

### This Trials

The English professor was absent-minded. This was a great trial to him. His wife had formed the habit of tying strings to his fingers to remind him of the spool of thread or the package of needles, which she sometimes needed from downtown, and consequently he often came to class with bits of twine adorning his strong right hand. These strings were usually pink or blue, for his wife deemed that the brighter the color the more effective the reminder, and she explained this to him so sensibly and withal so seriously that the Professor had not the heart to remonstrate. If the students smiled, he lengthened the assignment.

He traced this misfortune back to the year in which he read Junior themes. Often he thought of that year, especially when inexperienced and uninitiated persons referred in his hearing to the delightful and easy life of a college professor.

Those themes had marked a chapter in his life. They had occupied his mind to the exclusion of other matters, so that he forgot his classes and his necktie. Even after years he could recall the characteristics of style, both general and individual. In them he found wild, weird figures of speech, and casual allusions to "Reversion of Type" or "Evolution of the Species." He spent much time and thought trying to interpret certain subtle "effects," and sometimes he could not determine, whether they were mood, character or incident,—so subtle were they.

While reading, his mind mechanically and involuntarily sought after the maximum consummation and the subjective climax, and sometimes he could not find them. Frequently he thought he sighted the maximum consummation, and then was forced to abandon it because he could discover no major obstacle.

"B" and "T" was another thing that troubled him in these themes. Often he feared that neither "Beauty" nor "Truth" could be appropriately applied to them. This was usually after he had finished reading an essay on "The Problem of the Universe," or a story which dealt with the nobility of England.

Sometimes he was afraid that he would never reach the middle of the third act, or in other words, he did not know whether he would finish the themes or the themes would finish him. It was during this period of doubt that he deeply offended the most popular member of Maka Data. The young man in question had missed an examination, and so he approached the English Professor and asked what he should do about it. The English Professor looked up from a Junior theme, in which the "kindling tint" had not yet been given.

"Ah, yes," he said absently, "that's alright. Just read up on the subject and then you can tell me all you know in a few minutes."

When the next semester came, the Maka Data registered in another division.

That was only the beginning. On the day when he read the essay on "Nature," by the young lady with the French heels and an exaggerated pompadour, he forgot to wear his overcoat home and took a severe cold.

One brilliant and literary young Junior wrote an article on "Lady Macbeth," and in it characterized her as "spry," and said that "she did her stunts on double quick time." This one he marked "c plus."

There was an effusion on the subject

of "Affinities," which caused him to spread his toast on his lap and butter his napkin at breakfast the next morning. But when he read the story by the class poet, entitled, "Parted, Yet They Meet," his heart went out in sympathy and compassion to the theme-readers, and he had an impression that something ought to be done for them as an oppressed and suffering class. This impression became a firm and deep-seated conviction, when he read in a dissertation on "The Writing of English," that "The great consternation is when a person wants something to happen." He wrote on the margin in red ink, "You have confused the terms 'Consternation' and 'Consummation.'" Then he sighed deeply and blotted it with a letter which his wife had given him to mail.

It was just about this time that he reached the middle of the third act, that is, he felt that he would finish the themes, and that the struggle would end comedially, if no new forces were set in motion.

But this did not end his troubles. One day he allowed a Lady Instructor to stand talking for fully five minutes while he inadvertently remained seated. When she passed him thereafter, she greeted him coldly.

He made a grammatical error in class, and it was this which rankled in his bosom for a long, long time—even after the Maka Data had graduated, and the Lady Instructor had married.

But at length the last theme was finished and he marked it "a plus," notwithstanding the fact that it was a story entitled, "Lady Angelina's choice." After it was all over, and he looked back upon it, he felt with a certain pride that he had met his Waterloo, and had conquered. But he knew that he had not come out of the fight unscathed. He was no longer the same as he was before. He had often told his classes that when one reads any piece of literature which affects him greatly he is never quite the same afterward. He knew now that it was true. He could have given his students examples from his own experiences, he might even have held up, in proof, his right hand, decorated with its little strings of pink and blue, but he refrained. Why he refrained is a problem for psychologists, and one into which we can not enter here.

LETA S.

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