they want to know what average people would do **under such a circumstance!** That they're just saying someone would die, in order to study reactions, see if there would be guilt, anxiety, whatever! You don't really think they'd kill somebody, do you?!"

Arthur didn't answer. She saw his hands trembling. After a while, he got up and left.

When he'd gone to work, Norma **remained at the table, staring into** her coffee. I'm going to be late, she thought. She shrugged. What difference did it make?

While she was stacking dishes, she turned abruptly, dried her hands, and took the package from the bottom cabinet. Opening it, she set the button unit on the table. She **stared at** it for a long time before taking the key from its envelope and removing the glass dome. She **stared at** the button. How ridiculous, she thought. All this **furor over** a meaningless button.

Reaching out, she **pressed it down**. For us, she thought angrily.

She shuddered. Was it happening? A chill of horror **swept across** her.

In a moment, it had passed. She made a contemptuous noise. Ridiculous, she thought. To get so **worked up over nothing**.

She **threw** the button unit, dome, and key **into** the wastebasket and **hurried to dress** for work.



She had just **turned over** the supper steaks when the telephone rang. She **picked up** the receiver. "Hello?"

"Mrs. Lewis?"

"Yes?"

"This is the Lenox Hill Hospital."

She felt unreal as the voice **informed** her **of** the subway accident-the shoving crowd, Arthur pushed from the platform in front of the train. She was **conscious of** shaking her head but couldn't stop.

As she hung up, she remembered Arthur's life-insurance policy for \$25, 000, with double indemnity for-.

"No." She couldn't seem to breathe. She **struggled to** her feet and walked into the kitchen numbly. Something cold pressed **at her skull** as she removed the button unit from the wastebasket. There were no nails or screws visible. She couldn't see **how it was** put together.

Abruptly, she began to **smash it on** the sink edge, pounding it harder and harder, until the wood split. She pulled the sides apart, cutting her fingers without noticing. There were no transistors in the box, no wires or tubes.

The box was empty.

She **whirled with a gasp** as the telephone rang. **Stumbling into** the living room, she **picked up** the receiver.

"Mrs. Lewis?" Mr. Steward asked.

It wasn't her voice shrieking so; it couldn't be. "You said I wouldn't know the one that died!"

"My dear lady," Mr. Steward said. "**Do you** really think you **knew** your husband?"

Lesson No. 2

CLEARING IN THE SKY

"This is the way, Jess," said my father, pointing with his cane **across the deep** valley below us. "I want to show you something you've not seen for many years!"

"Isn't it **too hot** for you to do much walking?" I wiped the streams of sweat from my face to **keep them from stinging** my eyes.

I didn't want to go with him. I had **just finished walking a half mile** uphill **from** my home **to his**. I had **carried** a basket of dishes **to** Mom. There were two slips in the road and I couldn't drive my car. And I knew **how hot it was**. It was 97 in the shade. I knew that **from** January **until** April my father had gone to eight different doctors. One of the doctor had told him not to walk the length of a city block. He told my father to get a taxi to take him home. But my father walked home five miles across the mountain and told Mom what the doctor has said. Forty years ago a doctor had told him the same thing. And he had lived to raise a family of five children. He had done **as much** hard work in those years **as** any man.

I could not **protest to** him now. He had **made up** his mind. When he **made up** his mind to do a thing, **he would do it if he had to** crawl. He didn't care if it was 97 in the shade or 16 below zero. I



wiped more sweat from my face as I followed him down the little path between the pasture and the meadow.

Suddenly he stopped **at the edge** of the meadow, took his pocket knife from his pocket, and cut a wisp of alfalfa. He **held it up** between him and **the sun**.

"Look at this, Jess!" He bragged. "Did you ever see better alfalfa **grow out of the earth**?"

"It's the best looking hay I've ever seen any place," I said, "I've not seen better looking alfalfa even in the little Sandy River bottoms!"

"When I bought this little farm everybody around here said I'd **end up with my family** at the country poor farm if I tried to make a living here," he bragged again. "It took me thirty years to improve all these old worn-out acres to make them do this!"

"I like these woods, Jess," my father said. "Remember when we used to come here to **hunt for** squirrels? Remember when we sat beneath these hickories and the squirrels threw green hickory shells down at us? The morning wind just at the break of day in August was **so good to breath**. I can't forget those days. And in October when the rabbits were ripe and the frost had come and the hickory leaves had turned yellow and when the October winds blew they rustled the big leaves from the trees and they fell like the yellow rain drops to the ground! Remember," he said, looking at me with his pale blue eyes, "How our hounds, Rags and Scout, would make the rabbits circle! These were good days, Jess! That's why I remember this mountain."

"Is that what you wanted to show me?" I asked.

"Oh, no, no," he said as he began to climb the second bluff that lifted abruptly from the flat **toward the sky**. The pines on top of the mountain above us looked **as if** the fingers of their long boughs **were** fondling the substance of a white cloud. Whatever my father wanted me to see was on top of the highest point of my farm. And with the exception of the last three years, I had been over this point many times. I had never seen anything extraordinary upon this high point of rugged land. I had seen the beauty of many wild flowers, a few rock cliffs, and many species of hard and soft-wood trees.

"Why do you take the path **straight up the point**?" I asked. "Look at these other paths! What are they doing here?"

Within the distance of a few yards, several paths left the main path and **circled around** the slope, gradually climbing the mountain.

"All paths go to the same place," he answered.

"Then why do you take the steep one?" I asked.

"I'll explain later," he spoke with half-breaths.

He rested a minute to catch his second wind while I managed to stand on the path by holding to a little sapling, because it was **too steep** for my feet **to hold** unless I braced myself.

Then my father started to move slowly up the path again, supporting himself with his cane. I **followed at his heels**. Just a few steps in front of him a fox squirrel crossed the path and **ran up** a hickory tree.

"See that, Jess!" he shouted.

"Yes, I did," I answered.

"That brings back **something to me**," he said, "brings back the old days to see a fox squirrel. But this won't bring back **as much as** something I'm goin' to show you,"



My curiosity was aroused. I thought he had found a new kind of wild grass, or an unfamiliar herb, or a new kind of tree. For I remembered the time he had found a coffee tree in our woods. It is, as far as I know, the only one of its kind growing in our country.

Only twice did my father stop to wipe the sweat from his eyes as he climbed the second steep bluff toward the fingers of the pines. We reached the limbless trunks of these tall straight pines whose branches reached **toward the blue depth of the sky**, or the white cloud was now gone. I saw a clearing, a small clearing of not more than three-fourth of an acre in the heart of this wilderness right on the mountain top.

"Now, you're comin' to something, son," he said as he pushed down the top wire so he could cross the fence." This is something I **want you to see!**"

"Who did this?" I asked." Who cleared this land and fenced it? Fenced it against what?" "Stray cattle if they ever get out of the pasture," he answered me curtly." I cleared this land. And I fenced it!"

"But why did you ever **climb to this mountain top** and do this?" I asked him. "Look at the fertile land we have in the valley!"

"Fertile," he laughed as he reached down and picked up a double handful of leaf-rot loam." This is the land, son! This is it. I've tried all kinds of land!"

Then he smelled the dirt. He whiffed and **whiffed** the smell of this wild dirt **into** his nostrils.

"Just like fresh air," he said as he **let the dirt run** between his fingers. "It's pleasant to touch, too," he added.

"But, Dad-"I said.

"I know what you think," he interrupted." Your mother thinks the same thing. She wonders why ever climbed this mountain top to raise my potatoes, yams, and Tomatoes! But, Jess," He almost whispered." Anything grown in new ground like this has a better flavor. Wait until my tomatoes are ripe. You'll never taste sweeter tomatoes in your life. "

"They'll soon be ripe, too," I said as I looked at the dozen or more rows of tomatoes on the lower side of the patch.

Then above the tomatoes were a half- dozen rows of yams. Above the yams were, perhaps, three dozen rows of potatoes.

"I don't see a weed in this patch," I laughed. " Won't they grow here?"

"I won't let em," he said." Now this is what I've been **wanting you to see!**"

"This is **the cleanest** patch I've ever seen," I bragged." But I still don't see why you climbed the top of this mountain to clear this patch. And you did all this **against your doctor's orders!**"

"Which one?" he asked, laughing.

Then he sat down on a big oak stump and I sat down on a small black-gum stump near him. This was the only place on the mountain where the sun could **shine to the ground**. And on the lower side of the clearing there was a rim of shadow over the rows of dark stalwart plants loaded with green tomatoes.

"What is the reason for your planting this patch up here?" I asked.

"Twenty times in my life," he said," a doctor has told me to go home and be with my family as long as I could. Told me not to work. Not to do anything but to live and enjoy the few days I had left with me. If the doctors have been right," he said, winking at me," I have cheated death many times!



Now, I've reached the years the Good Book **allows to man** in his lifetime upon this earth! Three score years and ten!"

He got up from the stump and wiped the raindrops of sweat from his Red-Wrinkled Face with his big blue bandanna.

"And something else, Jess," he said, motioning for me to follow him to the upper edge of the clearing, "you won't understand until you reach three score and ten! After these years your time is borrowed. And when **you live on that** kind of time, something goes back. Something I cannot explain. You go back to the places you knew and loved. See this steep hill slope." He pointed down from the upper rim of the clearing toward the deep valley below. "Your mother and I, when she was nineteen and I was twenty-two cleared this mountain slope together. We raised corn, beans, and pumpkins here," he continued, his voice rising with excitement- he talked with his hands, too. "Those were the days. **This wasn't the land one had to build up**. It was already here as God had made it and we **had to do was to clear the trees** and burn the bush. I ploughed this mountain with cattle the first time it was ever ploughed. And we raised more than a barrel of corn **to the shock**. That's why I came back up here. I went back to our youth. And this was the only land left like that was."

"And, Jess," he bragged, "regardless of my threescore years and ten, I ploughed it. Ploughed it with a mule! I have, with just a little help, done all the work. It's like the land **your mother and I** used to farm here when I brought my gun to the field and took home a mess of fox squirrels every evening."

I looked at the vast mountain slope below where my mother and father had farmed. And I could remember, years later, when they farmed this land. It was on this steep sloop that my father once **made me a little wooden plough**. That was when I was six years old and they brought me to the field to thin corn. I lost my little plough in a furrow and I cried and cried **until he made me another** plough. But I never loved **the second** plough as I did **the first** one.

Now, to look at the mountain slope, **grown up** with all trees, many of them big enough to have **sawed into lumber** at the mill, it was hard to believe that my father and mother had cleared this mountain slope and had farmed it for many years. For many of the trees were sixty feet tall and the wild vines had matted their tops together.

"And, Jess," he almost whispered, "the doctors told me to sit still and to take life easy. I couldn't do it. I had to work. I had to go back. I had to smell this rich loam again. This land is not like the land I had to build to grow alfalfa. This is real land. It's the land that God left. I had to come back and dig in it. I had to smell it, **sift it through my fingers** again. And I wanted to taste yams, tomatoes, and potatoes grown in this land."

From this mountaintop I looked far in every direction over the rugged hills my father and mother had cleared and farmed corn, maize, and cane. The one slope they hadn't cleared was the one from which my father had cleared his last, small patch.

I followed him from his clearing in the sky, down a new path, toward the deep valley below.

"But why do you have so many paths coming from the **flat up the steep** second bluff?" I asked, since he had promised that he would **explain this to me later**.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Early last spring, I couldn't climb straight up the steep path. That was when the doctor didn't give me a week to live. I made a longer, easier path so I wouldn't have to do so much climbing. Then, as I got better, he explained. I made another path that was a little steeper. And as I



continued to get better, I made steeper paths. That was one way of knowing I was getting better all the time!"

I followed him down the path that wound this way and that, three times the length of the path we had climbed.

Lesson No. 3

DARK THEY WERE, AND GOLDEN EYED

The rocket metal cooled in the meadow winds. Its lid gave a bulging pop. From its clock interior stepped a man, a woman, and three children. The other passengers **whirled away across the Martian meadow**, leaving the man alone **among his family**.

The man **felt his hair flutter** and the **tissues** of his body **draw tight as if he were** standing **at the center** of a **vacuum**. His wife before him, seemed almost to **whirl away** in smoke. The children, small seeds, might at any instant be sown to all the Martian climes.

The children looked up at him, as people look to the sun to tell what time of their life it is. His face was cold.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife.

"Let's get back on the rocket."

"Go back to **the Earth**?"

"Yes! Listen!"

The wind blew **as if to flake away** their identities. At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, as marrow comes from a white bone. He felt **submerged in** a chemical that could dissolve his intellect and **burn away** his past.

They looked at the Martian hills that time had worn with a crushing pressure of years. They saw the old cities, lost in their meadows, lying like children's delicate bones among the blowing lakes of grass.

"Chin up, Harry," said his wife. "It's too late. We've come over sixty million miles. "

The children with their yellow hair hollered at the deep dome of Martian sky.

There was no answer but the racing hiss of wind **through the stiff grass**.

He picked up the luggage in his cold hands. "Here we go," he said – a man **standing on the edge** of a sea, ready to **wade in** and be drowned.

They **walked into town**.

Their names were Bittering-Harry and his wife Cora, Dan, Laura, and David. They built a small white cottage and ate good breakfasts there, but the fear was never gone. It lay with Mr. Bittering and Mrs. Bittering, a third unbidden partner at every midnight talk, at every dawn awakening.

"I feel like a salt crystal," he said, "in a mountain stream, being washed away. We don't belong here. We're Earth people. This is Mars. It was **meant for** the Martians. For heaven's sake, Cora, let's buy tickets for home!"

But she only shook her head. "One day the atom bomb will fix the Earth. Then we'll be safe here."

"Safe and insane!"



"Nonsense!" Mr. Bittering looked out of the windows. "We're clean, decent people." He looked at his children. "All dead cities have some kind of ghosts in them. Memories, I mean." He **stared at** the hills. "You see a staircase and you wonder what Martians looked like climbing it. You see Martian paintings and you wonder what the painter was like. You make a little ghost in your mind, a memory. It's quite natural. Imagination." He stopped. "You haven't been **prowling up** in those ruins, have you?"

"No, Papa," David looked at his shoes.

'See that you stay away from them. Pass the jam."

"Just the same," said little David, "I bet something happens."

Something happened that afternoon.

Laura **stumbled through** the settlement, crying. She **dashed blindly onto** the porch.

"Mother, Father-the war, Earth!" she sobbed. "A radio flash just came. Atom bombs hit New York! All the space rockets have **blown up**. No more rockets to Mars, ever!"

"Oh, Harry!" The mother **held onto her husband** and daughter.

"Are you sure, Laura?" asked the father quietly.

Laura wept. 'We're **stranded on** Mars, forever and ever!"

For a long time there was only the sound of the wind in the late afternoon. Alone, thought Bittering. Only a thousand of us here. No way back. No way. No way. Sweat **poured out** from his face and his hands and his body; he was **drenched in** the hotness of his fear. He wanted to strike Laura, cried, "No, you're lying! The rockets will come back!" Instead, he stroked **Laura's head against him** and said, "The rockets will **get through** someday."

"Father, what will we do?"

"**Go about our** business, of course. Raise crops and children. Wait. Keep things going until the war ends and the rockets come again."

The two boys stepped out onto the porch.

"Children," he said, sitting there, looking beyond them, "I've something to tell you."

"We know," they said.

He looked with dismay at their house." Even the house. The wind's done something to it. The air's burned it. The fog at night. The boards, all **warped out** of shape. It's not an Earthman's house any more."

"Oh, your imagination!"

He put on his coat and tie. "I'm going into town. We've got to do something now. I'll be back."

"Wait, Harry!" his wife cried.

But he was gone.

In town on the shadowy step of the grocery store, the men sat with their hands on their knees, conversing with great leisure and ease.

Mr. Bittering wanted to fire a pistol in the air.

What are you doing, you fools! he thought. Sitting here! You've heard the news-we're stranded on this planet. Well, move! Aren't you frightened? Aren't you afraid? What are you going to do?

"Hello, Harry," said everyone.

"Look," he said to them." You did hear the news, the other day, didn't you?"

They nodded and laughed. 'Sure. Sure, Harry. "

"What are you going to do about it?"



"Do, Harry, do? What can we do?"

"Build a rocket, that's what!"

"A rocket, Harry? To go back to all that trouble? Oh, Harry!"

"But you must want to go back. Have you noticed the peach blossoms, the onions, the grass?"

"Why, yes, Harry, seems we did," said one of the men.

"Doesn't it scare you?"

"Can't recall that it did much, Harry."

"Idiots!"

"Now, Harry."

Bittering wanted to cry, "You've got to work with me. If we stay here, we'll all change. The air. Don't you smell it? Something in the air. A Martian virus, may be; some seed, or a pollen. Listen to me!"

They stared at him.

"Sam," he said to one of them.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Will you help me build a rocket?"

"Harry, I got a whole load of metal and some blueprints. You want to work in my metal shop on a rocket you're welcome. I'll sell you that metal for five hundred dollars. You should be able to construct a right pretty rocket, if you work alone, **in about thirty years.**"

Everyone laughed.

"Don't laugh."

Sam looked at him with quite good humor.

"Sam," Bittering said, "Your eyes—"

"What about them, Harry?"

"Didn't they used to be grey?"

"Well, now, I don't remember."

"They were, weren't they?"

"Why do you ask, Harry?"

"Because now they're kind of yellow-colored."

"Is that so, Harry?" Sam said, casually.

"And you're taller and thinner—"

"You might be right, Harry."

"Sam, you shouldn't have yellow eyes."

"Harry, what color of eyes have you got?" Sam said.

"My eyes! They're blue, of course."

"Here you are, Harry." Sam handed him a pocket mirror." Take a look at yourself."

Mr. Bittering hesitated, and then raised the mirror to his face.

There were little, very dim **flecks of new gold captured in the blue of his eyes.**

"Now look what you've done," said Sam a moment later." You've broken my mirror."

Harry Bittering **moved into the metal shop** and began to build the rocket. Men stood in the open door and talked and joked without raising their voices. Once in a while they gave him a hand on lifting something. But mostly they just idled and watched him with their yellowing eyes.



"It's supper time, Harry," they said.

His wife appeared with his supper in a wicker basket.

"I won't touch it," he said. "I'll eat only food from our deep-freeze. Food that came **from the Earth**. Nothing from our garden."

His wife stood watching him. "You can't build a rocket."

"I worked in a shop once, when I was twenty. I know metal. Once I get it started, the others will help," he said, not looking at her, laying out the blueprints.

"Harry, Harry," she said, helplessly.

"We've got to get away, Cora. We've got to!"

Summer **burned the canals dry**. Summer moved like flame upon the meadows. In the empty Earth settlement, the painted houses flaked and peeled. Rubber tires **upon which children had swung** in back yards hung suspended like stopped clock pendulums in the blazing air.

At the metal shop, the rocket frame began to rust. In the quite autumn Mr. Bittering stood, very dark now, very golden-eye, upon the slope above his villa, looking at the valley.

"It's time to go back", said Cora.

"Yes, but we're not going," he said quietly. "There's nothing any more."

"Your books," she said. "Your fine clothes."

"The town's empty. No one's going back," he said. "There's no reason to, none at all."

The daughter wove tapestries and the sons played songs on the ancient flutes and pipes, their laughter echoing in the marble villa.

Mr. Bittering **gazed at the Earth settlement** far away in the low valley. "Such odd, such ridiculous houses the Earth people built. "

"They didn't know **any better**," his wife mused. "Such ugly people. I'm glad they've gone."

They both looked at each other, startled by all they had **just finished saying**. They laughed.

"Where did they go?" he wondered. He **glanced at** his wife. She was golden and slender as his daughter. She looked at him, and he seemed almost as young as their eldest son.

"I don't know," she said

"We'll go back to town may be next year, or the year after, or the year after that," he said, calmly. "Now-I'm warm. How about taking a swim?"

They turned their backs to the valley. Arm in arm they walked silently down a path of clear-running spring water.

Five years later a rocket fell out of the sky. It **lay steaming** in the valley. Men **leaped out** of it, shouting.

"We have won the war on the Earth! We're here to rescue you! Hey!"

But **the American-built town of cottages, peach trees, and theaters was** silent.

They found a flimsy rocket frame rusting in an empty shop.

The rocket men searched the hills. The captain established headquarters **in an abandoned bar**. His lieutenant came back to report.

"The town's empty, but we found the native life in the hills, sir. Dark people. Yellow eyes. The Martians. Very friendly. We talked a bit, not much. They learn English fast. I'm sure our relations will be most friendly with them, sir. "



"Dark, eh?" mused the captain. "How many?"

"Six, eight hundred, I'd say, living in those marble ruins in the hills, sir. Tall, healthy. Beautiful women."

"Did they tell you what **became of the men and women** who built this Earth settlement, Lieutenant?"

"They hadn't **the foggiest notion** of what happened to this town or its people."

"Strange. You think those Martians killed them?"

"They look surprisingly peaceful. Chances are **a plague did this town in**, sir."

"Perhaps. I suppose this is one of those mysteries we'll never solve. One of those mysteries you read about. "

Lesson No. 4

THANK YOU, M'AM

She was a large woman with a large purse that had everything in it but a hammer and nails. It had a long strap, and she carried it **slung across her shoulder**. It was about eleven o'clock at night, dark, and she was walking alone, when a boy **ran up behind** her and tried to snatch her purse. The strap broke with a sudden single tug the boy gave it from behind. But the boy's weight and the weight of the purse combined caused him to lose his balance. Instead of **taking off** full blast as he had hoped, the boy fell on his back **on the sidewalk** and his legs **flew up**. The large woman simply turned around and kicked him right square in his blue jeaned sitter. Then she reached down, picked the boy up by his shirt front, and shook him until his teeth rattled.

After that the woman said, "Pick up my pocket book, boy, and give it here."

She still held him tightly. But she bent down enough to permit him to stoop and pick up her purse. Then she said, "Now ain't you **ashamed of yourself?**"

Firmly gripped by his shirt front, the boy said, "yes'm."

The woman said, "What did you want to do it for?"

The boy said, "I didn't aim to."

She said, "You a lie!"

By that time two or three people passed, stopped, turned to look, and some stood watching.

"If I turn you loose, will you run?" asked the woman.

"Yes'm," said the boy.

"Then I won't turn you loose," said the woman. She did not release him.

"Lady, I'm sorry," whispered the boy.

"Um-hum! Your face is dirty. I got a great mind to wash your face for you. Ain't you got no body home to tell you to wash your face?"

"No'm," said the boy.

"Then it will get washed this evening," said the large woman, **starting up** the street, dragging the frightened boy behind her.

He looked **as if he were** fourteen or fifteen, frail and willow-wild, in tennis shoes and blue jeans.



The woman said, "You ought to be my son. I would teach you right from wrong. Least I can do right is to wash your face. Are you hungry?"

"No'm," said the **being-dragged boy**. "I just want you to turn me loose"

"Was I bothering you when I turned that corner?" asked the woman.

"No'm."

"But you put yourself in contact with me," said the woman. "If you think that that contact is not going to last awhile, you got another thought coming. When I **get through with you**, sir, you are going to remember Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones."

Sweat popped out on the boy's face and he began to struggle. Mrs. John stopped, jerked him around in front of her, put a half nelson about his neck, and continued to drag him up the street. When she got to her door, she **dragged** the boy **inside, down a hall**, and **into a large kitchenette**-furnished room at the rear of the house. She switched on the light and left the door open. The boy could hear other roomers laughing and talking in the large house. Some of their doors were open, too, so he knew he and the woman were not alone. The woman still held him by the neck in the middle of her room.

She said, "What is your name?"

"Roger," answered the boy.

"Then, Roger, you go to that sink and wash your face," said the woman, whereupon she turned him loose - at last. Roger looked at the door - looked at woman - looked at the door - and went to the sink.

"Let the water run until it gets warm," she said. "Here's a clean towel."

"You gonna take me to jail?" asked the boy, **bending over** the sink.

"Not with that face, I would not take you nowhere," said the woman. "Here I am **trying to get home to cook me a bite to eat**, and you snatch my pocket book! Maybe you ain't been to your supper either, late as it be. Have you?"

"There's nobody home at my house," said the boy.

"Then we'll eat," said the woman. "I believe you're hungry - or been hungry - to try to snatch my pocketbook!"

"I want a pair of blue suede shoes," said the boy.

"Well, you didn't have to snatch my pocket book to get some shoes," said Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones. "You could have asked me."

"M'am?"

The water was dripping from his face, the boy looked at her. There was a long pause. A very long pause. After he had dried his face, and not knowing what else to do, dried it again, the boy turned around, wondering what next. The door was open. He could **make a dash for it** down the hall. He could run, run, run, run!

The woman was sitting on the daybed. After a while she said, "**I were young once** and I wanted things I could not get."

There was another long pause. The boy's mouth opened. Then he frowned, not knowing he frowned.

The woman said, "Um-him! You thought I was going to say but, didn't you? You thought I was going to say, but I didn't snatch people's pocketbooks. Well, I wasn't going to say that." Pause. Silence. "I have done things, too, which I would not tell you, son. Everybody's got something in common. So



you sit down while I fix up something to eat. You might run that comb through your hair so you will look presentable."

In another corner of the room behind a screen **was a gas plate and an icebox**. Mrs. Jones got up and went behind the screen. The woman did not watch the boy **to see if he was going to run now, nor did she watch her purse**, which she had left behind her on the daybed. But the boy took care to sit on the far side of the room, away from the purse, where he thought she could easily see him out of the corner of her eye if she wanted to. **He did not trust the woman not to trust him**. And he did not want to be mistrusted now.

"Do you need somebody to go to the store?" asked the boy, "may be to get some milk or something?"

"Don't believe I do," said the woman, "unless you just want sweet milk yourself. I was going to make cocoa **out of this canned milk** I got here."

"That will be fine," said the boy.

She heated some lima beans and beef she had in the icebox, made the cocoa, and set the table. The woman did not ask the boy anything about where he lived, or his folks, or anything else that would embarrass him. Instead, as she ate, she told him about her job in a hotel beauty shop that **stayed open late**, what the work was like, and how all kinds of woman came in and out, blondes, redheads, and Spanish. Then she cut him a half of her ten-cent cake.

"Eat some more, son," she said.

When they **finished eating**, she got up and said, "Now here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of **latching onto** my pocketbook **nor anybody else's**- because shoes got by devilish ways will burn your feet. I got to get my rest now. But from **here on in**, son, I hope you will behave yourself."

She led him down the hall to the front door and opened it. "Good night! Behave yourself, boy!"

She said, **looking out into the street** as he went down the steps.

The boy wanted to say something other than "Thank you, ma'am," to Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones, but although his lips moved, he couldn't even say that as he turned at the foot of the barren stoop and looked up at the large woman in the door. Then she shut the door.

Lesson No. 5

www.salmanulwaheed.com THE PIECE OF STRING

At the end of market day, the rich people with vehicles of all kinds, carts, gigs, wagons, dumpcarts gathered at a great big hall for a great meal.

There were chickens, pigeons and legs of mutton in the roast and an appetizing odour of roast, beef. Leaf and gravy **dripping over the browned skin**, which increased the appetite and made **everybody's mouth water**. Everyone told his affairs, his purchases and sales. The diners discussed the crops and the weather which was favourable for the green things but not for wheat. Suddenly, at the sound of drum beat in the court everybody rose from the seats except a few ones who still had the food in their hands.



After the drum beat had ceased, the drummer **called out to the people** who were now attentive and impatiently waiting for him to **call out the public announcement**. "It is hereby made known to the inhabitants of this place and in general to all persons in the market that **a black leather pocketbook containing five hundred shillings and some business papers was lost** on the road between 9.00 and 10.00 in the morning. The finder is requested to return the same to the mayor's office or to Mr. James, the caretaker of this public hall. There will be a reward of 20 shillings".

After the meal had concluded the Chief of the police appeared on the scene. He inquired, "Is Mr. Hubert here?" Mr. Hubert seated at another end of the table replied, "Here I am." The police officer **went up to him** and said, "Mr. Hubert, will you please **accompany me to the mayor's office**, the mayor would like to talk to you." Mr. Hubert surprised and disturbed, followed the police officer. The Mayor, a stout serious man, was waiting for Hubert. "Mr. Hubert," he said, "You were seen this morning to pick up the pocketbook lost by Mr. James." Mr. Hubert, the simple countryman looked at the Mayor astounded and already terrified by the suspicion **resting on him**. "Why, Me? Me? **Me picked up** the pocketbook?" "Yes, you yourself". "By my word of honour I never heard of it." "But you were seen." "I was seen with the pocketbook? Who saw me?". "Mr. Manana, the harness man **saw you pick up** the pocketbook."

Mr. Hubert, the old man, remembered, understood and flushed with anger.

"O, him! Yes! He saw me pick up this string here." And as he said so, he **drew out** the little piece of string from his pocket.

But the Mayor shook his head and said. "You will not **make me believe** that Mr. Manana, who is a man of worthy credence, mistook the cord for a pocketbook."

Mr. Hubert, the peasant furiously lifted his hand, spat at one side to attest his honour, and said in the most exasperating tone, "It is, nevertheless, truth of good God, the scared truth. I **repeat it on my soul** and my salvation."

"After picking up the object, you stood there, looking a long while in mud **to see if any money had fallen out.**"

The good soul, Mr. Hubert, choked with indignation and fear.

"How any one can tell such lies to **take away** an honest man's reputation. How can anyone"

There was no use of Mr. Hubert protesting, for nobody believed him. Mr. Manana repeatedly maintained that Hubert had **picked up** the pocketbook. For an hour **both** men abused **each other**. Then at his own request, Mr. Hubert was searched. Nothing was found on him.

Finally the Mayor discharged Hubert with warning that he would consult the public prosecutor and ask for further orders.

As he left the Mayor's office, people surrounded and questioned him with serious curiosity. Nobody believed his story of the string. Instead people **laughed at him**.

Mr. Hubert **went along stopping his friends giving** them his statement and presentation, **turning** his pocket inside out to prove that he had nothing. All they said was, "You old rascal! Get out of here!".

Mr. Hubert went to the village telling every man he knew about his adventure, but he only **met with incredulity**. It all made him ill. The next day in the afternoon a man named George returned the pocketbook and its contents to Mr. James the owner of the pocketbook.



George **claimed to have found** the pocketbook on the **road to the village market**, but not knowing how to read he had given it to his employer.

The news spread like fire in the neighborhood. Mr. Hubert was also informed. He was in triumph.

"What grieved me as much was not the thing itself - as the lying. There is nothing **so** shameful **as** to be called a liar."

Whatever reasons he gave, people were not willing to believe him. "Those are lying excuses." They said behind his back.

Hubert felt this shame and disgrace **to his self-esteem** and character. He **consumed** his heart **over** this and wasted away before the very eyes of the people.

People started to tell the story of the string to amuse themselves and told it in a manner of soldier who had been on a campaign and told about his battles. Hubert's mind touched to the depth, began to weaken day by day.

Towards the end of the month he **took to his bed**. He died in the first week of the following month.

In the delirium of his death struggles he kept claiming his innocence, reiterating:

"A piece of string, a piece of string! By my word of honour I did not lie."

And he died.

It is said that a great flood in its wrath **carried away** the people and all their belongings. The grave of Hubert withstood the havoc of the flood.

It was **engraved on his tomb stone**, years after his death, "Here lies a man who told nothing but truth. Here lies the man who would not prove his innocence, but the flood proved it -!"

Lesson No. 6 THE REWARD

Our talk at the Club one day was of opportunity and determination. Some said opportunity was required for success, and millions never had it; others that only determination was needed. And then **Jorkens joined in**, all for determination. If a man was determined to get anything, and stuck to it **long enough**, he got it, said Jorkens. 'Anything?' asked Terbut.

'Anything,' Jorkens replied, **so long as** he **sticks to** it, and sticks to it **hard enough** and **long enough**. Anything whatever.'

Terbut disagreed.

'Life is like a race.' Jorkens **went on**, 'in which they tire after a while and sit down, or get **interested in something else** instead. The man who **keeps on** wins the race.'

'And suppose a man wanted to be skating champion of the Sahara,' said Terbut, 'and couldn't afford the money **to get there**.'

'He'd make the money,' said Jorkens. 'And he'd build a skating-rink in **the Sahara** and organize a competition there. He'd be skating champion all right, if he really gives all his time to it.'

'Could you tell us a case like that?' asked one of us. 'As a matter of fact, I can,' said Jorkens, 'a very similar case.'



'Let's hear it,' said Terbut,

'There was a young fellow,' said Jorkens, 'to whom his parents probably used to say **the very things** that we have been saying now; and very likely he, as many young fellows do, may have wanted to prove them wrong. I don't know: it was a long time ago. But whatever his motive was, he **hit on a most extraordinary ambition**, and **stuck to** it. It was nothing **less than** to be appointed Court acrobat.'

'What?' said Terbut.

'Acrobat,' Jorkens went on, 'to the Court of the country in which he lived.'

'What kind of country was that?' asked Terbut.

'Never mind what country it was,' said Jorkens. 'And as a matter of fact its customs weren't **so silly as** you suppose. They had no post of Court acrobat, and **never had had**. But that didn't stop young Gorgios.

That was his name. He was a good athlete when he **came by his wild idea** at about the age of sixteen, and had won **the high jump** and **the hurdles** and **the hundred yards** at his school.'

"Well, there was opportunity," argued Terbut, 'if he was born a good athlete.'

'But wait a moment,' said Jorkens. "You don't remain an athlete all your life and he still had to get the post created."

'How did he do that?' asked Terbut.

'Simply by **sticking to** it,' said Jorkens. 'He **went into politics**. They all do in that country. But he went **into them harder than anyone else**, and never gave up his ambition. Of course he made speeches, and fine ones, on many other subjects; but all the while he stuck to his one idea. The years **went by**, and the day came when he had power **enough to preach** his ambition openly, and he told them how the glory of their country and of its ancient throne would be increased **if the post of a Court acrobat were created**. He gave example of other Courts and greater ones. Of course many opposed him: that is politics. Of course it took a long time: that is politics too. But as the year **went by** he **wore down** opposing arguments, till he had taught people what a lesson it would be to all the nations to have a young athlete at Court exhibiting perfect physical fitness, and how such an example would strengthen their soldiers and enable them finally to win the **just rights** of the nation in victorious **battle against** their accursed neighbors. And so idea **caught on**; and to make a very **long story short**, the post of court acrobat was duly created.'

'Both **parents** of Gorgios **were by then long dead**. By then, little remained to be done: he had only to **stick** for a few more days **to** that **wild idea of his**, and then, when the question arose of choosing an athlete to fill the newly-made post, whom could they choose but the man who had worked for it all those years?'

'So Gorgios was appointed **acrobat to the Court**, and learned so late in life, what always takes time, that his parents were right after all. It only remained then to inaugurate him. And that is where I **came on the scene**, **wandering about Europe** as I used to do in those days when food used to be cheap and I was young and could easily walk long distances. I came to that country and they were wonderfully friendly, and they let me see the great ceremony, which took place as soon after the creation of the post as Georgios's uniform could be got ready. And very magnificent clothing it was, a tight-fitting suit of red velvet, all gay with gold buttons and shining with lines of gold lace that **wound and twisted about it**. The great throne-room had been **turned into** a kind of gymnasium, with the members of the Royal House **seated along a raised platform** at one end, and the principal officers standing beside and



behind them. Great curtains of red and gold were hung along the walls, and the high swings of acrobats hung down with gilded ropes from the ceiling, and a row of neat hurdles was arranged on the polished floor: Like the ones **over which Gorgios had won** his race when at school. Lights glittered, a band in pale green and gold played softly, and it was indeed a splendid scene. I will not describe it to you, because everything there, the uniforms and the ladies' brilliant dresses, was utterly put in the shade by the moment when the doors opened with a flood of golden light, and the old man in his brilliant uniform appeared between them for the crowning of his life's work. His white hair and the red uniform of the Court acrobat **showed each other off to perfection**, and his thin figure worn with age was made all the more melancholy by the tight-fitting uniform. As though tired by his long patience and the work of a lifetime, he walked slowly in his pointed shoes and **leaned on** a gilded stick. He **came to the hurdles** that he remembered, over which once he had won so easy a victory. As he came to the first he **looked up** for a moment with a slightly sad expression towards the royal platform, as though he asked some question with his eyes. Whatever the question was it was at once understood: royal smiles were **directed towards him**, and gentle applause **broke out** from every hand, which he understood at once, and the old bent from moved on away from the hurdle. Once he raised a hand to touch the lowest of the swings that were hung from the ceiling. But again the applause **broke out**, assuring him that no actual activity was **expected of him**. And so; having made his bows, he was led to a seat, his life's ambition achieved. It must have taken him more than sixty years to do it, since first he came by that strange **ambition of his**. But he did it. Not many **stick to** a thing for so long.'

And Jorkens uttered a quiet sigh, so clearly **mourning over** some lost ambition that he himself had **given up**, that not even Terbut asked him what it was.

Lesson No. 7 THE USE OF FORCE

"Please come down as soon as you can, my daughter is very sick."

When I arrived, I was met by the mother, a big startled looking woman, very clean and apologetic who merely said, "Is this the doctor?" And **let me in**. She added. "You must excuse us, doctor, we **have her in the kitchen** where it is warm. It is very damp here sometimes."

The child was fully dressed and **sitting on** her father's lap near the kitchen table. He tried to get up, but I motioned for him not to bother. I could see that they were all very nervous, eyeing me up and down distrustfully. As often, in such cases, they weren't telling me **more than** they had to, it was up to me to tell them that's why they were spending three dollars on me.

The child was fairly **eating me up** with her cold, steady eyes, and no expression on her face whatever. She did not move and seemed, inwardly, quiet; an unusually attractive little thing, and **as strong as** a heifer in appearance. But her face was flushed, she was breathing rapidly, and I realized that she had a high fever. She had magnificent blonde hair, in profusion. **One of those picture** children often reproduced in advertising leaflets and the photogravure sections of the Sunday papers.

"She's had a fever for three days," began the father, "and we don't know **what it comes from**. My wife has given her things, you know, like people do, but it doesn't do any good. And there's been a lot of sickness around. So we tho't **you'd better look her over** and tell us what the matter is."

As doctors often do, I took a trial shot at it as a point of departure. "**Has she had** a sore throat?"



Both parents answered me together, "No.... No. she says her throat doesn't hurt her."

"Does your throat hurt you?" added the mother to the child. But the little girl's expression didn't change nor did she move her eyes from my face.

"Have you looked?"

"I tried to", said the mother, but I couldn't see.

"As it happens we had been having **a number of cases** of diphtheria in the school to which this child went during that month and we were all, quite apparently thinking of that, though no one had as yet **spoken of** the thing".

"Well," I said, "suppose we take a look at the throat first. I smiled in my best professional manner and asking for the child's first name I said, come on, Mathilda, open your mouth and let's take a look at your throat."

"Nothing doing."

"Aw, come on," I coaxed, "just open your mouth wide and let me take a look. "Look," I said opening both hands wide, "I haven't anything in my hands. Just **open up** and let me see."

"Such a nice man," put in the mother. "Look how kind he is to you. Come on, do what he tells you to. He won't hurt you."

At that I ground my teeth in disgust. **If** only they **wouldn't** use the word "hurt" I **might be** able to get somewhere. But I did not allow myself to be hurried or disturbed but speaking quietly and slowly I approached the child again.

As I moved my chair a little nearer, suddenly with one catlike movement, both her hands clawed instinctively for my eyes and she almost reached them too. In fact she knocked my glasses flying and they **fell**, though unbroken, several feet away from me **on** the kitchen floor.

Both the mother and father almost turned themselves inside out in embarrassment and apology. "You bad girl," said the mother, taking her and shaking her by one arm. "Look what you've done. The nice man.... "

"For Heaven's sake," I broke in. "Don't call me a nice man to her. I'm here to look at her throat on the chance that she might have diphtheria and possibly **die of it**." But that's **nothing to her**. "Look here", I said to the child, "we're going to **look at your throat**. You're **old enough** to understand what I'm saying. Will you open it now **by yourself** or shall we have to open it for you"

Not a move. Even her expression hadn't changed. Her breaths, however, were coming faster and faster. Then the battle began. I had to do it. I had to have a throat culture for her own protection. But first I told the parents that it was entirely up to them., I explained the danger but said that I would not **insist on** a throat examination **so** long **as** they would take the responsibly.

"If you don't do what the doctor says you'll have to go to the hospital", the mother admonished her severely.

"Put her in front of you **on your lap**", I ordered, "and hold both her wrists".

But as soon as he did the child **let out a scream**. "Don't, you're hurting me. Let **go off** my hands. Let them go I tell you." Then she shrieked terrifyingly, hysterically. Stop it! You're killing me!"

"Do you think she can stand it, doctor?" said the mother.

"You get out", said the husband to his wife. "Do you want her to **die of diphtheria**?"

"**Come on** now, hold her", I said.



Then I grasped the child's head with my left hand and tried to get the wooden tongue depressor **between her teeth**. She fought, with clenched teeth, desperately! But now I also had grown furious - at a child. I tried to hold myself down but couldn't. I know **how to expose** a throat **for inspection**. And I did my best. When finally I got the wooden spatula behind the last teeth and just the point of it **into the mouth cavity**, she **opened up** for an instant but before I could see anything she **came down again** and gripped the wooden blade between her molars. She **reduced it to** splinters before I could get it out again.

"Aren't you ashamed", the mother yelled at her. "Aren't you ashamed to act like that in front of the doctor?"

"Get me a smooth-handled spoon of some sort", I told the mother, "We're going through with this." The child's mouth was already bleeding. Her tongue was cut and she was screaming in wild hysterical shrieks. Perhaps I should have desisted and come back in an hour or more. No doubt it would have been better. But I have seen, at least, two children **lying dead in bed of neglect** in such cases, and feeling that I must get a diagnosis now or never I **went at it** again. But the worst of it was that I too had **got beyond reason**. I could have **traced the child apart** in my own fury and enjoyed it. It was a pleasure to attack her. My face was **burning with it**.

In the final unreasoning assault overpowered the child's neck and jaws forced the heavy silver spoon back of her teeth and down her throat till she gagged. And there it was -both tonsils covered with membrane. She had fought valiantly **to keep me from knowing** her secret. She had been hiding that sore throat for three days at least and lying to her parents in order to escape just **such** an outcome **as** this.

Now truly she was furious. She had been on the defensive before but now she attacked. Tried to **get off** her father's lap and fly at me while tears of defeat blinded her eyes.

Chap 8

THE GULISTAN OF SA'DI

Sheikh Sa'di was a great storyteller. He **speaks to all nations** and is perpetual modern, said Emerson. He thought of the Gulistan as **one of the bibles** of the world, for he found in it the universality of moral law. The Gulistan translated in Latin and English, became love for the people. It is interesting to note that English scholars used Sa'di's translated parables in their divine books till it was discovered to be an English translation of a Latin version of Persian origin. Edwin Arnold has aptly described Gulistan in culinary terms as "an intellectual pilaf, a literary curry; a kebab of a versatile genius". The readers are sure to enjoy these parables **as food for thought**.

Once a king and a Persian slave were sailing in the same boat. The slave had never been at sea, and never experienced any calamity. After some-time the boat was hit by a storm and **started tossing**. It was very inconvenient for the passengers. All remained quiet except the slave who in fear of being drowned began to cry and tremble, and created inconvenience for the other. The others tried to pacify him by kindness and affection but he didn't hear anybody. When the uneasiness lasted longer the king also became displeased.

In that boat there happened to be a sergeant, who said, "With your permission, may I quieten him."



"It will be a great favour", the king said. The sergeant ordered the slave to be **thrown into** the water, so that he could have experienced the true danger of life. Two persons threw him in the sea and when he was about to be drowned they pulled him back to the boat, and he clung the stern with both of his hands. Then he sat down and remained quiet. This appeared strange to the king, who could not comprehend the wisdom in the action taken by the sergeant and he asked for it. The sergeant replied:

"Before he had experienced the danger of being drowned, he knew not about the safety of the boat. A man does not realize the worth of safety from the misfortune until he has tasted it."

II

It is related that while a deer was being roasted for Nushirvan, a king of Persia, famous for his justice, no salt could be found. A boy was sent to a village to bring some salt. The boy brought it and presented it to the king who asked whether he had paid for it.

"No", said the boy.

"**Pay for** the salt", said the king, "**lest it should become** a custom and the village be ruined."

Having been asked what harm could arise from such a trifling demand.

"The foundation of oppression was small in the world", said the king.

"Whoever enlarged it, so that it reached its present magnitude, is at fault. If the king eats one apple from the garden of a subject, his slaves will **pull down** the whole tree. For five eggs, which the king allows to be taken by force, the people belonging to his army will put a thousand fowls **on the spit.**"

A tyrant does not remain in the world,
but the curse on him abides for ever

III

A king fell seriously ill and all hopes of his recovery vanished. **The more** the disease was cured **the more** it became painful. At last the physicians agreed that this disease could not be cured except **by means of** bile of a person **endued with** certain qualities. Orders were issued to search for an individual of this kind. A son of a farmer was discovered to possess the qualities mentioned by the doctors. The king summoned the father and mother of the boy, whose consent he got by giving them a huge amount of wealth. The Qazi issued a decree to shed the blood of a person for the health of the king. The boy was brought to the altar and the executioner was directed to slaughter the boy. When all was ready the boy **looked toward the sky** and smiled.

"Why do you laugh in such a position?", the king asked.

"A son **looks to the affection** of his parents," said the boy.

"If they fail, they are expected to bring the case before the Qazi to seek justice. But in the present case, the parents have agreed to get my blood shed for the trash of this world. The Qazi has issued a decree to kill me. The king thinks he will recover his health only **through my slaying** and I see no other refuge **besides God Almighty**. To whom shall I complain against your brutality, **if I am to seek** justice from your hand?"

The king **felt disturbed** and **on hearing these words** he could not control his tears and said,



"It is **better** for me **to die than to shed** the blood of an innocent boy." He kissed the head and eyes of the boy and presented him with a lot of wealth. It is said that the king also recovered within a week.

Lesson No. 9 THE FOOLISH QUACK

One evening, as **the sun** was setting, some travellers stayed to rest under **a clump of trees**, and, loosening their camels, set them to graze. It happened that **one of the animals** entered a melon-field, and that a melon stuck in **its** throat. The owner, seeing this and fearing to lose the animal, tied a blanket round its throat, and then struck the place with all his might. Instantly the melon **broke in the throat** of the camel, and it was then easily swallowed.

A certain man who had just **come up, looking on** and observing this proceeding, shouldered his bundle, and, going to the next village, pretended that he was a doctor.

"But what can you cure?" asked the villagers.

"I can cure the goitre," answered the quack.

An old woman, whose throat was swollen to a frightful size, exclaimed: "O my son, **if you could** only cure my goitre, I **would** bless you for evermore!"

"Certainly," answered the man; "here, bring me a blanket and a good-sized mallet."

As soon as they were brought, he **tied up** the woman's throat, and struck the swollen part with **so** much force **that** the poor old creature instantly expired.

"Ah," cried the people, "this fellow is a villain!"

So they seized him, being minded to carry him before the king. One of them, however, said: "She was a very old woman, who must have died shortly in any case.

Let us therefore compel the wretch to dig her grave, and then we can beat him and **let him go**." So they took him and set him to work, but the ground was so stiff and hard that he made slow progress.

"If you do not dig it," said they, "before the king you shall go, and then you will be hanged."

Thus exhorted the unfortunate man in the greatest fear, laboured away with all his might; and at last, when the villagers saw that he had finished his task and buried the victim of his mistaken treatment, they beat him well and **let him go**.

Uninfluenced by the severity of his punishment, the man mounted his camel and **went on to** the next village, and again gave himself out as a great doctor.

"And what can you cure?" said someone.

"I can cure goitre," answered he.

This time it was an old man who offered himself for treatment. But the pretended doctor said "Look here, good people. I shall do my best to cure this case; but remember, if I am **so unfortunate as to kill him**, I am not to be compelled to dig the man's grave."

"A pretty sort of doctor you must be!" cried they, "Before you begin your treatment, you are **talking of digging** the patient's grave! Away with you; we shall have nothing to do with you."

Hearing this, the pretended doctor began to say to himself: "What an extraordinary thing this is! My best plan surely is to return to the camel-men and tell them they have not shown me the right way to cure this disease. Perhaps they will advise me."



When he had overtaken them, he cried: "What foolish men you must be! met an old woman who suffered from goitre just like your camel, and I tied a blanket round her neck and struck her with a mallet, but, instead of recovering like your camel, she died, and **instead of getting a fee** I was **compelled to** dig her grave!"

"**It is not we** who are stupid," answered the camel-men, "but you. We are not stupid at all. These animals are camels of prodigious size and strength. How was a feeble old woman to stand the blow of a mallet? No; it is you, and you only, who are stupid."

One of the men now stepped forward, saying to his friends: "You remain quiet, and **leave** this fellow **to me**." Then, addressing himself to the newcomer, he cried: "Hear you, sir, these men do not understand the matter at all. I can set it all right for you in a minute." Saying this, he lifted a heavy stick, bound with iron rings, and struck a camel which was **feeding off the leaves** of a wild plum-tree. The stolid creature, scarcely feeling the blow, merely moved a step or two forward." You observe," said the man, "the effect of this treatment on the camel. Now observe its effect on a human being!" He then **struck the man himself a similar blow**, which **felled him to the earth** like a log. When consciousness returned, this bewildered victim inquired: Why, sir, this cruel usage?"

'Do you not perceive?' answered the camel-man. 'I wished to show you that what is good for camels is not good for poor old men and women.'

"Ah," said the wretched man, "I now begin to see my error. **Never, never again shall I set myself up** for a doctor!"

Lesson No. 10

THE MILD ATTACK OF LOCUSTS

"Look, look, there they are!"

Out ran Margaret to join them, looking at the hills. Out came the servants from the kitchen. They all stood and gazed. Over the rocky levels of the mountain was a streak of rust-coloured air, Locusts. There they came.

At once Richard **shouted at** the cookboy. Old Stephen **yelled at** the houseboy. The cookboy ran to beat the old ploughshare **hanging from** a tree branch, which was used to summon labourers at moments of crisis. The houseboy **ran off to the store** to collect tin cans, any old bit of metal. The farm was ringing with the clamour of the gong; and they could **see the labourers come pouring out of** the compound, **pointing at** the hills and shouting excitedly. Soon they had all **come up to the house**, and Richard and old Stephen were giving them orders - Hurry, hurry, hurry.

And **off they ran** again, the two white men with them and in a few minutes Margaret could see the smoke of fires rising from all around the farmlands. Piles of wood and grass had been prepared there. There were seven patches of bared soil, yellow colour and pink, where the new mealies were just showing, making a film of bright green; and around each **drifted up** thick clouds of smoke. They were **throwing** wet leaves **on to the fires** now, to make it acrid and black. Margaret was watching the hills. Now there was a long, low cloud advancing, rust color still, swelling forward and out as she looked. The telephone was ringing. Neighbours-quick, quick, there come the locusts. Old Smith **had had** his crop eaten to the ground. Quick, get your fires started. For of course, while every farmer hoped the



locust would overlook his farm and **go on to the next**, it was only fair to warn each other; one must play fair. Everywhere, **fifty miles over the countryside**, the smoke was rising from myriads of fires. Margaret answered the telephone calls, and between calls she stood watching the locusts. The air was darkening. A strange darkness, for the sun was blazing - it was like the darkness of a veldt fire, when the air gets thick with smoke. The sunlight **comes down distorted**, a thick, hot orange. Oppressive it was, too, **with the heaviness** of a storm. The locusts were coming fast. Now half the sky was darkened. Behind the reddish veils in front, which were the advance guards of the swarm, the main swarm showed in dense black cloud, **reaching almost to the sun itself**.

Margaret was wondering what she could do to help. She did not know. Then up came old Stephen from the lands." We're finished, Margaret, finished! Those beggars can eat every leaf and **blade off the farm** in half an hour! And it is only early afternoon-if we can make **enough smoke**, make enough noise till the sun goes down, they'll settle somewhere else perhaps...."And then "Get the kettle going. It's thirsty work, this. "

Looking out, all the trees were queer and still, **clotted with insects**, their boughs **weighed to the ground**. **The earth** seemed to be moving, locusts crawling everywhere, she could not see the lands at all, so thick was the swarm. **Toward the mountains** it was like **looking into driving rain**-even as she watched, the sun was **blotted out** with a fresh onrush of them. It was a half night, a perverted blackness. Then came a sharp crack from the bush- a branch had **snapped off**. Then another. A tree down the slope **leaned over** and **settled** heavily **to the ground**. Through the hail of insects a man came running.

"All the crops finished. Nothing left," he said.

But the gongs were still beating, the men still shouting, and Margaret asked: "Why do you go on with it, then?"

"The main swarm isn't settling. They are **heavy with eggs**. They are looking for a place to settle and lay. If we can stop the main body settling on our farm, that's everything. If they get a chance to lay their eggs, we are going to have everything eaten flat with hoppers later on." He **picked a stray locust off** his shirt and split down with his thumbnail-it was clotted inside with eggs. "Imagine that multiplied by millions. You ever seen a hopper swarm on the march? Well, you're lucky."

"Is it very bad?" asked Margaret fearfully, and the old man said emphatically: "We're finished. This swarm may **pass over**, but once they've started, they'll be **coming down from the North** now one after another. And then there are the hoppers -it might go on for two or three years. "

"For the Lord's sake, "said Margaret angrily, still half- crying, "what's here is **bad enough**, isn't it?" For although the evening air was no longer black and thick, but a clear blue, with a pattern of insects whizzing this way and that across it, everything else - trees, buildings, bushes, earth- was gone under the moving brown masses.

But Margret preferred not even to think of them. After the midday meal the men **went off** to the lands. Everything was to be replanted. With a bit of luck another swarm would not come travelling down just this way. But they hoped it would rain very soon, to spring some new grass, because the cattle would die otherwise - there was **not a blade of grass left on the farm**. As for Margaret, she was trying to get used to the idea of three or four years of locusts. Locusts were going to be like bad weather, from now on, always imminent. She felt like a survivor after war - if this devastated and mangled countryside was not ruin, well, what then was ruin?



But the men ate their supper with good appetites.

"It could have been worse," was what they said. "It could be **much worse**."

Lesson No. 11 I HAVE A DREAM

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow jail cells. Some of you have come from the areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that **in spite of** the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this **nation** will **rise up** and **live out** the true meaning of **its** creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together **at the table of brotherhood**.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state **sweltering with** the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I **return to the South**. With this faith we will be able to **hew out of the mountain** of despair, a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to **transform** the jangling discords of our nation **into** a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to **stand up** for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. This will be the day when all of us will be able to live with new meaning

My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,



Of thee I sing:

Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountain side
Let freedom ring.

(Note it's a song in praise of one's country. My country is a sweet land of liberty. I sing for this land where my fathers died. It is a land of the pilgrims' pride and let the freedom ring from every side of it.)

And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania!

Let Freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado!

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California!

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee!

Let freedom ring from every hill and Mole-hill of Mississippi. From every mountain side, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to **speed up that day** when all of us, black men and white men, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual,

"Free at last: Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Lesson No. 12

THE GIFT OF MAGI

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. She had put it aside, one cent and then another and then another, in her careful buying of meat and other food.

Della counted it three times. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was nothing to do but fall on the bed and cry. So Della did it.

Only \$1. 87 to buy a gift for Jim. Her Jim. She had had many happy hours planning something nice for him. Something nearly **good enough**. Something almost worth the honor of **belonging to** Jim.

The James Dillingham Youngs were very proud of two things which they owned. One thing was Jim's gold watch. It had once **belonged to** his father. And, long ago, it had **belonged to** his father's father. The other thing was Della's hair.

If a queen had lived in the rooms near theirs, Della would have washed and dried her hair where the queen could see it. Della knew **her hair was** more beautiful than any queen's jewels and gifts.

If a king had lived in the same house, with all his riches, Jim would have looked at his watch every time they met. Jim knew that no king had anything so valuable.

So now Della's beautiful hair **fell about her**, shining like a falling stream of brown water. It reached below her knee. It almost **made itself into a dress** for her.

And then she **put it up on her head again**, nervously and quickly. Once she stopped for a moment. And stood still while a tear or two **ran down** her face.



She **put on her old brown coat**. She **put on** her old brown hat. With the bright light still in her eyes, she moved quickly out of the door and down to the street.

Where she stopped, the sign said: "Mrs. Sofronie. Hair Articles of all Kinds."

Up to the second floor Della ran, and stopped to get her breath.

Mrs. Sofronie, large, too white, cold-eyed, **looked at** her.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Mrs. Sofronie. "**Take** your hat **off** and **let me look** at it."

Down fell the brown waterfall.

"Twenty dollars," said Mrs. Sofronie, lifting the hair to feel its weight.

"Give it to me quickly," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours seemed to fly. She was going from one shop to another, to find a gift for Jim.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and for no one else. There was no other like it in any of the shops, and she had looked in every shop in the city.

It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material. Because it was so plain and simple, you knew that it was very valuable. All good things are like this.

It was good enough for the watch.

As soon as she saw it, she knew that Jim must have it. It was like him. Quietness and value- Jim and the chain both had questions and value. She paid twenty-one dollars for it. And she hurried home with the chain and eighty-seven cents.

With that chain on his watch, Jim could look at his watch and learn the time anywhere he might be. Though the watch was so fine, it never had a fine chain. He sometimes took it out and looked at it only when no one could **see him do it**.

When Della arrived home, her mind quietened a little. She began to think more reasonably. She started to try to cover the sad marks of what she had done. Love and large-hearted giving, when added together, can leave deep marks. It is never easy to cover these marks, dear friends-never easy.

Within forty minutes her head looked a little better. With her short hair, she looked wonderfully like a school boy. She stood at the looking-glass for a long time.

"If Jim doesn't like me," she said to herself, "before he looks at me a second time, he'll say I look like a girl who works for money. But could I do - oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven, Jim's dinner was ready for him.

Jim was never late. Della held the watch chain in her hand and sat near the door where he always entered. Then she heard his steps in the hall and her face lost color for a moment. She often said little prayers quietly, about simple everyday things.

And now she said "Please God, **make him think** I'm still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked very thin and he was not smiling. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two-and with a family to **take care of**! He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands.

Jim stopped inside the door. He was **as quiet as** a hunting dog when it is near a bird. His eyes looked strangely at Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not understand. It filled



her with fear. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor anything else she had been ready for. He simply looked at her with the strange expression on his face.

Della went to him.

"Jim, dear," she cried, "don't look at me like that. I had my hair **cut off** and sold it. I couldn't **live through Christmas** without giving you a gift. My hair will grow again. You won't care, will you? My hair grows very fast. It's Christmas, Jim. Let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-what a beautiful nice gift I got for you."

"You've **cut off** your hair?" asked Jim slowly. He seemed to labour to understand what had happened. He seemed not to feel sure he knew.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me now? I'm me, Jim. I'm the same without my hair."

Jim looked around the room.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said.

"You don't have to **look for it**," said Della. "It's sold I tell you-sold and gone, too. It's the night before the charismas, boy. Be good to me, because I sold it for you. May be the **hairs of my head could be counted**," she said, "but no one could ever count **my regard** for you. Shall we eat dinner, Jim?"

Jim folded his arms before him. For ten seconds let us look in another direction. Eight dollars a week or a million dollar a year – how different are they? Someone may give you an answer, but it will be wrong. The Magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. My meaning will be explained soon.

From inside his coat, Jim took something **tied in paper**. He threw it upon the table.

"I **want you to understand** me, Dell," he said. "Nothing like a haircut could make me careless for you. But if you'll open that, you may know what I felt when I came in."

White fingers **pulled off** the paper. And then a cry of joy; and then a **change to tears**.

For there lay the combs – the combs that Della had seen in a shop window and loved for a long time. Beautiful combs, with jewels, perfect for her beautiful hair. She had known they **cost too much** for her **to buy** them. She had looked at them without **the least hope of owning them**. And now **they were hers**, but her **hair was** gone.

But she held them to her heart, and at last, was able to look up and say:

"My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then she jumped up and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him in her open hand. The gold seemed to shine softly as if with her own warm and loving spirit.

"Isn't it perfect, Jim? I hunted all over the town to find it. You'll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how they look together."

Jim sat down and smiled.

"Della," said he, "let's put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They're **too nice to use** now. I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs. And now I think we should have our dinner."

The Magi, as you know, were wise men-wonderfully wise men-who brought **gifts to the newborn Christ**-child. They were the first to give Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were doubtlessly wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two children who were not wise. **Each** sold



the most valuable thing **he** owned in order to buy a gift for the other. But let me speak the last word to the wise of these days: Of all who give gifts, these two were **the wisest**. Of all who give and receive gifts, **such as they** are **the most wise**. Everywhere they are **the wisest ones**. They are the Magi.

Lesson No. 13 GOD BE PRAISED

BEFORE HIS MARRIAGE, Maulvi Abul Barkat, alias Abul, used to live in comfort, even pomp. On his head, he wore a light brown turban known as Mashadi lungi, because it originally came from Mashad in Iran. The gilded tip of his cap used to shine brightly above the turban. He always carried a walking stick, a sort of scepter with decorative band of brass and gilt. For his hair, he used fragrant oil. Its sweet pungent smell lingered in the village lanes whenever he walked through them.

Maulvi Abul had slightly bulging eyes. On his fingers he wore silver rings with large turquoise stones. These rings **came off his fingers** five times a day before ablutions, and yet no change was ever observed in the order in which they were worn.

Every Eid, after his sermon, whenever the cotton bag containing from 150 to 200 rupees collected from the devotees happened to fall with a thud, he distributed 40 to 50 rupees in the presence of the worshippers among the needy and the poor of the village. After each such act, he used to say: "Please don't pray for me. Remember the Benevolent Almighty Allah. If He creates insects in stones, He supplies their food there too. Please do not bless me. What has He not blessed me with? Health, peace of mind, freedom from care; I have everything one can desire. I don't need anything more from His unlimited treasure of divine blessings. "

Like the children who came in quick succession, the times, too, had changed fast. A pair of shoes for his first born, Mehrunnisa, had cost him one rupee. For his youngest daughter, he was now asked to pay six rupees for a pair. When he complained, the shoemaker said: "Maulvi, I didn't charge more for your sake. Had it been someone else, I could easily have wangled ten rupees. The cost of leather has gone sky-high. Prices have risen **so** suddenly **that** it seems as though all the cows and buffaloes in the country have been dispatched to the Mount Caucasus. My cost price is five twelve. Believe me, my profit is only four annas. Come on, Maulvi, don't look disappointed and, pray, don't give me even that four annas bit. I will charge only what I have spent for these dainty shoes. If I am lying, the curse of Allah be on me and may I be drowned in some pond. May I even be **deprived of** a decent burial!"

If it were possible to get the necessities of life from the heavens through prayers, Maulvi Abul **would have prayed** to Allah for a pair of shoes for his Umda, the youngest in the family. At night he consulted his wife. But **instead of replying**, she silently lifted a corner of the quilt to expose Umdatunnisa's small, bare feet. Seeing those dainty feet, Maulvi Abul **burst into tears** like a child.

Next day, after his morning prayers, he went to the shoemaker and paid him five rupees and twelve annas and bought the shoes. Leaving his shop, he vowed, with Allah as his witness, never to use the powdered tobacco that he loved.

When Mehrun reached the age of 14, Maulvi Abdul's prayers became intense and prolonged. During Ramadan, he led the nightly tarawih prayers as usual. But the same Maulvi Abul who never had made a single mistake, began straying from one Surah of **the Holy Quran** to another. Sometimes, unconsciously, he **repeated** the same chapter **twice** in **the same** part of prayer.



Once when Chaudhry Fateh Dad, the member of the District Board, reprimanded him for a mistake, Maulvi Abul felt like shouting back at him: "You have a whole row of boys, Chaudhri Sahib. **Had you** also **been** blessed with a daughter then you **would understand** why I repeated a chapter of the Holy Book twice!"

But Chaudhry Fateh Dad's censure was purely religious. Why, he was the same rich, pious Muslim, the Head of the village, who every evening for years had been sending Maulvi Saheb homebaked bread **smear**ed **with ghee** and an earthen bowl of dal. He was very regular in his offering. If for some reason the daily offering of the evening meal was delayed, Chaudhry Fateh Dad would carry it himself to Maulvi Abdul's house and apologise for the delay, saying:

"I am terribly sorry, Maulviji. My wife is unwell. So the maid has cooked the food." He, sincerely considered the daily gift to Maulvi Abul a part of his daily worship.

Conscious of the ever increasing responsibilities of her husband, Zaibunnisa too had started teaching young girls of the village **the Holy Quran**. On Thursday, when each of the girls brought a small portion of sugar on bread, Zaibunnisa would arrange for at least two baskets. These small baskets were used to store morsels of home baked bread.

But, there was yet another problem. Besides bread to fill their bellies, they also needed clothes to cover their bodies. Chaudhri Fateh Dad used to present new clothes to Maulvi Abul once a year after every harvest. Whenever these clothes came, a tailoring shop would **spring up** in Maulvi Abdul's house. Zaibunnisa, with the assistance of Mehrun and Zabda and Shamsun, would **cut them into** smaller outfits for the younger kids. If he ever received some extra money, this bonus would usually be **locked up** in a tin box.

With the passage of time, the appetites of the children increased.

Maulvi Abul was caught in the whirl of life. Time had not been **kind to him**. The hair around his temples had become silvery white. The grip of his teeth on his gums had for long been loose. But his voice remained resonant. However, sometimes that too quivered.

Chaudhri Fateh Dad was the only one who knew the reason. Maulvi Abul had once opened His heart to him about a suitable match for Mehrun. The Chaudhry had carefully considered the eligibility of all the young men of the village.

There were some whom he found suitable. But the trouble was that everyone in the community knew Maulvi Abul well. Chaudhri Fateh Dad tried to **negotiate with** a couple of elders but all of them drew back as if bees had suddenly sprung from a bed of flowers.

Ultimately Maulvi Abul's and Zaibunnisa's prayers bore fruit. A young man from the village who had gone away, came back and opened a small cloth shop. He called himself Shamim Ahmed.

He was the only son of a Haafiz. After the death of his father, Khudayar, tried to follow his father's footsteps. When he was about 16, he went away to the city, leaving his old mother behind. Later they learnt that he had worked in the house of a head clerk, after which he had managed to open a small shop on a footpath where he began selling cut pieces. After saving some money and gaining experience in the business, he returned to the village. He then begged Maulvi Abul to inaugurate and bless his shop by becoming his first customer.

That day, in order not to disappoint his erstwhile disciple and his aged mother, Maulvi Abul took a momentous decision. He went to his wife and said:" Shamim Ahmed wants me to inaugurate his shop



by becoming his first customer. If you agree, let us buy a piece of cloth for Mehrun's suit. In any case we will need it for her dowry. My purchase in the presence of the entire village may impress them."

"May Allah bless you," she **blurted out** and immediately took out the key which **hung in a thread** around her neck. She opened the trunk, took out the tin box and placed it before her husband.

As she opened it, her eyes suddenly became bright with unshed tears. Just then Mehrun walked in. Then she turned back with a smile, almost **as if she was** thinking. I know the secret of Abba's readiness to inaugurate Shamim Ahmed's shop!

Maulvi Abul counted his savings. There were 43 rupees. He put the money into his pocket, stood up slowly and said: If somehow Mehrun can be married, all my worries will disappear. I will feel **as light as** a feather, at least for some years to come."

When Maulvi Abul reached Shamim Ahmed's new shop, he found a crowd had already assembled there to watch the proceedings. Most of the onlookers were women. They lingered to gaze with wistful longing at the colourful display.

Maulvi Abul inaugurated the shop by first reciting verses from the Holy Quran in his powerful voice. Then he selected a piece of pink cloth with beautiful flowers nestling amidst yellow dots.

"I will need a piece from this for a young lady's suit," he said loudly.

Overjoyed, Shamim Ahmed picked up his yard stick, uttered "In the name of Allah" silently, measured seven yards, picked up the large pair of scissors and cut the cloth. He then folded it neatly and placed it before Maulvi Abul with respect. He almost seemed to be offering it as a gift.

"How much should I pay?" Maulvi Abul asked. Out of respect, Shamim Ahmed hesitated for a moment, rubbed his palms, cleared his throat and replied: "At the rate of six rupees per yard, it will be 42 rupees, sir."

His words fell like a bombshell on Maulvi Abul. Suddenly he felt **as if** bundle after bundle of cloth from the various shelves **had been** falling over him. Out of 43 rupees he kept a rupee and quickly paid the rest to Shamim Ahmed.

"Thank you, sir," Shamim said, flushing with happiness. "You have graciously become my first customer, I consider it a good omen. That is why I have not offered you any concession today. I am your humble servant, sir. I will, God willing, compensate you soon in some other way."

Maulvi Abul placed the bundle of cloth under his arm and got up to leave. He smiled, blessed Shamim Ahmed and began walking slowly home.

One evening, a few days later, someone **knocked at** the door. He went to the door himself and opened it. A wave of fragrance **flowed into** the house.

"Assalam-o-Alaikum, sir." He heard a familiar voice. It was Shamim Ahmed.

After the preliminary exchange of greetings, Shamim Ahmed hesitatingly said something secret to Maulvi Abul.

A thrill went through Maulvi Abul's ears. An idea came to him. **Instead of listening to** Shamim Ahmed's request on his threshold, he turned and shouted: "Arif's mother, I am going out. I will be back soon." And he started walking towards the mosque. Shamim Ahmed followed him silently.

They went to a room at one end of the mosque. It was dark and usually used for offering special prayers in solitude.



Maulvi Abul went into the room. He put a match to a dry twig and with it lit the earthen lamp. The flame flickered for a while, then became steady. Shamim Ahmed was now **looking** nervously **into the flickering flame**.

To put him at ease, Maulvi Abul said softly, "What is it, son?"

Shamim Ahmed lowered his eyes, hesitated for a moment and then replied, "If you allow me, sir, I'll begin."

"Yes, of course, son. What is it?" To encourage the youth he patted his back.

Shamim **felt at ease**, but couldn't overcome his embarrassment. Then, finally **mustering up** courage, he cleared his throat and began in a low voice: "As a matter of fact, my mother should have done this, but she is not well. That's why I have come."

He stopped.

"You did the right thing," Maulvi Abul said affectionately.

"My request is, please accept me as your slave. I mean....!" He stopped abruptly, **stumbling over** the words.

Maulvi Abul could not believe what he had just heard. To make sure, he Asked: "What is it, son? I don't quite understand. You wish me to accept you as...?"

"Yes, sir, as your slave!" Shamim Ahmed **blurted out** in haste, "I mean, if you have no objection, I will send my mother with the marriage proposal. It will be an honour, sir, to be your son"....

In his excitement, fear and confusion, he did not see the tears which had silently rolled down Maulvi Abul's cheeks. In that silence, time almost stood still for both of them. They looked dazed.

Maulvi Abul sighed and wiped the tears from his eyes and his face with the loose end of his turban. In a quavering voice, he said: "O Allah, daughters are your helpless creatures!" He caught hold of Shamim Ahmed's hand and added: "They are for marriage. You are my dear disciple. Brother Hafiz Abdul Rahim's son is also my son. Come, my son, come!" And he embraced Shamim Ahmed warmly.

Half an hour later, when he reached home, Zaibunnisa asked: "Where are you coming from with this wave of fragrance?"

Mehrun looked up. Before her father could answer, she said: "Yes, Abba, what a sweet perfume. The whole house is full of it."

Seeing him silent, his wife went to him. "What is it?" she enquired softly.

Maulvi Abul looked first towards his eldest daughter, then towards the row of children who had appeared on the scene. They had all **clustered around** their sister.

They looked disappointed, for he had returned empty-handed. They had to be pleased first. So he declared slowly, "Tonight, all my children will get a special treat, a little raw sugar with bread."

This did the trick. Their faces immediately lit up with joy. Fie then went to another part of the courtyard and sat down on the matted bed.

"Come here, Arif's Mother," Maulvi Abul sounded excited as he **called out to** his wife. He told her the whole incident. At first Zaibunnisa did not believe him. But when he repeated the story under oath, she began to cry.

Don't cry, Zaibun," he said softly. He rarely addressed her that way. But today was a special day. "God did listen to our prayers. Let us bow our heads to Him."

They were still lost in their newly acquired happiness when suddenly, once again, they heard a knock. Before any of his children could rush and open the door,



Maulvi Abul shouted.

"Wait. Let me see." He went to the door and opened it. Chaudhry Fateh Dad was standing there, wrapped in a shawl. He warmly caught Maulvi Abul's hands and embraced him. "Congratulations, sir. At last my efforts have proved fruitful" he said in a low voice.

"Yes, Chaudhry Saheb. I am thankful to you and **grateful to Almighty** Allah."

"Shamim is a good boy, sir Please take a decision without delay. Who knows what may happen?" saying that, he brought out a cotton bag from under his shawl and **handed it over** to Maulvi Abul." This is a humble gift. Please give it to my daughter on my behalf," said Chaudhry Fateh Dad.

Gratified and almost dazed, Maulvi Abul went back to his wife. With a thumping heart he opened the bag. Tied neatly in a large silken kerchief were a pair of gold pendants set with large, shining stones and wrapped in a hundred rupee note!

A few days later, the pre-marriage celebrations began. Mehrunnisa, was **put in seclusion** in a separate room till the auspicious day. Her hands and feet were covered with henna. The gay songs that usually accompany wedding ceremonies were not sung, for after all, this was Maulvi Abul Barkat's residence. Music of any kind could not be allowed in his house. So the village girls simply sat in a circle round the shy bride, and for several nights sang songs of love and friendship, flowers and their fragrance, and the romantic rainy season which has a special significance for young men and women in the rural Punjab. They also sang sweet songs of the excitement of union and the pangs of separation.

On the other hand, nobody could restrain Shamim Ahmed from celebrating his marriage any way he desired. So he came to marry Mehrun amidst fireworks with musicians playing gay tunes. That night, after a lot of whispering in one corner of the house, many trunks were dragged out and opened. The next morning when the dowry was exhibited in the courtyard, the entire **village** was stunned by what **it** saw. People were not impressed much with the colourful clothes, for this was not unusual. But the jewellery! It was incredible. Some secretly believed that the Maulvi had a special amulet whose charm blessed him with secret power to get **as** much money **as** he desired from the angels.

In the crowd, there was also a loudmouthed old hag who seemed to have other views. In a loud whisper, she pointed out that several suits in the dowry had once belonged to a woman who had died young. There were others which had been part of Zaibun's dowry. "Even the bracelets and the gold nose-ring **are hers**," she added with conviction. "But the gold pendants?" She raised her eyes and looked towards the heavens, **as if they were** a gift from there.

After the ceremonies were over, **Mehrun was made to sit** in a palanquin: Beautifully decorated, it was covered with a large silken cloth so that the bride could go to the bridegroom's house in strict purdah. As two sturdy villagers carried it away, Maulvi Abul walked a few steps with it. He must have cried silently for his eyes and nose were red and he looked pale. At the same time he **looked at peace**.

As he went back to his house, Zaibunnisa suddenly appeared from behind the door. She held his hand and **burst into tears**. "Look at this house," she said, sobbing. "Without Mehrun, doesn't it look like a graveyard?"

Maulvi Abul smiled and consoled her, "Don't be silly, Zaibun. Has Mehrun taken Zabda also with her? What about Shamsun?" Suddenly he remembered something. "Arif's mother, where is Zabda?" he asked in a whisper.

"Inside. Crying," she replied.



"Zabda." Maulvi Abul called her. A few minutes later Zabda came out of the room. She looked sad. There were large dark patches of tears on her new pink head cloth. The Maulvi said to his wife "Arif's mother, have you noticed?" he whispered. "This Zabda **of ours** has suddenly grown up."

There was silence for a while. Then Maulvi Abul said, perhaps to reassure himself more than his wife: "Don't worry. God Almighty is kind and benevolent. It's a sin to lose faith."

Oblivious of his surroundings, Maulvi Abul's mind was racing elsewhere. As if in a trance, he had called Shamsun. Slowly, his third daughter came forward and **began walking** towards them.

A few months after Mehrun's marriage, a primary school for girls was opened in the village.

All these years, Maulvi Abul had two main sources of inspiration, in which he had implicit faith. The first one was Almighty Allah and after Him, Chaudhry Fatehdad. It was certainly Allah's benevolence that **sinner**s like Maulvi Abul and Zaibunnisa **were** still alive and that all their children were living and Mehrun had been married with such splendour.

Lesson. No. 14

OVERCOAT

One evening in January a well-groomed young man **having walked up** Davis Road to the Mall **turned to** Charing Cross. His **hair was** sleek and shining and he wore side burns. His thin moustache seemed to have been drawn with a pencil. He had **put on** a brown overcoat with a cream coloured half opened rose in his button hole and a green flat hat which he wore at a **rakish** angle. A white silk scarf was **knotted at his neck**. **One of his hands was slipped into** a pocket of his overcoat while in the other he held a short polished cane which every now and then he twirled jauntily. It was a Saturday evening in mid-winter. The sharp icy gusts of wind struck like steel, but the young man seemed to be immune to them. So, while others were walking briskly to keep warm, he was **ambling along** obviously enjoying his promenade in the bitter cold.

He looked such a dandy that tonga-wallas on catching **sight of him**, even from a distance, **whipped up** their horses and raced **towards him**. With a wave of his stick he **turned** them **away**. A taxi also drew near him and the driver looked at him enquiringly. He too was **turned off**. This time with a "No, Thank you."

As the evening advanced the cold became more intense. It was a cold that induced people to seek **comfort in pleasure**. At such times it was **not only** the profligate who ranged abroad, **but** even those who were usually content to live with their loneliness, emerged from their hide-outs to join the gaiety of the streets. And so people **converged on the Mall** where they amused themselves among the variety of hotels, restaurants, cafes and snack bars, each according to his means. Those who could not afford the pleasures inside, were content to **gaze at** the coloured lights and brilliant advertisements outside. Up and down the main road there was an unending stream of cars, buses, tongs and bicycles while the pavement thronged with pedestrians.

The young man **seated on** the cement bench was watching with interest the people **passing on** the pavement before him. Most of them were wearing overcoats which were of every kind from the astrakhan to the rough military khaki **such as are found** in large bundles at the secondhand clothes' shops.



The overcoat the young man himself was wearing was old, but it was well cut and the material was of good quality. The lapels were stiff and the sleeves well creased. The buttons were of horn, big and shiny. The young man seemed to be very happy in it.

A boy selling pan and cigarettes with a tray of his wares passed by.

"Pan Walla,"

"Yes, sir"

"Have you **change for a ten rupee note**?"

"No, sir, but I'll get it for you."

"And what if you don't come back?"

"If you don't trust me sir, you can come with me. Anyway, what do you want to buy?"

"Never mind... Here, I have found one anna. Now give me a good cigarette and **be off with you.**"

As he smoked he seemed to relish every puff.

A small lean white cat shivering with cold **rubbed against** his legs and mewed.

He stroked it and it **leapt up onto** the bench. Smoothing its fur he muttered:

"Poor little mite."

After a few minutes he got up.

By now it was past seven. He **started off** again **along the Mall**. An orchestra could be heard playing in **one of the restaurants**. Many people had collected outside. Mostly they were **passers by**, a few drivers of the waiting taxis and tongas, labourers and beggars. Some fruit vendors having sold their fruit were also standing around with their empty baskets. These people outside seemed to be enjoying the music more than those who sat inside, for they were listening in silence though the music was foreign.

The young man also stood and listened for a moment or so, then **walked on**.

A few minutes later he found himself outside a large Western music shop.

Without hesitation he went in. There were musical instruments of different kinds arranged on shelves around the walls. On a long table, attractively displayed, were the latest hit songs. A Spanish guitar was hanging on the wall. He examined it with the air of a connoisseur and studied the price label attached to it. Then a huge German Piano diverted his attention. Lifting the cover of the key-board he played a few notes and closed it again.

One of the salesmen came up.

"Good evening, sir," he said, "Can I help you, sir?"

"No thank you," the young man said with an air of indifference. Then suddenly as if remembering something he called out.

"Oh yes... Could you let me have a list of this month's gramophone records?"

He **slipped** the list **into one of the pockets** of his overcoat and resumed his promenade on the Mall.

He stopped next at a book stall. He picked up one or two magazines and after a hurried **glance at** the contents carefully replaced them. A few yards further on, a large Persian carpet, which was hanging outside a shop attracted his attention. The owner of the shop, wearing a long robe and a silk turban, greeted him warmly.

"I just wanted to see this carpet" the young man said to the carpet dealer.

"With pleasure, sir."



"Oh, don't bother to take it down. I can see it quite well as it is. How much is it?"

"Fourteen hundred and thirty two rupees, sir."

The young man **frowned as if to suggest**, "Oh so much."

"You have only to select, sir," said the carpet dealer amiably, "and we will reduce the price to the minimum."

"Thank you so much", the young man said approvingly. "A fine carpet indeed, I'll come again some time," and he walked away.

The cream colour rose which adorned the lapel of his overcoat had slipped and was about to fall. He adjusted it with a peculiar smile of satisfaction.

He was now walking **along the pavement** near the High Courts. He had been **roaming about** for quite a long time, but his spirits were still high; he was neither tired nor bored.

At this part of the Mall the crowd of pedestrians had thinned down and there were quite long stretches of empty pavement between one group and the other. The young man as he went along tried to spin his cane around one finger, but in this attempt he dropped it.

"Oh, sorry," he exclaimed and bending down picked it up.

Meanwhile a young couple who had been walking behind them **passed by** and went **ahead of him**. The youth was tall and was wearing black corduroy trousers and a leather jacket with a zip. The girl wore a floppy shalwar of white satin and a green coat. She was short and bulky.

The young man was delighted to watch this spectacle and kept on walking behind them.

So far the young man had found little to interest him among the persons he had observed that evening. He had been, perhaps, too deeply **engrossed in himself**.

He followed them closely hoping to get a glimpse of their faces and to hear **more of their talk**.

By now they had reached the big cross-roads near the General Post Office. The pair stopped for a moment, then after crossing the Mall headed toward Mcleod Road.

When the couple had walked some hundred yards ahead of him, he hurriedly moved after them. **Hardly had he reached** half way across the road **when** a truck full of bricks came from behind like a gust of wind and crushing him down **speeded off** towards Mcleod Road. The driver of the truck had heard a shriek and had actually for a moment slowed down, but realizing that something serious had happened, had taken advantage of the darkness and had **sped away into the night**. Two or three Passers-by who had witnessed the accident shouted "Stop him..... Take the number," but the truck was no more to be seen.

In a short while quite a large crowd had collected. A traffic inspector on his motor bike stopped. The young man was badly hurt. There was a lot of blood about and he was in a very precarious state. A car was stopped and he was **loaded into it** and taken to a nearby hospital. When they reached there he was just alive.

On duty that night in the casualty department were assistant surgeon Khan and two young nurses, Shehnaz and Gill. He was still wearing his brown overcoat and the silk scarf. There were large stains of blood all over his clothes. Someone had, out of sympathy, placed the young man's green felt hat on his chest so that it should not be lost. .

"Seems quite well-to-do." Nurse Shehnaz said to nurse Gill, to which she replied in a lower tone:

"All **togged up** for Saturday night, poor chap."

"Did they catch the driver?"



"No he got away."

"What a pity!"

In the operating theatre the assistant surgeon and the two nurses with their faces concealed behind masks, were attending the young man, only their eyes were visible. He was lying on a white marble table. His hair was still smooth against his temples. The strong scented oil with which he had dressed it earlier that evening still **gave out** a faint odour.

His clothes were now being taken off. The first to be removed was the white silk scarf.

Beneath the scarf there was **neither a tie nor a collar**.... Nor even a shirt. When the overcoat was removed it was found that the young man was wearing underneath only an old cotton sweater which was all in holes. Through these holes one could see the dirty vest which was in an even **worse** state **than** the sweater. Layers of dirt covered his body. He **could not have had a bath** for at least two months. Only the upper part of his neck was clean and well powdered.

The shoes and the socks now **came off**. The shoes were old but brightly polished. As to the socks, in colour and pattern the one was quite different from the other. There were holes at the heels, and where the flesh **showed through the holes** it was **grimed with** dirt. He was **by now dead** and his life-less body lay on the white marble slab.

The following were the few things which were found in the various pockets of his overcoat:

A small black comb, a handkerchief, six annas and a few pies, a half smoked cigarette, a little diary in which the names and addresses of a few people were noted, a list of gramophone records and a few handbills which distributors had **thrust upon** him during his evening promenade.

Alas, his little cane, which was perhaps lost at the time of the accident, was not included in the list.

Lesson No. 15

THE ANGLE AND THE AUTHORS-AND OTHERS

I had a vexing dream one night, not long ago: it was about a fortnight after Christmas. I dreamt I **flew out of the window** in my nightshirt. I went up and up. I was glad that was going up. "They have been noticing me," I thought to myself. "If anything, I have been a bit too good. A little less virtue and I might have lived longer. But one cannot have everything." The world grew smaller and smaller. The last I saw of London was the long line of electric lamps bordering the Embankment. Later nothing remained but a faint luminosity **buried beneath darkness**. It was at this point of my journey that I heard behind me the slow, throbbing sound of wings.

I turned my head. It was the Recording Angel. He had a weary look I judged him to be tired.

"Yes," he acknowledged, "it is a trying period for me, your Christmas time."

"I am sure it must be", I returned; "the wonder to me is how you **get through** it all. You see at Christmas time," I went on, "all we men and women become generous, quite suddenly. It is really a delightful sensation. "

"You are to be envied", he agreed.

"It is the first Christmas number that starts me off," I told him; "those beautiful pictures-the sweet child looking so pretty in her furs, giving Bovril with her own dear little hands to the shivering street arab ; the good old red-faced squire **shovelling out** plum pudding to the crowd of grateful villagers. It makes me yearn to borrow a collecting box and go round doing good myself."



"And it is not only me - I should say," I continued;" I don't want you to run away with the idea that I am the only good man in the world. That's what I like about Christmas, it makes everybody good. **The lovely sentiments we go about repeating!** The noble deeds we do from a little before Christmas up to, say, the end of January! Why noting them down must be a **comfort to you.**"

"Yes," he admitted, "noble deeds are always a great joy to me.

"They are to all of us," I said; "I love to **think of all** the good deeds I myself have done. I have often thought of keeping a diary- jotting them down each day. It would be so nice for one's children."

He agreed there was an idea in this.

"That book **of yours,**" I said, "I suppose, now, it contains all the good actions that we men and women have been doing during the last six weeks." It was a bulky looking volume.

"Yes", he answered, "they were all recorded in the book". (The author tells of his good deeds)

It was **more** for the sake of **talking of him than** anything else that I **kept up with him.** I did not really doubt his care and conscientiousness, but it is always pleasant to chat about one's self. "My five shillings subscription to the Daily Telegraph's Sixpenny Fund for the Unemployed-got that down all right?" I asked him.

"Yes", he replied, "it was entered".

As a matter of fact, now I come to think of it," I added, "it was ten shillings altogether. They spelt my name wrong the first time."

"Both subscriptions had been entered", he told me.

"Then I have been to four charity dinners," I reminded him; "I forget what the particular charity was about. I know I suffered the next morning. He interrupted me with the assurance that my attendance had been noted.

"Last week I sent a dozen photographs of myself, signed, to a charity bazaar."

He said that he remembered my doing so.

And, of course, you remember my performance of "Talbot Champneys in Our Boys" the week before last, in aid of the Fund for Poor Curates," I went on. "I don't know whether you saw the notice in the Morning Post, but-

He again interrupted me to remark that what the Morning Post man said would be entered, one way or the other, to the critic of the Morning Post, and had nothing to do with me. "Of course not," I agreed; "and between ourselves, I don't think the charity got very much. Expenses, when you come to add refreshments and one thing and another, mount up. But I fancy they rather liked my Talbot Champneys."

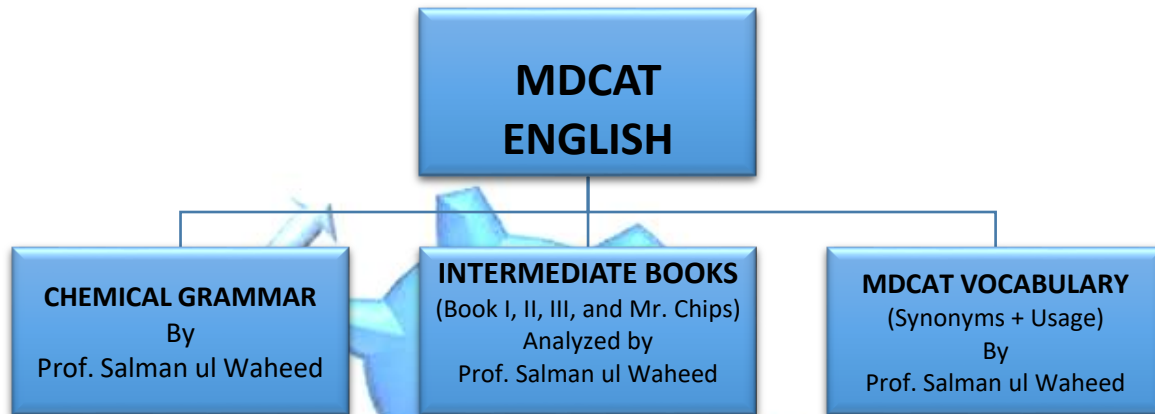
He replied that he had been present at the performance, and had made his own report.

I also reminded him of the four balcony seats I had taken for the monster show at His Majesty's in aid of the Fund for the Destitute British in Johannesburg. Not all the celebrated actors and actresses announced on the posters had appeared, but all had sent letters full of kindly wishes; and the others-all the celebrities one had never heard of-had **turned up to a man.** Still, on the whole, the show was well **worth the money.** There was nothing to **grumble at.**

There were other noble deeds of mine. I could not remember them at the time in their entirety. I seemed to have done a good many. But I did remember the rummage sale to which I sent all my old clothes, including a coat that **had got mixed up with them by accident,** and that I believe I could have worn again.



And also the raffle I had joined for a motor-car. The Angel said I really need not be alarmed, that everything had been noted, together with other matters I, may be, had forgotten. (The Angel appears to have made a slight mistake).



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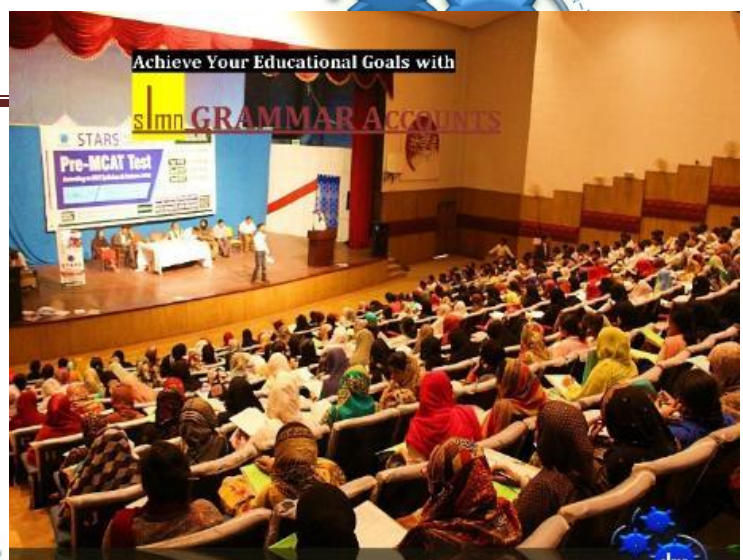


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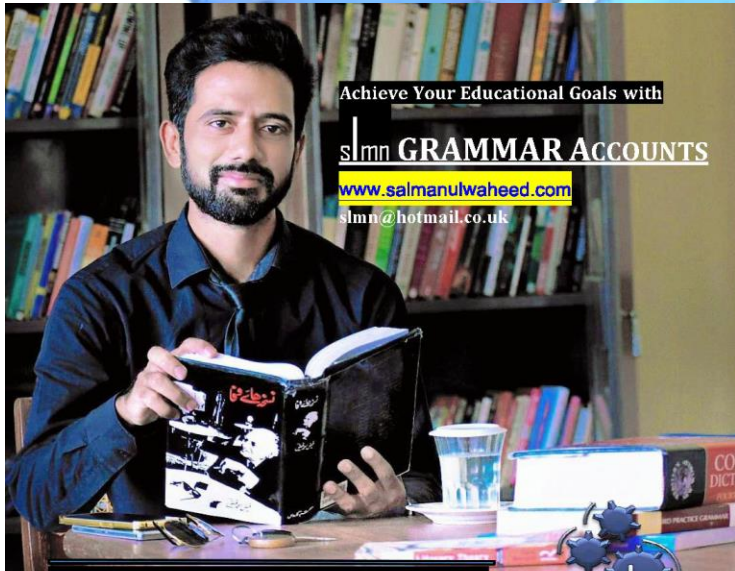
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