

A Group of "Characters"

(The character is a literary form usually presenting a type, and most highly developed during the 17th century).

I

He wishes to be considered unmoved, as one who, having known emotion, prefers reason; in reality he is incapable of great feeling. He wears a perpetual slight smile and speaks slowly in a low, courteous tone. He extols tolerance, which to him is the belief that one man's opinion is as good as another's. His greatest pleasure is in talking; and to his listeners he seems to solve all the problems of the world. In his relations with women he is a sort of Aristotelian God, for he often proves himself the Unmoved Mover.

II

She seizes your arm upon meeting you and never releases it until your departure. She asks, what do you know? Why haven't you phoned her? What shows have you seen? Have you any new clothes? Have you met any men? Do you know the words to "Spring Time and You"? Have you been to church lately? Then college has a bad effect upon you! Her reading consists chiefly of the Bible, newspaper serials, religious treatises, and screen magazines. She goes often to church gatherings, where she meets tall young men with slick black hair and Ideals. Though she bestows her affection upon a dozen young men a year, calling each affair "infatuation" when the next begins, she will not hear of your inconsistency to one. You love X—, though you may deny it even to yourself. She desires earnestly to be great: a dancer, a nurse, an actress, an evangelist, a singer, a millionaire's wife; yet her

greatest accomplishment is a complete comparison of the views of Jane Jordan and Dorothy Dix.

—ARLEEN WILSON.

Great Aunt Tildy

Great aunt Tildy remains the only living member of her very immediate family, and so from her own house, goes about to visit the nieces and nephews, and great-nieces and great nephews, who are scattered around the country. She visits her niece, Leafa, and her great niece, June. At her constant insistence, because she wants to be "a help instead of a hindrance," she is finally allowed to preside over the dishpan after the evening meal. She fumbles here and there for pans, the soap chips, the chore boy.

"You have to know houses," explains Aunt Tildy to June. "Yes sir, Junie, you have to get to know houses. Now at home I can find my way around in the dark, without scraping a chair or stirring the china dog by the door." She puts a dish in the drying rack without scalding and goes on splashing suds.

"Wouldn't you rather dry than wash, Aunt Tildy?" says June, scalding the dishes before Aunt Tildy's unnoticed eyes.

"As soon wash as dry," declares the old lady, "as soon wash as dry. Haven't been washing dishes much anymore, but I've been washing them a long time—since I was a little girl, and the oldest of the lot of us children. I'm not young now—eighty last March, but I can still wash 'em. My family ate their plates clean, but there's been a lot of folks come to my house that hasn't, and I've kind of got hardened to dishes clean or dirty."

And June, drying the dishes and putting them away, looked at them curiously, as to her they became the musical monotony of great aunt Tildy's life.

The Cook

The cook wears funny, thick black shoes with turned up toes, and has an annoyingly new black and white checkered patch on one faded trouser leg. He is greasy, and overly comfortable with the waitresses. He enjoys life thoroughly through self-appreciation of his own humor and wit. He becomes over-irritable when too hot, or defied, and over-ingratiating when in a good humor.

Through the Swinging Doors

The nurse's office is a white place and a quietly busy one. Through the swinging doors at the left is a small resting room, with three cots, a locker, a mirror, a small old-fashioned desk that is closed and locked, and a chair. Each narrow bed has a gray army blanket at its foot. This room is not entirely separate from the other, but is only partitioned off. While you lie in its remote nearness, you hear a murmur of voices from the other side of the wall, as the doctor and nurse welcome, advise, and admonish all comers. Occasionally another person stops momentarily in the rush of the day, and she, too, finds a resting place through the swinging doors. And especially if it happens to be late in the day, a curious companionship springs up between the stranger and you, through your mutual weariness.

—GENE SMITH.

THE HIRED MAN

Some say I'm lazy; don't know why.
I rake and mow the Parson's lawn,
And milk and clean old Betsy's sty.
I take down screens when summer's
gone,
I'm powerful good at shuckin' corn,
And mighty quick at cuttin' wood.
Just 'cause I don't own any land
Don't see why folks say I'm no good.
Won't take a job, like brother Dan.
This town jest needs a hired-man.

—JANE MOORE.

Good Crop

Max Stuckey

The sharp spiteful crack of a rifle stirred the peaceful little mountain town into a hubbub of excitement.

The figure lay face down in the muddy street. The faded blue denims and ragged black coat were splashed with mud. The head and shoulders nestled deep in a large puddle.

No one approached it. A few people stood on the board walk and discussed the incident in whispers.

One tall grey-bearded mountaineer nudged his companion.

"I know'd hit would happen, Anse. Younguns always did stir up these old feuds. I heerd Mark Benton was goin' to kill th' kid. Mark never was a hand to say things he didn't mean."

Anse shook his head. "This is one time Mark bit off mor'n he kin chew. Thet kid's brother, Tait, is th' pizenest man in Pine Mountain country. Mark my word, this little fuss Mark started is goin' to end by Mark bein' laid right beside his pappy over there in the churchyard."

The grey-beard disagreed violently. "Mark's a smart boy. He'll have Tait under the Laurel before the first snow."

The argument grew more and more bitter.

"I'll bet my tobaccy crop agin your'n thet Mark gits Tait before spring," sputtered Big Dan, the tall grey-beard.

Anse nodded his head. They shook hands.

Fall came. Other men had paid with their lives in the family war Mark Benton had precipitated, but Tait and he were still treading the twisty clay mountain paths. Some day they would meet. One would see the other first and that other one would never know. That is the way most