

parasitic characters of the community. He knew it would never be returned to him, not in cash, anyway.

As I review my apprenticeship under George from time to time, I am amazed at the amount of his philosophy of life which has become a part of me. His influence has gone out in many directions from his little community in the form of partially trained printers and partially developed philosophies.

## Point Blank Observation

John Roberts

**T**HE small black pit made a deep impression upon my mind. I thought of its great power and its ability to do great destruction. I wondered about its attributes and came to the conclusion that there were none. The opening had a radius of only a quarter of an inch, but it was sufficient to snuff out life. Peering down the hole, I could see the grooves that lined its inside. When I thought that just a flick of the finger could make me an immortal, sweat dripped from my brow. . . . Not everyone can be fortunate enough to have the end of a loaded gun barrel stare him in the face.

## Footprints in the Sand

Jean E. Rees

**O**N THIS still, cold, misty morning, while strolling down the beach, I see a figure, who stands dressed entirely in black, surrounded by the glistening gray sand. Only the slapping, lapping of the hungry, salty sea can be heard, each wave trying to outdo the other in order to overtake the stooped, desolate man. The man seems conscious only of the song the sea sings. He soon loses even this contact as he becomes more and more engrossed in thought—a thought which seems as if it will shatter into little pieces and never give him peace of mind from the grief he bears. He feels that if he could be by himself for a while his grief would be cast aside, setting him free once again.

"How does one free himself from anything, be it happiness or sadness? How can I, one lonely man, stand against the merciless world when the only thing I have ever loved has been taken away? If I could have someone, something to talk to or about, part of my grief would be lifted—lifted so I could do what I wish and go where I please, whenever I wish."

As this man sits by himself on the waterfront, he slowly puts his hand into his coat pocket and draws a cigarette from it. Searching through his other pockets, he finds a match, strikes it slowly, and draws a long breath. The cigarette lights easily; and as the man draws the match to his mouth to blow it out the light flickers upon his wrist where the hand of his watch slowly ticks away the minutes. The thought flashes through his mind that he has only a few more hours by himself before the sun will slowly rise above the rooftops of the old, shabby shacks. The sun will shine its rays through the damp fog and its gold, yellow, and orange will lure many men out of their comfortable, warm beds to begin once again the daily routine of casting their crude nets into the providing sea. He will not be able to be alone any more that day; therefore, he will have to search for another isolated place where he can be alone with his grief and turmoil. Why must a man constantly search for solitude? And why must he travel from one place to another escaping reality forever? Why can't a man find an answer to these weighing questions and end his unhappiness forever?

As he thinks of the possibilities, his hands grow icy cold and then numb. His lips become dry and parched, and he slowly moistens them with his tongue and tightly closes them, so that the overwhelming sound does not escape. His mind recalls stories he has read in the newspapers, vivid stories of how people in disgrace take their lives in their own hands, twisting them every way, and finally getting them so tangled that it is useless to try to straighten them out.

Almost without realizing it, he slowly lifts his heavy feet and steps in the direction of the foaming sea. The icy chill of the water penetrates his numbed senses and jerks him quickly back to reality. So, finding himself a few feet from the dry sand, he cautiously retraces his steps to safety.

As he looks into the sea, he seems to hear the waves laughing at him as they lick at his uncertain feet. They also seem to be saying that he cannot escape life by using them as his method of ending his grief. He must go elsewhere to satisfy this longing for escape.

As he stands there with his clothes dripping salty drops, his hands automatically plunge into his jacket pockets. They are very cold, and he tries to get a little warmth into them. As a little feeling returns, the fingers of his right hand close on his knife. It rests heavily upon his hand.

"Maybe this is the answer to my problem! If I cannot get help from the sea, then I shall find a way here on shore."

He sits down to plan a scheme that can be fulfilled and not interrupted as it was before. His eyes and fingers study the cold knife, inch by inch. He slowly, cautiously opens the blades and runs his forefinger over them.

As he begins making plans and gathering his courage, he suddenly springs to his feet and moans softly. There, standing on the far end of the beach, he sees a figure waving and shouting to him. Hope enters his body, and he thinks that perhaps someone is calling to him. He takes a few steps forward, talking to himself all the while.

"Should I go and see if my assistance is needed? Why would he be calling me, when there are other men around to help him? Why is he coming all this way to ask me for help? Doesn't he realize I couldn't even help my own boy?"

He blinks his eyes quickly to see if he can identify the figure. As fast as hope grows in him, it diminishes.

"Why, there is no one there at all. Here again my plan for escape has been interrupted."

He turns hopelessly and throws himself down on the sand. He begins to recall his morning experience. Again he is lost in deep thought.

Suddenly a tense voice seems to boom at him. It is only a whisper, but to him it seems a shout.

"Mister, my dog has a broken leg and can't walk. I called to you when I was further up on the beach, but you didn't come. I had to leave my dog lying on the ground by himself while I ran for you. I must rush back to him because I promised I wouldn't stay long. If you'll help me, I'll be very grateful. I have no one else to turn to for help, no one but you. Please, Mister, come with me and help my dog."

The man looks into the pleading eyes of a boy, and to his face comes a glow of gratitude. He takes the boy's small, moist hand and begins walking slowly in the direction from which the boy had come. With an urgent pull of the hand, the boy quickens the man's pace. Behind them are left the footprints of the grateful man and the excited boy. Large footprints, slow and unsteady, going alongside many tiny ones, fast and sure of their destination, make deep imprints in the moist sand.