

Part Two

IN LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR A TRIP, I THINK THERE is a private conviction that it won't happen. As the day approached, my warm bed and comfortable house grew increasingly desirable and my dear wife incalculably precious. To give these up for three months for the terrors of the uncomfortable and unknown seemed crazy. I didn't want to go. Something had to happen to forbid my going, but it didn't. I could get sick, of course, but that was one of my main but secret reasons for going at all. During the previous winter I had become rather seriously ill with one of those carefully named difficulties which are the whispers of approaching age. When I came out of it I received the usual lecture about slowing up, losing weight, limiting the cholesterol intake. It happens to many men, and I think doctors have memorized the litany. It had happened to so many of my friends. The lecture ends, "Slow down. You're not as young as you once were." And I had seen so many begin to pack their lives in cotton wool, smother their impulses, hood their passions, and gradually retire from their manhood into a kind of spiritual and physical semi-invalidism. In this they are encouraged by wives and relatives, and it's such a sweet trap.

Who doesn't like to be a center for concern? A kind of second childhood falls on so many men. They trade their violence for the promise of a small increase of life span. In effect, the head of the house becomes the youngest child. And I have searched myself for this possibility with a kind of horror. For I have always lived violently, drunk hugely,

20 eaten too much or not at all, slept around the clock or missed two nights of sleeping, worked too hard and too long in glory, or slobbered for a time in utter laziness. I've lifted, pulled, chopped, climbed, made love with joy and taken my hangovers as a consequence, not as a punishment. I did not want to surrender fierceness for a small gain in yardage. My wife married a man; I saw no reason why she should inherit a baby. I knew that ten or twelve thousand miles driving a truck, alone and unattended, over every kind of road, would be hard work, but to me it represented the antidote for the poison of the professional sick man. And in my own life I am not willing to trade quality for quantity. If this projected journey should prove too much then it was time to go anyway. I see too many men delay their exits with a sickly, slow reluctance to leave the stage. It's bad theater as well as bad living. I am very fortunate in having a wife who likes being a woman, which means that she likes men, not elderly babies. Although this last foundation for the journey was never discussed, I am sure she understood it.

The morning came, a bright one with the tawny look of autumn in the sunlight. My wife and I parted very quickly, since both of us hate good-bys, and neither one of us wanted to be left when the other had gone. She gunned her motor and exploded away for New York and I, with Charley beside me, drove Rocinante to the Shelter Island Ferry, and then to a second ferry to Greenport and a third from Orient Point to the coast of Connecticut, across Long Island Sound, for I wanted to avoid New York traffic and get well on my way. And I confess to a feeling of gray desolation.

On the ferry deck the sun was sharp and the coast of the mainland only an hour away. A lovely sloop stood away from us, her genoa set like a curving scarf, and all the coastal craft trudged up the Sound or wallowed heavily to-

ward New York. Then a submarine slipped to the surface half a mile away, and the day lost part of its brightness. Farther away another dark creature slashed through the water, and another; of course they are based in New London, and this is their home. And perhaps they are keeping the world's peace with this venom. I wish I could like submarines, for then I might find them beautiful, but they are designed for destruction, and while they may explore and chart the sea bottom, and draw new trade lines under the Arctic ice, their main purpose is threat. And I remember too well crossing the Atlantic on a troop ship and knowing that somewhere on the way the dark things lurked searching for us with their single-stalk eyes. Somehow the light goes bleak for me when I see them and remember burned men pulled from the oil-slicked sea. And now submarines are armed with mass murder, our silly, only way of deterring mass murder. 21

Only a few people stood in the wind on the top deck of the clanking iron ferry boat. A young man in a trench coat, with cornsilk hair and delphinium eyes red-edged by the dull wind, turned to me and then pointed. "That's the new one," he said. "She can stay down three months."

"How can you tell them?"

"I know them. I'm on them."

"Atomic?"

"Not yet, but I've got an uncle on one, and maybe pretty soon."

"You're not in uniform."

"Just had a leave."

"Do you like to serve on them?"

"Sure I do. The pay's good and there's all kinds of—future."

"Would you like to be down three months?"

"You'd get used to it. The food's good and there's movies and—I'd like to go under the Pole, wouldn't you?"

"I guess I would."

"And there's movies and all kinds of—future."

"Where are you from?"

"From over there—New London—born there. My uncle's in the service and two cousins. I guess we're a kind of submarine family."

"They worry me."

"Oh, you'd get over that, sir. Pretty soon you wouldn't even think you were submerged—that is, if you haven't got something wrong with you. Ever had claustrophobia?"

"No."

"Well, then. You soon get used to it. Care to go below for a cup of coffee? There's plenty of time."

"Sure I would."

And could be he's right and I'm wrong. It's his world, not mine any more. There's no anger in his delphinium eyes and no fear and no hatred either, so maybe it's all right. It's just a job with good pay and a future. I must not put my memories and my fear on him. Maybe it won't be true again, but that's his lookout. It's his world now. Perhaps he understands things I will never learn.

We drank our coffee out of paper cups, and through the square ferry windows he pointed out the dry docks and the skeletons of new submarines.

"Nice thing about it is if there's a storm you can submerge, and it's quiet. Sleep like a baby and all hell busting loose up above." He gave me directions for getting out of town, some of the few accurate ones I got on the whole trip.

"So long," I said. "I hope you have a good—future."

"It's not bad, you know. Good-by, sir."

And driving along a back Connecticut road, tree-bordered and gardened, I knew he had made me feel better and surer.

For weeks I had studied maps, large-scale and small,

but maps are not reality at all—they can be tyrants. I know people who are so immersed in road maps that they never see the countryside they pass through, and others who, having traced a route, are held to it as though held by flanged wheels to rails. I pulled Rocinante into a small picnic area maintained by the state of Connecticut and got out my book of maps. And suddenly the United States became huge beyond belief and impossible ever to cross. I wondered how in hell I'd got myself mixed up in a project that couldn't be carried out. It was like starting to write a novel. When I face the desolate impossibility of writing five hundred pages a sick sense of failure falls on me and I know I can never do it. This happens every time. Then gradually I write one page and then another. One day's work is all I can permit myself to contemplate and I eliminate the possibility of ever finishing. So it was now, as I looked at the bright-colored projection of monster America. The leaves of the trees about the camp ground were thick and heavy, no longer growing but hanging limp and waiting for the first frost to whip them with color and the second to drive them to the earth and terminate their year.

Charley is a tall dog. As he sat in the seat beside me, his head was almost as high as mine. He put his nose close to my ear and said, "Ftt." He is the only dog I ever knew who could pronounce the consonant *F*. This is because his front teeth are crooked, a tragedy which keeps him out of dog shows; because his upper front teeth slightly engage his lower lip Charley can pronounce *F*. The word "Ftt" usually means he would like to salute a bush or a tree. I opened the cab door and let him out, and he went about his ceremony. He doesn't have to think about it to do it well. It is my experience that in some areas Charley is more intelligent than I am, but in others he is abysmally ignorant. He can't read, can't drive a car, and has no grasp of mathematics. But in his own field of endeavor, which

24 he was now practicing, the slow, imperial smelling over and anointing of an area, he has no peer. Of course his horizons are limited, but how wide are mine?

We drove on in the autumn afternoon, heading north. Because I was self-contained, I thought it might be nice if I could invite people I met along the way to my home for a drink, but I had neglected to lay in liquor. But there are pretty little bottle stores on the back roads of this state. I knew there were some dry states but had forgotten which they were, and it was just as well to stock up. A small store was set well back from the road in a grove of sugar maples. It had a well-kept garden and flower boxes. The owner was a young-old man with a gray face, I suspect a teetotaller. He opened his order book and straightened the carbons with patient care. You never know what people will want to drink. I ordered bourbon, scotch, gin, vermouth, vodka, a medium good brandy, aged applejack, and a case of beer. It seemed to me that those might take care of most situations. It was a big order for a little store. The owner was impressed.

“Must be quite a party.”

“No—it’s just traveling supplies.”

He helped me to carry the cartons out and I opened Rocinante’s door.

“You going in that?”

“Sure.”

“Where?”

“All over.”

And then I saw what I was to see so many times on the journey—a look of longing. “Lord! I wish I could go.”

“Don’t you like it here?”

“Sure. It’s all right, but I wish I could go.”

“You don’t even know where I’m going.”

“I don’t care. I’d like to go anywhere.”

Eventually I had to come out of the tree-hidden roads and do my best to bypass the cities. Hartford and Providence and such are big cities, bustling with manufacturing, lousy with traffic. It takes far longer to go through cities than to drive several hundred miles. And in the intricate traffic pattern, as you try to find your way through, there's no possibility of seeing anything. But now I have been through hundreds of towns and cities in every climate and against every kind of scenery, and of course they are all different, and the people have points of difference, but in some ways they are alike. American cities are like badger holes, ringed with trash—all of them—surrounded by piles of wrecked and rusting automobiles, and almost smothered with rubbish. Everything we use comes in boxes, cartons, bins, the so-called packaging we love so much. The mountains of things we throw away are much greater than the things we use. In this, if in no other way, we can see the wild and reckless exuberance of our production, and waste seems to be the index. Driving along I thought how in France or Italy every item of these thrown-out things would have been saved and used for something. This is not said in criticism of one system or the other but I do wonder whether there will come a time when we can no longer afford our wastefulness—chemical wastes in the rivers, metal wastes everywhere, and atomic wastes buried deep in the earth or sunk in the sea. When an Indian village became too deep in its own filth, the inhabitants moved. And we have no place to which to move.

I had promised my youngest son to say good-by in passing his school at Deerfield, Massachusetts, but I got there too late to arouse him, so I drove up the mountain and found a dairy, bought some milk, and asked permission to camp under an apple tree. The dairy man had a Ph.D. in mathematics, and he must have had some training in phi-

26 losophy. He liked what he was doing and he didn't want to be somewhere else—one of the very few contented people I met in my whole journey.

I prefer to draw a curtain over my visit to Eaglebrook school. It can be imagined what effect Rocinante had on two hundred teen-age prisoners of education just settling down to serve their winter sentence. They visited my truck in droves, as many as fifteen at a time in the little cabin. And they looked courteous curses at me because I could go and they could not. My own son will probably never forgive me. Soon after I drove off, I stopped to make sure there were no stowaways.

My route went north in Vermont and then east in New Hampshire in the White Mountains. The roadside stands were piled with golden pumpkins and russet squashes and baskets of red apples so crisp and sweet that they seemed to explode with juice when I bit into them. I bought apples and a gallon jug of fresh-pressed cider. I believe that everyone along the highways sells moccasins and deerskin gloves. And those who don't sell goat-milk candy. Until then, I had not seen the factory-outlet stores in the open country selling shoes and clothes. The villages are the prettiest, I guess, in the whole nation, neat and white-painted, and—not counting the motels and tourist courts—unchanged for a hundred years except for traffic and paved streets.

The climate changed quickly to cold and the trees burst into color, the reds and yellows you can't believe. It isn't only color but a glowing, as though the leaves gobbled the light of the autumn sun and then released it slowly. There's a quality of fire in these colors. I got high in the mountains before dusk. A sign beside a stream offered fresh eggs for sale, and I drove up a farm road and bought some eggs and asked permission to camp beside the stream and offered to pay.

The farmer was a spare man, with what we think of as a Yankee face and the flat vowels we consider Yankee pronunciation. 27

"No need to pay," he said. "The land's not working. But I would like to look at that rig you've got there."

I said, "Let me find a level place and put it in order, then come down for a cup of coffee—or something."

I backed and filled until I found a level place where I could hear the eager stream rattling; it was almost dark. Charley had said "Ftt" several times, meaning this time that he was hungry. I opened Rocinante's door, turned on the light, and found utter chaos inside. I have stowed a boat very often against roll and pitch, but the quick stops and starts of a truck are a different hazard. The floor was littered with books and papers. My typewriter roosted uncomfortably on a pile of plastic dishes, a rifle had fallen down and nudged itself against the stove, and one entire ream of paper, five hundred sheets, had drifted like snow to cover the whole place. I lighted the gas mantle lamp, stuffed the debris in a little closet, and put on water for coffee. In the morning I would have to reorganize my cargo. No one can tell how to do it. The technique must be learned the way I learned it, by failures. The moment it was dark it became bitterly cold, but the lamp and the gas burners of the stove warmed my little house cozily. Charley ate his supper, did his tour of duty, and retired into a carpeted corner under the table which was to be his for the next three months.

There are so many modern designs for easy living. On my boat I had discovered the aluminum, disposable cooking utensils, frying pans and deep dishes. You fry a fish and throw the pan overboard. I was well equipped with these things. I opened a can of corned-beef hash and patted it into a disposable dish and set it on an asbestos pad over a low flame, to heat very slowly. The coffee was barely

28 ready when Charley let out his lion roar. I can't say how comforting it is to be told that someone is approaching in the dark. And if the approacher happened to have evil in his heart, that great voice would give him pause if he did not know Charley's basically pacific and diplomatic nature.

The farm owner knocked on my door and I invited him in.

"You've got it nice in here," he said. "Yes, sir, you've got it nice."

He slipped in the seat beside the table. This table can be lowered at night and the cushions can be converted to make a double bed. "Nice," he said again.

I poured him a cup of coffee. It seems to me that coffee smells even better when the frost is in. "A little something on the side?" I asked. "Something to give it authority?"

"No—this is fine. This is nice."

"Not a touch of applejack? I'm tired from driving, I'd like a spot myself."

He looked at me with the contained amusement that is considered taciturnity by non-Yankees. "Would you have one if I didn't?"

"No, I guess not."

"I wouldn't rob you then—just a spoonful."

So I poured each of us a good dollop of twenty-one-year-old applejack and slipped in on my side of the table. Charley moved over to make room and put his chin down on my feet.

There's a gentility on the road. A direct or personal question is out of bounds. But this is simple good manners anywhere in the world. He did not ask my name nor I his, but I had seen his quick eyes go to the firearms in their rubber slings, to the fishing rods pinioned against the wall.

Khrushchev was at the United Nations, one of the few

reasons I would have liked to be in New York. I asked, 29
“Have you listened to the radio today?”

“Five-o’clock report.”

“What happened at the U.N.? I forgot to listen.”

“You wouldn’t believe it,” he said. “Mr. K. took off his shoe and pounded the table.”

“What for?”

“Didn’t like what was being said.”

“Seems a strange way to protest.”

“Well, it got attention. That’s about all the news talked about.”

“They should give him a gavel so he could keep his shoes on.”

“That’s a good idea. Maybe it could be in the shape of a shoe so he wouldn’t be embarrassed.” He sipped the applejack with a deep appreciation. “That’s pretty nice,” he said.

“How do folks around here feel about all this talking back to the Russians?”

“I don’t know about other people. But I think if you’re talking back it’s kind of like a rear-guard action. I’d like to see us do something so they had to talk back to us.”

“You’ve got something there.”

“Seems to me we’re always defending ourselves.”

I refilled the coffee cups and poured a little more applejack for both of us. “You think we should attack?”

“I think we should at least take the ball sometimes.”

“I’m not taking a poll, but how does the election seem to be going around here?”

“I wish I knew,” he said. “People aren’t talking. I think this might be the secretest election we ever had. People just won’t put out an opinion.”

“Could it be they haven’t got one?”

“Maybe, or maybe they just don’t want to tell. I remem-

30 ber other elections when there would be pretty peppery arguments. I haven't heard even one."

And that's what I found all over the country—no arguments, no discussion.

"Is it the same—other places?" He must have seen my license plates, but he would not mention that.

"That seems right to me. Do you think people are scared to have an opinion?"

"Maybe some. But I know some that don't scare, and they don't say, either."

"That's been my experience," I said. "But I don't know, really."

"I don't either. Maybe it's all part of the same thing. No thanks, no more. I can smell your supper's nearly ready. I'll step along."

"Part of what same thing?"

"Well, you take my grandfather and his father—he was still alive until I was twelve. They knew some things they were sure about. They were pretty sure give a little line and then what *might* happen. But now—what might happen?"

"I don't know."

"Nobody knows. What good's an opinion if you don't know? My grandfather knew the number of whiskers in the Almighty's beard. I don't even know what happened yesterday, let alone tomorrow. He knew what it was that makes a rock or a table. I don't even understand the formula that says nobody knows. We've got nothing to go on—got no way to think about things. I'll step along. Will I see you in the morning?"

"I don't know. I'm going to start early. I want to get clear across Maine to Deer Isle."

"Say, that's a pretty place isn't it?"

"I don't know yet. I haven't been there."

“Well, it’s nice. You’ll like it. Thanks for the—coffee. 31
Good night.”

Charley looked after him and sighed and went back to sleep. I ate my corned-beef hash, then made down my bed and dug out Shirer’s *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. But I found I couldn’t read, and when the light was off I couldn’t sleep. The clattering stream on the rocks was a good reposeful sound, but the conversation of the farmer stayed with me—a thoughtful, articulate man he was. I couldn’t hope to find many like him. And maybe he had put his finger on it. Humans had perhaps a million years to get used to fire as a thing and as an idea. Between the time a man got his fingers burned on a lightning-struck tree until another man carried some inside a cave and found it kept him warm, maybe a hundred thousand years, and from there to the blast furnaces of Detroit—how long?

And now a force was in hand how much more strong, and we hadn’t had time to develop the means to think, for man has to have feelings and then words before he can come close to thought and, in the past at least, that has taken a long time.

Roosters were crowing before I went to sleep. And I felt at last that my journey was started. I think I hadn’t really believed in it before.

Charley likes to get up early, and he likes me to get up early too. And why shouldn’t he? Right after his breakfast he goes back to sleep. Over the years he has developed a number of innocent-appearing ways to get me up. He can shake himself and his collar loud enough to wake the dead. If that doesn’t work he gets a sneezing fit. But perhaps his most irritating method is to sit quietly beside the bed and stare into my face with a sweet and forgiving look on his face; I come out of deep sleep with the feeling of be-

32 ing looked at. But I have learned to keep my eyes tight shut. If I even blink he sneezes and stretches, and that night's sleep is over for me. Often the war of wills goes on for quite a time, I squinching my eyes shut and he forgiving me, but he nearly always wins. He liked traveling so much he wanted to get started early, and early for Charley is the first tempering of darkness with the dawn.

I soon discovered that if a wayfaring stranger wishes to eavesdrop on a local population the places for him to slip in and hold his peace are bars and churches. But some New England towns don't have bars, and church is only on Sunday. A good alternative is the roadside restaurant where men gather for breakfast before going to work or going hunting. To find these places inhabited, one must get up very early. And there is a drawback even to this. Early-rising men not only do not talk much to strangers, they barely talk to one another. Breakfast conversation is limited to a series of laconic grunts. The natural New England taciturnity reaches its glorious perfection at breakfast.

I fed Charley, gave him a limited promenade, and hit the road. An icy mist covered the hills and froze on my windshield. I am not normally a breakfast eater, but here I had to be or I wouldn't see anybody unless I stopped for gas. At the first lighted roadside restaurant I pulled in and took my seat at a counter. The customers were folded over their coffee cups like ferns. A normal conversation is as follows:

WAITRESS: "Same?"

CUSTOMER: "Yep."

WAITRESS: "Cold enough for you?"

CUSTOMER: "Yep."

(Ten minutes.)

WAITRESS: "Refill?"

CUSTOMER: "Yep."

This is a really talkative customer. Some reduce it to

“Burp” and others do not answer at all. An early morning waitress in New England leads a lonely life, but I soon learned that if I tried to inject life and gaiety into her job with a blithe remark she dropped her eyes and answered “Yep” or “Umph.” Still, I did feel that there was some kind of communication, but I can’t say what it was. 33

The best of learning came on the morning radio, which I learned to love. Every town of a few thousand people has its station, and it takes the place of the old local newspaper. Bargains and trades are announced, social doings, prices of commodities, messages. The records played are the same all over the country. If “Teen-Age Angel” is top of the list in Maine, it is top of the list in Montana. In the course of a day you may hear “Teen-Age Angel” thirty or forty times. But in addition to local news and chronicles, some foreign advertising creeps in. As I went farther and farther north and it got colder I was aware of more and more advertising for Florida real estate and, with the approach of the long and bitter winter, I could see why Florida is a golden word. As I went along I found that more and more people lusted toward Florida and that thousands had moved there and more thousands wanted to and would. The advertising, with a side look at Federal Communications, made few claims except for the fact that the land they were selling was in Florida. Some of them went out on a limb and promised that it was above tide level. But that didn’t matter; the very name Florida carried the message of warmth and ease and comfort. It was irresistible.

I’ve lived in good climate, and it bores the hell out of me. I like weather rather than climate. In Cuernavaca, Mexico, where I once lived, and where the climate is as near to perfect as is conceivable, I have found that when people leave there they usually go to Alaska. I’d like to see how long an Aroostook County man can stand Florida.

34 The trouble is that with his savings moved and invested there, he can't very well go back. His dice are rolled and can't be picked up again. But I do wonder if a down-Easter, sitting on a nylon-and-aluminum chair out on a changelessly green lawn slapping mosquitoes in the evening of a Florida October—I do wonder if the stab of memory doesn't strike him high in the stomach just below the ribs where it hurts. And in the humid ever-summer I dare his picturing mind not to go back to the shout of color, to the clean rasp of frosty air, to the smell of pine wood burning and the caressing warmth of kitchens. For how can one know color in perpetual green, and what good is warmth without cold to give it sweetness?

I drove as slowly as custom and the impatient law permitted. That's the only way to see anything. Every few miles the states provided places of rest off the roads, sheltered places sometimes near dark streams. There were painted oil drums for garbage, and picnic tables, and sometimes fireplaces or barbecue pits. At intervals I drove Rocinante off the road and let Charley out to smell over the register of previous guests. Then I would heat my coffee and sit comfortably on my back step and contemplate wood and water and the quick-rising mountains with crowns of conifers and the fir trees high up, dusted with snow. Long ago at Easter I had a looking-egg. Peering in a little porthole at the end, I saw a lovely little farm, a kind of dream farm, and on the farmhouse chimney a stork sitting on a nest. I regarded this as a fairy-tale farm as surely imagined as gnomes sitting under toadstools. And then in Denmark I saw that farm or its brother, and it was true, just as it had been in the looking-egg. And in Salinas, California, where I grew up, although we had some frost the climate was cool and foggy. When we saw colored pictures of a Vermont autumn forest it was another fairy thing and we frankly didn't believe it. In school we memo-

rized "Snowbound" and little poems about Old Jack Frost and his paintbrush, but the only thing Jack Frost did for us was put a thin skin of ice on the watering trough, and that rarely. To find not only that this bedlam of color was true but that the pictures were pale and inaccurate translations, was to me startling. I can't even imagine the forest colors when I am not seeing them. I wondered whether constant association could cause inattention, and asked a native New Hampshire woman about it. She said the autumn never failed to amaze her; to elate. "It is a glory," she said, "and can't be remembered, so that it always comes as a surprise."

In the stream beside the resting place I saw a trout rise from the dark water of a pool and make outflowing silver rings, and Charley saw it too and waded in and got wet, the fool. He never thinks of the future. I stepped into Roccinante to bring out my poor mite of garbage for the oil drum, two empty cans; I had eaten from one and Charley from the other. And among the books I had brought along, I saw a well-remembered cover and brought it out to the sunlight—a golden hand holding at once a serpent and a mirror with wings, and below in scriptlike letters "*The Spectator*, Edited by Henry Morley."

I seem to have had a fortunate childhood for a writer. My grandfather, Sam'l Hamilton, loved good writing, and he knew it too, and he had some bluestocking daughters, among them my mother. Thus it was that in Salinas, in the great dark walnut bookcase with the glass doors, there were strange and wonderful things to be found. My parents never offered them, and the glass doors obviously guarded them, and so I pilfered from that case. It was neither forbidden nor discouraged. I think today if we forbade our illiterate children to touch the wonderful things of our literature, perhaps they might steal them and find secret joy. Very early I conceived a love for Joseph Addison

36 which I have never lost. He plays the instrument of language as Casals plays a cello. I do not know whether he influenced my prose style, but I could hope he did. In the White Mountains in 1960, sitting in the sun, I opened the well-remembered first volume, printed in 1883. I turned to Number 1 of *The Spectator*—Thursday, March 1, 1711. It was headed:

*“Non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, et speciosa dehinc miracula promat.”*—Horace.

I remember so well loving Addison's use of capital letters for nouns. He writes under this date:

“I have observed that a Reader seldom peruses a Book with Pleasure 'till he knows whether the Writer of it be a black or fair Man, of a mild or cholerick Disposition, Married or a Batchelor, with other Particulars of the like Nature, that conduce very much to the right Understanding of an Author. To gratify this Curiosity, which is so natural to a Reader, I design this Paper and my next, as Prefatory Discourses to my following Writings and shall give some Account in them of the several persons that are engaged in this Work. As the chief trouble of Compiling, Digesting and Correcting will fall to my Share, I must do myself the Justice to open the Work with my own History.”

Sunday, January 29, 1961. Yes, Joseph Addison, I hear and I will obey within Reason, for it appears that the Curiosity you speak of has in no Way abated. I have found many Readers more interested in what I wear than in what I think, more avid to know how I do it than in what I do. In regarding my Work, some Readers profess greater Feeling for what it makes than for what it says. Since a Suggestion from the Master is a Command not unlike Holy Writ, I shall digress and comply at the same Time.

Among the generality of men I am tall—six feet even—although among the males of my family I am considered a

dwarf. They range from six feet two inches to six feet five, and I know that both my sons, when they stretch their full height, will overtop me. I am very wide of shoulder and, in the condition I now find myself, narrow of hip. My legs are long in proportion to my trunk and are said to be shapely. My hair is a grizzled gray, my eyes blue and my cheeks ruddy, a complexion inherited from my Irish mother. My face has not ignored the passage of time, but recorded it with scars, lines, furrows, and erosions. I wear a beard and mustache but shave my cheeks; said beard, having a dark skunk stripe up the middle and white edges, commemorates certain relatives. I cultivate this beard not for the usual given reasons of skin trouble or pain of shaving, nor for the secret purpose of covering a weak chin, but as pure unblushing decoration, much as a peacock finds pleasure in his tail. And finally, in our time a beard is the one thing a woman cannot do better than a man, or if she can her success is assured only in a circus.

My costume for traveling was utilitarian if a trifle bizarre. Half-Wellington rubber boots with cork inner soles kept my feet warm and dry. Khaki cotton trousers, bought in an army-surplus store, covered my shanks, while my upper regions rejoiced in a hunting coat with corduroy cuffs and collar and a game pocket in the rear big enough to smuggle an Indian princess into a Y.M.C.A. My cap was one I have worn for many years, a blue serge British naval cap with a short visor and on its peak the royal lion and unicorn, as always fighting for the crown of England. This cap is pretty ratty and salt-crusted, but it was given me by the skipper of a motor torpedo boat on which I sailed out of Dover during the war—a gentle gentleman and a murderer. After I left his command he attacked a German E-boat and held his fire trying to take it whole since none had ever been captured, and in the process he got himself sunk. I have worn his cap ever since in his honor and in

38 his memory. Besides, I like it. It agrees with me. Down East this cap did not draw a second glance, but when later, in Wisconsin, North Dakota, Montana, I had left the sea far behind, I thought it drew attention, and I bought what we used to call a stockman's hat, a Stetson, not too wide of brim, a rich but conservative western hat of the kind my cow-harrying uncles used to wear. Only when I came down to another sea in Seattle did I reassume the naval cap.

Thus far with Addison's injunction, but my Reader has me back in that New Hampshire picnic place. As I sat there fingering the first volume of *The Spectator* and considering how the mind usually does two things at once that it knows about and probably several it doesn't, a luxurious car drove in and a rather stout and bedizened woman released a rather stout and bedizened Pomeranian of the female persuasion. I would not have known this latter fact, but Charley knew. Emerging from behind the garbage can, he found her beautiful, his French blood flared up, and he proceeded to gallantries unmistakable even to the slack eyes of mademoiselle's mistress. This creature let out a shriek like a wounded rabbit, emerged from the car with an explosive ooze, and would have snatched her darling to her bosom if she could have bent down that far. The best she could do was to fetch a slap at tall Charley's head. He quite naturally and casually took a nip at her hand before proceeding toward romance. Until that moment I never quite knew the meaning of the phrase "to make the welkin ring." In the first place I didn't know what a welkin was. I looked it up later. And that bull bitch of a woman sure as hell made it ring. I grabbed her hand and saw that the skin wasn't even broken, so I grabbed her dog, which promptly bit me good and drew blood before I could get the little monster by the throat and gently throttle it.

Charley regarded the whole scene as nonsense. He wet

on the garbage can for the twentieth time and called it a day. 39

It took time to calm the lady. I brought out the bottle of brandy, which might have killed her, and she took a slug that should have killed her.

After all I've done for him you'd think Charley would have come to my aid, but he dislikes neurotics and he detests drunks. He climbed in Rocinante, crawled under the table, and went to sleep. Sic semper cum Frogs.

At last milady flailed away with her hand brake on, and the kind of a day I had built lay in ruins. Addison had crashed in flames, the trout no longer ringed the pool, and a cloud covered the sun and put a chill in the air. I found myself driving faster than I wanted to and it began to rain, a cold steel rain. I didn't give the lovely villages the attention they deserved, and before long I had crossed into Maine and continued eastward.

I wish any two states could get together on a speed limit. Just about the time you get used to fifty miles an hour you cross a state line and it's sixty-five. I wonder why they can't settle down and agree. However, in one matter all states agree—each one admits it is the finest of all and announces that fact in huge letters as you cross the state line. Among nearly forty I didn't see a single state that hadn't a good word to say for itself. It seemed a little indelicate. It might be better to let visitors find out for themselves. But maybe we wouldn't if it weren't drawn to our attention.