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HEMINGWAY'S BITTERNESS

by

HAROLD LOEB

In *A Moveable Feast*, written shortly before his death, Ernest Hemingway chose to denigrate several of those who had assisted him generously when he needed help most. Indignant at his ungraciousness, at his spiteful descriptions of Ford Madox Ford, Scott Fitzgerald, Edward Walsh and Gertrude Stein, each of whom, back in the nineteen twenties, had done what he or she could — and it was considerable — for the young, unpublished author, I started to write an article drawing on my own experience of Hem's early bitterness. I supposed that his use of Lady Duff Twysden and myself, or, at least, of our backgrounds, in his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, had been the first instance of his propensity to assign disagreeable fictive characters and unpleasant behavior to the people he knew best. But I was mistaken. I soon discovered that *The Sun Also Rises*, was not the earliest example of this propensity, or the last either.

As the work proceeded, I came to feel that there was little reason to dredge from the past episodes probably of interest only to the original participants. And of these but four, so far as I know, were alive: Bill Smith, Hemingway's early friend, Donald Ogden Stewart, Hadley, Hem's first wife, and myself. Who else cared about what really happened in Paris and Pamplona in 1925? What did it matter that the events of a long past holiday were not as represented in Hemingway's first novel? So I dropped the project.

But again I was mistaken. *The Saturday Evening Post* had published—first installment March 12, 1966 — an account by A. E. Hotchner of Papa Hemingway's recollections of the period.¹ Since *The Saturday Evening Post* appeals to a large, unspecialized audience, I concluded that some interest must persist in those distant events. Furthermore, Hotchner's quotations from Hemingway give, as I propose to show, a false and at times scurrilous account of our various doings. Many of the incidents described are either distorted or fabricated. And Hotchner has Hemingway give the real names, including my own, of the individuals whom Hemingway travestied in *The Sun Also Rises*. Consequently, I feel released from the reticence, or whatever the emotion was, which made me hesitate to rehash once again our old confusions. I shall therefore put down the story of that period as I remember it, citing examples in Hemingway's writings of his bitter animosity toward those who had helped him, and accounting, insofar as I can, for what appears to be his gratuitous bitterness.

I quite realize that no two witnesses of an event ever see or remember quite the same things and that in *The Sun Also Rises* Hemingway was writing fiction. But Hemingway, by giving the real names of those at the Pamplona fiesta during which most of the action took place, has implied that the fiction was based on fact. This seems to me verging on the libelous: libelous or not, it is false. Though some bias no doubt is unavoidable under the circumstances, I shall endeavor to

¹These articles were the forerunners of Mr. Hotchner's book, *Papa Hemingway*, to which later references are made.

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be truthful and objective. I am satisfied that the account which follows, certainly that part of it directly experienced, is substantially accurate.

In describing the goings on at Pamplona and what came before and after, I shall not always use my own name or that of Duff Twysden or Ernest Hemingway. Sometimes, the names that Hemingway used in his story, *The Sun Also Rises*, are more convenient. This is not because I am particularly keen on the name Robert Cohn, though I have known several pleasant Cohns whose company I enjoyed. And certainly I prefer the name Duff Twysden to that of Brett Ashley, and Ernest Hemingway to that of Jacob or Jake Barnes. But by making use of the names so generously supplied by "Papa", I shall tie my story more closely to Hemingway's fiction and thereby enable the reader to compare more easily the fiction and the actuality.

Hemingway had that quality which it is fashionable at the moment to call "charisma". Myths circled in the dust behind him. Even in the early days before he had been published, exaggerated stories of his prowess were current. Latterly, books have been written about him which read, to those who knew him, like fantasy. I am not against myth. It may well be that Americans are better citizens because of the stories, like those of Abraham Lincoln, which keep alive the memories of favored historical figures. But such myths should be in character, should delineate with reasonable accuracy the actual man. Falsehoods, however glamorous, add little and may even detract from a man's stature.

Hem was a great writer. He developed a style which has affected, I believe beneficially, nearly all the better American writers that came after him. His life was filled with action. To some extent he overcame his fears. But I see no point in crediting him with virtues in excess of those which he abundantly possessed, nor in concealing weaknesses of which, like the rest of us, he had an appreciable share. So I shall to the best of my ability picture Hemingway as I knew him, crediting him with what he had but not suppressing the qualities which flaw the image.

Our first encounter was delightful. We met in the late spring of 1924 at one of Ford Madox Ford's tea parties in the gallery above the press where the *Transatlantic Review* was being printed. Hemingway was assisting Ford to get out the magazine. People were coming in, going out, rumbling around. But I best remember young Ernest, eyes and mouth smiling, white, regular teeth, hearty manner and slightly clumsy movements. He was twenty-five at the time and in good condition. He knew of *Broom*, my recently folded magazine of the arts, and I was aware of his stories even though at the time they had been published only in two small Parisian editions.

We got to talking, not about writing, painting or politics, but about fishing and hunting. Hem liked to fish and had done a lot of it in Michigan. I had gone after brook trout in the Canadian Rockies and in Maine, and had shot duck and prairie chicken in Alberta, quail and one deer in South Carolina. It was pleasant chatting about fishing with a writer. Hem invited me to play tennis on the public courts near the prison which harbored the guillotine. He and some of his friends worked out there several times a week. I turned up on the following Monday.

He was no tennis player; a bad eye, damaged in a street brawl, and a weak leg injured by shrapnel, hampered his control. His back court drives were erratic and his net game non-existent. Nevertheless, he put so much gusto into the play and got so much pleasure out of his good shots and such misery from his misses, that the games in which he participated were never lackadaisical. Also, we usually played doubles, and by assigning the best player to Hem, a close match could sometimes be achieved. The tennis was fun, especially for me as old skills returned.

After tennis Hem suggested that we box. He kept a set of gloves in the locker room by the courts. I was not eager to take him on. He must have weighed over 190 pounds and I was still light in 1924, weighing perhaps 135 pounds. Also I was not a good boxer. Though I had devoted a month or two to boxing at Princeton in Freshman year, I had soon deserted it for cane sparring, and then wrestling. In sophomore year, I made the wrestling team and did no more boxing. I did not feel I could hold my own with this big, eager, broad-shouldered fellow who talked like a pro. However, unable to think up an adequate excuse, I put the gloves on and we sparred awhile on the soft turf.

Though I feared that Hem would use his greater strength, reach, and weight to smash through my defenses and make me look foolish, it turned out otherwise. I noticed he was signalling his punches by a jiggling of the pupil and I was enabled thereby to forestall most of his swings by jabbing my left at his chin. In all the months we boxed together Hem never exerted himself fully. And he was generous with his praise and made me out to be a better boxer than I really was.

Through the spring and fall of 1924 our boxing and tennis continued, friendly and enjoyable. We visited each other's homes, learned contract bridge, — the game was just being introduced — at Ford Madox Ford's, dined at the *Negre du Toulouse*, *Le Trianon* and *L'Avenue* — Michaud's had long since folded, though Hem in his last book mentions eating there later with Scott Fitzgerald — and spent a weekend at Senlis where, after walking along the ancient moats and walls, we played poker in a hotel room.

I liked Hadley, Hem's wife, and Bumby the baby was cute and cheerful. I do not know why Hemingway told Hotchner he was so poor that he often fed the family on pigeons captured in the park. I don't know why Hotchner relates the story as if it were true. With corn or bread for bait and tremendous patience, it might be possible now and again to grab and hold a city pigeon. But then to wring its neck and kill it in the Luxembourg Gardens with hundreds of people walking around, and to do this repeatedly without being noticed seems to me quite incredible. Pigeons, like chickens, make an awful fuss when grabbed. Feathers fly and birds do not die easily. To my mind, Hem was clearly spoofing. Yet Hotchner repeats the anecdote in all seriousness. I do not remember that Hem was much of a spoofer as a young man. Perhaps he developed a taste for it as age overtook him.

Actually, Hemingway was not as poor, in my opinion, as he makes himself out to be in *A Moveable Feast*. Before I knew him, during his early years in Europe, he wrote for the *Toronto Star* as well as for a Hearst Agency. Then he returned to Toronto in 1923 where he received (according to biographers Arinowitz and Hamill) some \$125 dollars a week. He returned to Paris in January 1924. I

met him some months afterwards, as mentioned above, when he was already leg-man and associate editor of Ford Madox Ford's *Transatlantic Review*. Though the pay there may have been small and irregular, Ford was short of money nearly always, I believe the Hemingways had a supplementary income from Hadley or her family.¹ For Hem in those days did not stint himself except in the matter of clothes. On one occasion he bought and paid for a Miro, and on many others we drank *Pouilly Fuisse* and ate oysters, *Portugaises* when we felt poor, *Marennnes* when we were flush. Hem always paid for his share or tried to. *Pouilly Fuisse* is a costly wine and French oysters even then were more expensive than their American counterparts.

When one considers that the Hemingways in those years went to Pamplona, Madrid, San Sabastian, Valencia, Northern Italy, and to Austria for skiing in 1924 and 1925, it seems improbable that Hem ever went without food because he was too poor to buy it. I imagine he went without food time to time as I did, largely to find out what it felt like. Marcelline Hemingway says when her brother "became a bit too heavy for the lightweight football team, he used to starve himself before weighing-in for the Saturday games. Often toward the end of the week, Ernest would stick to a diet of lettuce and a little water to keep his weight down." I do not believe he was often, if ever, too poor to buy a croissant. Certainly, he never made himself out to be penniless. We always ate well when out together. And he never borrowed money from me, or tried to. Possibly he thought of himself as having been poor in his twenties, just as he thought of himself as being poor in his early sixties when, as Hotchner relates, he believed the Revenue Agents were after him.

We made plans to go skiing in the Austrian Alps. Hem knew a place where the food was good, the wine and beer excellent. The Bertram Hartmans, old friends of ours, planned to come along, as well as Bob Benchley. Later, in June, we would go to Pamplona to see the bullfights, but before that to a village in Spain where Hem had fished the year before and found the trout plentiful. Though Hem thought bullfighting wonderful, I did not expect to enjoy it. Yet I was curious about it. When I was a child, my uncles had given my father a collection of Mexican artifacts, among which was a set of pictures made of feathers, brilliantly colored, depicting various facets of bull running. I could still call them to mind, and wanted to compare my mental image to the reality.

However, a complication caused a change of plans. A month earlier, Horace Liveright had accepted for publication my first novel, "Doodab", on the condition that I put back the "a"s and "the"s which I had left out of the text whenever I thought they did not contribute to the meaning, — that is to say, whenever their subject did not have to be marked as definite or indefinite. I was torn between going skiing with Hem in Austria or returning to New York to argue with Horace Liveright. Meanwhile, Malcolm Cowley, who was in America, offered to go see Liveright and check up on the situation. Isadore Schneider, a friend of Malcolm's and a former contributor to *Broom*, worked in the Liveright office.

¹ According to Marcelline, Hemingway's sister, Hadley had a small trust fund. (P. 211. *At the Hemingway*. Atlantic Monthly Press, 1961). This confirms my remembrance of the situation.

While I was waiting to hear from Cowley, the date for our departure arrived. After some hesitation, I stayed on in Paris when the Hemingways, the Hartmans, and Bob Benchley set off in late December for Austria. I was unhappy about it though I hoped to join them later. However, on the first of January, I took a ship for New York.

From here on for a space I shall use the names so generously provided by Papa. As it becomes clear that in actual life Jake and Robert were good and close friends, one should be able to see clearly the difference between an author's attitude toward a friend and his attitude to one of his fictive creations even when the fictive character was based, as Jake Barnes told Hotchner, on the live friend. Jake, in real life, was assuring Robert how much he would be missed if he could not join him in Austria. And if he could come, he must not forget Jake's Ms. Jake's reference to his book was the manuscript of *In Our Time* that he had left with Leon Fleischman and which was eventually published by Horace Liveright. I brought Hem to see Leon Fleischman in Paris somewhat earlier in the fall. Fleischman, an old friend of mine had been a partner of Liveright's and had become his European representative when he moved to Paris with his wife and child. He had not seen my manuscript which had been sent somewhat earlier to Liveright by Harold Stearne, Liveright's former representative. By the autumn, however, Fleischman had been deputised to find manuscripts suitable for American publication.

Leon and his wife, Helen, had received Hem and Kitty, a friend of mine, pleasantly, and without reading Hem's stories offered to send them to Liveright with his recommendation. Possibly he had looked over the limited paper editions of *In Our Time*, published by Bill Bird earlier in the year. During the conversation, Leon may have appeared officious, perhaps slightly patronizing. I did not notice it, having known Fleischman a long while, and being quite used to his assumption that he was a literary "aficiendo" as well as a tennis player. Leon was a great admirer of Turgenev and George Moore. I preferred Dostoevski and Bernard Shaw. But no controversial subject came up during tea and highballs, and Hem left his stories with Fleischman for submission to Liveright.

Afterwards, as we were walking away from the apartment, Hem muttered: "That damned kike". Kitty was outraged. When alone with me, she accused him of anti-Semitism. "Nonsense," I said. "He used the word as I might say mick or dago. It doesn't mean a thing."

By now Jake knew that Robert was not coming to Austria. He had gone to New York. Don Stewart had written Jake that Doran would not publish his short stories. They might be turned over to Mencken for a reading at Knopf, but Mencken did not like Jake's work — that might explain the snide reference to Mencken in *The Sun Also Rises*. Feeling guilty for having done nothing about the MS of *In Our Time*, I went over to Liveright's office and asked Schneider what had happened to it. Schneider told me that Beatrice Kaufman (the playwright, George Kaufman's wife) who was reading for Liveright had it. I knew Beatrice. I went to her office and told her about Hemingway and his work. "I know books of short stories are hard to sell, but Hem will surely write a novel and it will be a sensation. You can take my word for it."

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After I had spoken, Beatrice said: "This is very odd. I was just about to mail the stories back." And she reached out and picked up a package addressed to Fleischman in Paris.

I said: "Hold it. Give it another reading. I know what I am talking about." Slowly she unwrapped the package. Beatrice and others gave it further reading. I do not know what their verdict would have been because Sherwood Anderson, then at the peak of his reputation and Liveright's star author, phoned Liveright. It was not difficult for Sherwood to convince Horace of the book's importance. Since Liveright was anxious to hold Anderson, his best selling literary author, *In Our Time* was accepted. Schneider phoned to tell me. Cohn wired the news to Jacob. Jake's elation, it turned out, was embittered by the difficulty in convincing Liveright. Jake felt that he had been pummeled. Perhaps, back in 1925, when Hemingway was 26 years old, the news that at long last he was about to have a book published commercially was too overwhelming. Perhaps it was then that he felt one shouldn't wish for too much because one is likely to get it. That, in any case, is the best I could do towards understanding his reaction.

I returned to Paris in March. It was a busy, delightful spring. Bill Smith — Bill Gorton in the novel, Hemingway's friend from Horton Bay, — was already in Paris when I arrived. Ernest had often spoken of Bill with whom he had spent happy summers. Bill was, as Hem put it, "One swell guy", and I was recommended to Bill for virtue that included wrestling, boxing, and tennis playing. After a moment of mutual sniffing, we accepted each other and became long time friends.

Bill played tennis about as well as I did and we were more than able to hold off Hem and Paul Fisher, quite the best player on the court. There were many good matches. Hem and Bill and Paul largely filled the gap left by the departure for America some months earlier of Matthew Josephson and Malcolm Cowley. These two and other associates and contributors to *Broom* had kept me from being homesick for the United States.

Now everybody seemed to be coming to Paris. My mother and her new husband were already there. My cousins, Edmond and Peggy Guggenheim turned up unexpectedly. Beatrice Kaufman and Peggy Leach arrived from New York. Pauline Pfeiffer and her sister Jinny were working in Paris for Vogue. Kitty met them there and had them over to the apartment, where they met Hemingway. Scott Fitzgerald arrived with Zelda. (I knew him slightly from the Sunwise Turn Book Shop — I had found a rare book for him). Scott admired Hem and presented him with a copy of *The Great Gatsby*, hoping he would like it. And Hem was felicitous about my novel which he read in manuscript. He didn't say much about his own reactions, which did not surprise me. I suppose it wasn't his kind of writing, but he told me that Hadley had liked it, particularly the last part with its touch of sentiment.

I tended at that time to ignore the gossip, current in "The Quarter", about Hem's temper. It was told that friends had had to hold him back from knocking down an old man, an American architect, who had inadvertently brushed the cafe table at which Hem was sitting. Also Hem had beaten up Paul Fisher for

no apparent reason. He said he just felt like it. I discounted these and similar stories not having seen the episodes myself. I was aware that people exaggerated.

* * *

Early in June, Robert Cohn and Brett Ashley spoke to each other at the bar of the Select. Cohn had been aware of Brett before he had left for America. He had liked to watch her face and listen to her voice even from a distance. But he had never spoken to her, not even at Joe Bennett's party where she and Mike had arrived together. Instead, he had drunk too much and left. But there is no need to tell once again the true story of Brett and Cohn. It was gone into at some length in my book of recollections, *The Way It Was* (Criterion Books, 1959).

Brett's friend, Mike Campbell, was about to leave for England to visit his mother. Cohn's friend, Kitty, intended to go to London when Cohn, Jake and Bill went fishing. Cohn and Brett waited until they had gone and then took the train to St. Jean de Luz, a resort by the sea near Biarritz. After two weeks, Brett returned to Mike and Paris, as had been planned from the beginning. It was hard for Cohn to let her go but he felt it advisable under the circumstances. Something within him had said "no" when Brett had suggested that they go off together to South America. If only she had said Africa or Asia, he sometimes mused when a sinking in his stomach made him feel empty, everything might have been different. But he had let Brett go and stayed on at St. Jean de Luz.

Some days after her departure, a letter came from Brett. It went as follows: "I don't quite know what to say to you except that I'm miserable without you and things don't seem to improve at all with time. I had almost hoped they would. That glorious little dream we lived together seems ever more incredible and wonderful from a distance of a thousand years.

"Now for a doubtful glad tidings. I am coming on the Pamplona trip with 'Jake' and your lot. Can you bear it? With 'Mike' of course. If this appears impossible for you, let me know and I'll try and get out of it. But I'm dying to come and feel that even seeing and being able to talk to you will be better than nothing.

"I love you, dearest one, with all my forces. Have you missed me?" "By all means come," Cohn wired. He felt that if Brett could stand it, he could stand it, too. But he was not happy about it.

Yet he still felt his or their decision to separate had been sound. Brett was romantic, like Arlen's woman in *The Green Hat* who was partly based on her. She lived for love, or, perhaps, for the transfiguration of the outside world which being in love effected. When the enchantment faded, and Cohn felt it would fade sooner or later, Brett would fade, too. She wanted more than affection, security, friendship. Or so Cohn thought. But he did not convince himself, not fully.

It was towards the end of June that Cohn first sensed a coolness in his friend Barnes. There were allusions to Brett's homosexual friends, Cedric and Lett, which Cohn thought uncalled for. Cohn thought it best to stay in St. Jean de Luz. Brett had written him she would be coming there as soon as she and Mike could get organized.

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Brett and Mike arrived on schedule. Brett looked the same except that instead of a floppy felt hat, she wore a beret. I did not like her in a beret. Hem usually wore a beret. I wondered if the two were more intimate than she let on. But I couldn't ask Brett about Hem before Mike. So we spent an evening at the Casino, taking my friend Ruth along to make the party even. The next day, we hired a car to go to Pamplona. The long ride went all right, a little boring at times. Mike was not a scintillating conversationalist. But I enjoyed the nearness of Brett, even under unfavorable circumstances. She was different however. I gathered that the spell, as she called it, had definitely been broken. I was hurt by its loss but not acutely. It had been my own choice, I told myself, and perhaps I had been right to make it. I did not approve of the way Brett drank at the Casino. When she had been with me, she had drunk as I had, neither more nor less. Now she kept up with Mike.

Eventually — the ride taking a good part of the day — we reached Pamplona and the hotel on the square where Hemingway (to use real names again) had reserved rooms. Things were better now. New towns interested me, and I was not reminded, as I had been at St. Jean, of poignant moments that were to have no sequel.

On the following day, Hem, Bill, Don and Hadley came in by bus from their fishing trip. The idyllic scenes of *The Sun Also Rises* were purely imaginary. Hem was in a black mood. None of them had had as much as a strike. Apparently, an irrigation project had wrecked the fishing by diverting water into the stream, or out of it. It wasn't clear which, and they didn't want to talk about it. After a shave and a drink, Bill was himself again and Don seemed to be a delightful chap. Don, however, was not going into the bull ring because he had broken two ribs there the year before. It seemed that early in the morning, the town riffraff were permitted to go into the arena where they were pursued by a series of bulls, steers, and heifers with padded horns trained to chase one and all but not to single out an individual for special treatment. Bill and I decided to go into the ring with Hem, and the others intended to get up to see the fun although it started early in the morning with the running of the fighting bulls through the streets.

I had to force myself to climb over the barrier. The arena looked enormous and I had never had anything to do with cattle except in Alberta when sitting on a horse, a safer location. However, Hem climbed over the barrier followed by Bill, and I felt I had to follow. The next morning I went into the arena again but this time with one of the hotel's bath towels. No one told me that bulls are relatively indifferent to the color white. For a while I just stood around. Then a dark, well-horned young animal came along at a lope. I held the towel in front of me, waving it slightly. As the bull got nearer, I noticed that its mean little eyes were not looking at the towel which I flaunted before it, but over the towel at my head. Probably this bull was not going to be turned aside by the movement of a towel it was not looking at. There was no time to think. Reflexively, as one twists when lifted by a wrestler, I turned my back. When the bull lowered his head to butt, I dropped the towel and sat on its head, grasping the horns for support. Three long strides followed, slower than the rise and fall of a galloping horse, and the bull tossed its head. I was thrown into the air but had the good fortune to land

on my feet. "One would have thought he had done it on purpose," Cayetena, the Pedro Romero of the novel, said, according to Hem when he and the matador talked over the feat later that evening.

The better feeling which followed the amateur morning did not last long. The trouble started with Mike. He baited me whenever he got tight and he was nearly always tight. I had no notion how to handle insults from a drunk. If you knock one down, you're a brute for hitting a helpless man. If you ignore the remarks, which I usually did, the drunk doesn't notice it but keeps right on, more and more convinced that he's being terribly funny. Furthermore, Mike had an excuse for being nasty, an excuse of some validity. So I did nothing but keep out of his way as much as I reasonably could.

I was more troubled by Hem's attitude than by Mike's. Nothing overt had occurred but the old warm feeling was gone, and I had no adequate explanation to account for its disappearance. I asked Bill about it. With Bill I still felt at ease and increasingly friendly. Bill hadn't changed and the situation was throwing us closer together. "What's wrong with Hem?" I asked. "You've known him longer than I have."

"Hem has moods," said Bill, who sometimes was more terse than meaningful.

"Sure," I said, "but they didn't use to last."

"It's the *wagon lits*," said Bill. "Hem doesn't like *wagon lits*."

"What do you mean?" I asked, bristling a little for I suspected what was coming.

Bill said: "When Joe Bennett told Hem that you and Brett had gone South together in a *wagon lit*, Hem went off muttering the foulest curses I'd ever heard."

"But why?"

"Hem doesn't like *wagon lits*," said Bill.

I mulled this over. Hem may have disapproved of my going off with Brett. He probably did. I had always felt that Hem was something of a Puritan. Though he had tried to slough off his Oak Park conditioning, I suspected that it still affected his actions and reactions. I had never seen Hem out with a woman other than his wife. Even at parties, he seemed uninterested in other women. Despite his writing about a compliant girl, I suspected that he had had little experience with women until he fell in love with Luz, the girl in "A Very Short Story" who, some years later was to rise again and die as Catherine Barkley. Actually, Luz was a nice though not beautiful American girl from Milwaukee who had left him for an Italian officer.

It was possible that Hem had changed toward me because I refused to be enthusiastic about bullfighting. There was still another possibility. Perhaps Hem had been annoyed because I had not gone fishing and instead had stayed in St. Jean de Luz to wait for Brett and Mike. This could have and no doubt did annoy him but surely not enough to account for the drastic change in his attitude. Or it could be that something had happened when Brett got back to Paris. Perhaps

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Mike had been late in returning from England and Brett had run into Hem. They may have gone dancing, though Hem was not keen on dancing. I suspected he felt dancing was not quite masculine. It was possible that back in Paris she had fallen for Hem shortly after she had written me that letter. Or perhaps he had fallen for her. She would have liked that, I suspected, even if she didn't accept it. Probably, I concluded, some such causes had combined to transform Hem's feelings toward me.

On the next to last evening of the Fiesta, Cohn, — if I may return to Hem's nomenclature — made another blunder. He met Brett on the town square coming from the hotel and asked her to have a drink with him. She tried to get out of it, said they shouldn't, it would cause trouble. But he insisted.

They were sipping an absinthe at the cafe — or what passed for absinthe in Pamplona — Cohn never discovered if the claim was authentic — when a Spaniard whom they had recently met came up to their table and asked if they would do him the honor of accepting the hospitality of his club. He tempted them with an offer of champagne. Since Brett was uneasy sitting there with Cohn, afraid no doubt that Mike would find them together and make a scene, she accepted and they went to the club which was located on the second floor in a spacious apartment overlooking the square. A piano stood in the corner of the main room. A monocled man with a grey goatee began to play popular tunes. Then Brett took over with French songs which she sang in a sweet, low voice. Cohn enjoyed her singing but soon had another worry. A crowd gathered. Champagne flowed freely. Cohn could not find a way to separate Brett from the piano, the champagne and the admiration. He could not get her away until the crowd dispersed in the small hours.

The next afternoon she appeared at the cafe with a swollen black eye. When Cohn started to ask what had happened, Jake cut him off by saying she had fallen down the stairs. Cohn said nothing further. In the evening, they were sitting around their usual table sipping drinks, and Mike started baiting him again. Cohn was used to that but Jake joined in. They intimated that he didn't know when he wasn't wanted. This made him furious because he and Jake had organized the expedition and had invited the others. He felt like throwing his drink into Jake's face. Instead he got up slowly and asked his former friend to walk out with him.

What happened was described as follows in *The Way It Was* (pp. 295 ff):

"I was scared — not shaken or panicky, but just plain scared. I had boxed enough with Hem to know that he could lick me easily; his forty-pound advantage was just too much. And the edge I sometimes had because of Hem's tendency to telegraph his punches would be lost in the dark. I could not hope to outbox him. My little jabs would miss their mark and Hem's swings would smash my face in. I considered clinching, but Hem would think it dirty fighting and react by gouging or strangling. Exchanging punches was the lesser danger. I would simply have to stand up and take it. . . .

"We reached the last cafe, the last illuminated shop front. We went down a few steps. Now there were only street lamps. The small street carried on in semi-darkness.

"I took my glasses off and, after considering the safest place, put them in the side pocket of my jacket. Then I stopped, faced Hem, and took my jacket off.

"My glasses,' I said, 'are in the side pocket. If they're broken I couldn't get them fixed here.'

"Feeling ridiculous, I looked around for some place to put my packet.

"Shall I hold it for you?' he asked.

"I smiled. There was just enough light for me to see that Hem was smiling too, the boyish, contagious, smile that made it so hard not to like him.

"If I may hold yours,' I said.

"We stood hesitantly looking at each other.

"I don't want to hit you,' I said.

"Me either,' said Hem.

"We put on our jackets and started back."

Later Jake apologized. But when the fiesta was over, Cohn knew that the friendship would never be the same.

At the close of the fiesta, the party broke up. Hem and Hadley went on to Madrid; Brett, Mike, Bill and I returned to St. Jean de Luz. I do not remember what happened to Don but have the impression he left earlier. On our way out with our bags. Hen introduced us on the hotel stairs to a young Spaniard in an undistinguished business suit who, he said, was the matador whose work he admired so much. That was the only contact Brett had with the bull fighter, a single handshake. Immediately afterwards, we got into the cab waiting down stairs and drove across the border. No doubt Hem's account makes a better story.

We saw Hemingway again, after his return from Spain. Bill remembers a dinner with Kitty and Hem at which a duck was consumed. However, our friendship was over and showed no sign of revival. Hem and I played tennis once, and for once I tried appeasement. I don't mean that I deliberately hit the ball out, but I didn't exert myself to win. So I lost, though I could hardly believe it. Hem put it in his book. He had Cohn lose to Jake at tennis because Cohn, supposedly was still upset by Lady Brett. The things one imagines!

In September Bill and I boarded the S.S. Suffren, an old tub with rats behind the radiators. I wanted to be in New York when my book came out. In June 1926, after Liveright accepted my new MS, I returned to Paris. I saw Duff at the Select the night I arrived. She was with Lett, Cedric's boyfriend, and had been drinking too much. I walked away after a few words of greeting. Then I joined up with a beautiful blond Dutch waif who knew no English and had, so she said, run away from home. Gradually my French improved, as it was our only verbal means of communication. And in the midst of this Duff came to the hotel. I went downstairs to speak to her. What had been was no longer there, or at least, I thought so. I saw her quite often a year later just before she met a young Texan at the seashore and fell in love with him and married him. I think it was Cedric who

introduced them to each other. Shortly afterwards, the Texan brought her back to America and I believe she made him a good wife, though perhaps she drank too much. Nearly ten years later in 1935 or 1936, I saw her for the last time at a cocktail party. She looked terrible and died shortly afterwards.

But in the fall of 1926 I went south to St. Paul with the Dutch girl and rented a little farmhouse in a great field of artichokes and set about writing my third novel, *Tumbling Mustard*. I was still there when someone sent me a copy of *The Sun Also Rises*.

The book hit like an upper-cut. At first I had difficulty getting into it. I confined my reading to the passages that had to do with Cohn, seeking to discover if I talked like Cohn. Evidently I didn't act like Cohn, never having knocked anyone down or even hit anyone except with gloves on. I didn't seem to talk like Cohn either. But it is difficult to see oneself as another sees you; so I couldn't be sure. Then, having read the book, I tried to understand what had led my one-time friend to transform me into an insensitive, patronizing, uncontrolled drag. At the time I did not have the benefit of reading Hemingway's *To Have And Have Not*, which was not written for another eight years so that I lacked the illumination, such as there was, in the following passage: "... an ability to make people like him without ever liking or trusting them in return, while at the same time convincing them warmly and heartily of his friendship; not a disinterested friendship, but a friendship so interested in their success that it automatically made accomplices; and an incapacity for either remorse or pity, had carried him to where he was now." Not that I believe that Hemingway was consciously depicting himself when he wrote this. But I do think that was how Ernest saw our and other friendships ten years later, or perhaps one year later. So many of us rewrite history in the light of later feelings. Even governments. . . . Forty years later, after studying Hem's writing, it seems to me that Mr. A. E. Hotchner's term "persecutory"² is the key to much that happened, not only in Hem's later years, but also to what happened much, much earlier. I shall return to this thought later.

But when *The Sun Also Rises* first appeared, I had no clue to the cause of Hemingway's unnecessary nastiness, or to the bitterness which induced it. It would have been just as easy, or nearly as easy for him to have changed his protagonist's backgrounds as well as their characters. There seemed to be no purpose in making their identity recognizable to everyone acquainted with the seven who had gone to Pamplona. I was not the only one travestied. Duff, the Lady Brett of the story, was given a character that encouraged later commentators to put her down as a repugnant tramp. Duff didn't realize the book would hurt her at the time, and didn't, or at least pretended, not to mind much. This was in part because the Lady Brett described in the novel had redeeming qualities though not always those of the real Duff. Since anything I might say about her would be suspect, let me quote Hadley Hemingway. For Hadley had no reason to like Duff and may have had reasons to dislike her. As Hadley put it to Arnowitz or Hamil, "Duff, she was lovely, a very fine lady, and very much of a man's woman. She was very, very popular and very nice to women too. She was fair and square . . . but she really was a lady and nothing could stop that . . ." (p. 91).

²A. E. Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway* (New York, 1966), p. 275.

And something of what Hadley was trying to convey shows up in the fictive Lady Brett of the novel.

In Hem's mind, Cohn, too, probably had redeeming qualities. For one thing, Cohn was supposed to have been middleweight boxing champion at Princeton. In my opinion Hem never got over his disappointment at not going to college. And he wanted to be champion of everything. So we may reasonably suppose, despite his disclaimer, that he himself would have liked to have been champion of Princeton. Hem had mixed feelings for the Ivy League and the Rich. My guess is that it was his combination of envy, suspicion and admiration for these categories that complicated his relations with Scott Fitzgerald and perhaps myself. It is even possible that Hem believed or hoped that making Cohn middleweight boxing champion of Princeton would take some of the sting out of his offensive characterization.

* * *

In the spring of 1927, I returned to Paris and stayed long enough for the incident which provided Hem's imagination with the basis for the following: He is reported by Hotchner as saying that: "The day after *The Sun Also Rises* was published, I got word that Harold Loeb who was the Robert Cohn of the book, had announced that he would kill me on sight. I sent him a telegram to the effect that I would be here in the Hole in the Wall for three consecutive evenings so he'd have no trouble finding me. As you can see I chose this joint because it is all mirrors. . . . I waited out the three days but Harold didn't show. About a week later, I was eating dinner at Lipp's in Saint Germain, which is also heavily mirrored, when I spotted Harold coming in. I went over and put out my hand and Harold started to shake hands before he remembered we were mortal enemies. He yanked his hand away and put it behind his back" (pp. 48-49).

Actually I never threatened to kill anyone, not even Hemingway, on sight or otherwise. Nor did I get a telegram to meet him at the "Hole in the Wall" or elsewhere. Possibly someone told Hem that I had threatened to kill him. It may have seemed funny. However, it was not the day or the week after the book was published that I met Hem in the restaurant, the episode which probably gave him the idea for his distorted account of what happened, but months later in the spring. I was sitting alone, in what may have been Lipps, — I just don't remember, — reading a newspaper and drinking a pernod. Hem came in and looked at me. He smiled, as I remember it. He did not come nearer but went directly to the bar where he sat down on a stool and ordered a drink. His back was turned and I continued looking at it. I distinctly remember being amazed at the color of his neck. Red gradually suffused it — and then his ears, right up to their tips.

Though mildly diverted, I was not tempted to go to the bar. I wanted nothing more to do with him. After a while, he got up, paid for his drink and walked out. He did not look around.

I saw him once again ten years later. We were in the Stadium at Princeton, walking in opposite directions beneath the seats when we recognized each other at a distance. This time, more or less inadvertently, we both smiled. I felt sad afterwards.

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It was the earlier meeting in the restaurant which supplied the basis for the story about my not "showing".

Hem's motive for this distortion may have been due in part to annoyance at my book, *The Way it Was*, which attempted to recount what actually happened at Pamplona in 1925. I don't expect Hem liked it. And he had the book on his desk, his last secretary tells me, while writing *A Moveable Feast*. At any rate, he told Hotchner that "those days with Lady Duff ruined poor Loeb for the rest of his life" (p. 48). It gave me an odd feeling to read in print that I had been "ruined" some forty years earlier, not an unpleasant feeling, for here I was not feeling ruined at all. I daresay Hem had a similar feeling after reading the obituaries which followed his aeroplane accidents.

Hemingway's belief that I threatened to kill him probably was due, I would guess, to something more deeply felt than annoyance at my book. His recalling the grievance after so long an interval may have been owing in part to irritation at its contents. However, there is a long history of similar delusions going back to his boyhood and culminating in his last illness.

These delusions must have had their source in Hemingway's earliest experiences. At the dawn of memory, Hemingway went through an ordeal from which he may never have recovered. His mother, by a not unusual quirk or fancy, treated him as the twin of his slightly older sister. Marcelline wrote about it in her book. "Mother," she reports, "often told me she had always wanted twins, and that though I was a little over a year older than Ernest (he was born July 21, 1899), she was determined to have us be as much like twins as possible. When we were little, Ernest and I were dressed alike in various outfits, in Oak Park in gingham dresses and in little fluffy lace tucked dresses with picture hats, and in overalls at the summer cottage on Walloon Lake . . . Mother was doing her best to make us feel like twins by having everything alike" (pp. 61-62).

Marcelline included in her book a photograph of Ernest in a girl's dress and hat.

Though Hem, in the years I knew him, did no more than mention Marcelline and his other sisters, and never spoke of having been dressed in girl's clothes, it is my belief that this experience accounts in part for several of his more important characteristics. One day he must have waked up to what was happening to him. Possibly a playmate called him a sissy. Thenceforth he overstressed his masculinity and hardihood. Later, as his talk (to be quoted) with Gertrude Stein suggests, he was obsessed by fear of homosexuality and homosexuals, and the fear of homosexuality is often linked by psychiatrists with paranoia.

There are only a few mentions of his behavior as a child. Marcelline slights his early years though she describes at some length the personalities of their parents. However, in writing of the period, she does drop several hints that her brother was already "playing tough". One summer, for example, he refused to put on shoes. And he chose "the old Brute" as a nickname for himself.

The first hint of a delusion appears as a boy, when, according to Hemingway, his father, "was very strict about shooting only on the wing. He had his spies

around so I never tried to cheat" (Hotchner, p. 179). In his teens, Hem sometimes felt his friends were out to get him. An example is given in *Losen Country*, a novel by John Dos Passos. The author was trying to recapture the life of the young people in and about Horton Bay and Walloon Lake, Michigan, early in the century. The main characters, barely disguised, were Ernest Hemingway, YK, Bill, and Kate Smith to whom Dos Passos was married. Evidently, Dos's information on life up in Michigan was provided largely by Kate, since he did not visit the neighborhood until many years later when the young people had grown up and departed.

It is not a good novel, probably one of Dos Passos' weakest, but it is of interest because of the light it throws on young Ernest Hemingway who is assigned the name George, or Georgie Warner.

Early in the narrative the young people go sailing. Joe, the steersman, swung the boat around to avoid a log, and the boom caught George (Ernest), knocking him overboard. Quickly the steersman reversed direction, and they went back and pulled George out of the water by his shirt, "dripping" as Dos put it, "like a wet dog". Then they disentangled the hooks of his spoon from the seat of his pants. George, scowling, teeth chattering from cold and rage, muttered, "Tried to drown me." Joe said he was sorry and went to get George some dry clothes.

Obviously, Dos Passos' report — if that was his source — of Kate Smith's memories of her summer vacation is not convincing testimony of Ernest's state of mind. Memories are erratic and change with the passage of time. However, Kate, a sweet young woman, had no ax to grind and her portrait, as transcribed by Dos, makes Hem into a sultry, difficult adolescent already in battle with the powers to be.

Despite the relative innocuousness of this description of the young Hemingway during his awkward age, Hem was furious when the book came out and had nothing more to do with Dos Passos although Dos had been one of his boon and respected companions. And when Dos tried to make it up by suggesting a visit, Hem warned him off in a brutal letter.

Marcelline Hemingway's description of her brother supports Kate's picture. She has their mother say, "When Ernest gets through this period . . . of fighting himself and everybody else . . . he will be a fine man" (p. 198). This was in 1919 after his return from the war.

Other examples of Hemingway's early fears may be found in his book, *A Moveable Feast*. He was discussing homosexuality with Gertrude Stein. He reports himself as saying, "I knew it was why you carried a knife and would use it . . . when you were in the company of tramps when you were a boy . . ." And a little further on he adds: "When you were a boy and moved in the company of men, you had to be prepared to kill a man, know how to do it and really know that you would do it in order not to be interfered with" (p. 18).

Did the teenage Hemingway carry a knife? Did he know how to kill? Was he prepared to kill?

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I do not know the answers. My guess — these memories had no basis in fact but were compensatory inventions to mitigate the shame he felt from having in his youth imagined deadly perils, among brutes and perverts, a delusion he finally succumbed to in his old age. Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps Hem actually carried a knife and would have used it. Still, the import is much the same. At the end, his sense of being pursued by imaginary enemies became a conviction.

That Hem, some ten years after the event, if he really had this conversation with Gertrude, and again, some forty years after the event when he was writing his last book, remembered that as a boy "you had to be prepared to kill," may have been, in my opinion, a precursive symptom of the illness which finally overtook him.

A striking example of his trigger-happy distrust of even his most loyal friends comes from a later period, the year 1929, when Hem was 30 years old. Morley Callaghan tells about it in *That Summer in Paris* (pp. 213ff).

Hem and Morley were boxing and Scott Fitzgerald was keeping time. Either because the boxing fascinated him or because he was astonished that Morley was more than holding his own, Scott forgot to call time when the three minute round was up. "Right at the beginning of the round," as Morley tells it, "Ernest got careless; he came in too fast, his left down, and he got smacked on the mouth. His lip began to bleed . . ." He charged Fitzgerald with complicity.

The following event must have happened when Hem was over forty because he had already written *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. He was with his son, probably one of Pauline's sons, since Bumby would have been about twenty years old by then. Edmund Wilson reports that Hem told him in all seriousness that on his recent trip through the Southern States in a car with his young son, he had at one point suddenly become aware that he had entered Mississippi. Realizing he was in Faulkner Country, he let the boy go to bed at the hotel where they spent the night. Then he had sat up till morning with his gun on the table in front of him.

Since this event supposedly occurred in the 1940's before the recent Negro-White tension in Mississippi, the implication is that Hemingway feared that the low characters of Faulkner's fiction, presumably in the pay of or at the instigation of Faulkner, would attack him. But I believe further instances would be redundant. It seems to me that Hemingway during his life tended to imagine offenses where none were intended, a not unusual characteristic, but one which, in his case, grew and intensified until it destroyed his equilibrium.

In 1918, some years before the later examples cited above, Hemingway underwent the disaster which I suspect served to transform the jumbled youth into the dedicated writer, and to confirm the persecutory feelings which eventually wrecked him.

Turned down by the United States Army because of a bad eye, and reluctant to enlist in the Canadian forces where physical requirements were less strict, Ernest Hemingway, in the autumn of 1917 got a job on the *Kansas City Star* with the help of an assist from a family friend and from his uncle, Tyler Hemingway.

In April 1918, a story came over the wire that the American Red Cross wanted volunteers to serve as ambulance drivers on the Italian front. Hem and his friend Brumback — who had already served as ambulance driver on the French front — cabled their applications. By May 12th they were in uniform and shortly afterwards sailed for France whence they entrained for Milan.

Ernest Hemingway, Bill Horne, a classmate of mine with whom he "palled" on the way over, and the other ambulance drivers were rated as honorary lieutenants of the Italian Army, though they continued to wear their American uniforms with a small cross on the collar; no bars.

Dissatisfied by the quietness behind the lines, Hem and Bill Horne volunteered for canteen service at the front. On July 8, 1918, after six days of service, Ernest was distributing chocolate bars in the forward trenches when a shell landed, killing several soldiers and wounding him seriously.

But let me permit Bill Horne to tell about it since he saw Hemingway immediately before and after the event. Bill wrote to me that:

The Austrians made one attempt to break through the Pasubio position into the Po Valley, but couldn't make a go of it — maybe early July, after that our front was very quiet. So when the ARC asked for volunteers to go down to the Piave and run soldiers' canteens for a couple of weeks a number of us volunteered. Among them Ernie. He went to Fossalta, I to the next town, San Pedro Novello. It was at Fossalta that Ernie got hit by that trench mortar shell; then was picked up by the Austrian searchlights and took several big machine gun slugs while carrying a wounded Italian soldier back from the advanced listening post to the front line. For that he got the Silver Valor Medal — next to the highest [first the Gold Medal] decoration a soldier could get.)

They finally found him (quite by accident I understand) and took him to the American Red Cross Hospital in Milan — most of the way across Italy. He was an awfully sick boy, believe me. Full of scaggia (which means metal fragments), a 45 slug under his knee cap.

It was there in that American-run, American-staffed hospital that Ernie (he was 19 years old at the time) met Luz.³ She was the nurse on that part of the floor. I would estimate that she was two to several years older than he, that is *only* a guess. She was an American girl; of South Baltic antecedents, I suppose . . . I rather think I remember she came from Milwaukee, but am not sure of that. Anyhow, she was American, *not* British as Catherine Barkley was. Nor as beautiful — not nearly as beautiful. Just a nice, cheery American woman. And Ernie at that time one of the best looking, big strong men you could want to see.

So they fell in love — very (very much . . . and it lasted almost as long as the war did. Then I think Luz went off to another assignment and fell in love with somebody else. But that is only heresay . . . You can draw your own conclusions from rereading "A Very Short Story".

The impact of trench mortar fragments and machine gun slugs, the bearing of a fatally wounded soldier to the rear while seriously injured himself, and the desertion by Luz, each in its way must have affected Hemingway. The explosion and bullets displaced a kneecap, and put fragments of steel in his leg. For a time afterwards he found it impossible to sleep in the dark, and was harrassed by nightmares. Also the shock brought on the depressions which haunted him on his return to the United States, and recurred in his late years. The rescue of the fatally wounded soldier, which earned him the silver cross, also gave his morale the

³ Not her real name but the name Hem gave her in his story entitled "A Very Short Story."

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greatest boost it was ever to receive. Thereafter he was confident of his courage "in the clutch". Luz's desertion, shook his faith in women.

After putting down this passage and some of what follows, I read *Hemingway, A Reconsideration*, by Philip Young. In his brilliant study, Mr. Young finds that the wounding of Hemingway on the Italian front was a traumatic experience which affected his personality. It still seems obvious, according to Mr. Young, "that for Hemingway and the hero alike" — he was referring to Hemingway's fictive heroes, "the explosion at Fossalta was the crux of that life, and the climax to a series of like events which had their start up in Michigan and were to be repeated and imitated in various forms over and over again" (p. 64).

That, I believe, is the gist of Mr. Young's thesis. I do not question its essential validity. But I believe other aspects of experience beside the physical injury, and other life experiences beside the wounding at Fossalta, had as great or greater importance. Possibly Mr. Young would agree with me. Few things are as simple as they seem, which Mr. Young recognizes. Our difference, therefore, comes down to one of emphasis. The wounding at Fossalta may have been the climax of Hemingway's life, but I do not think it was the event most influential in shaping it. This occurred, I suspect, much earlier. By the time Hemingway and I met in the 1920's he was, I am now convinced, already too sick for friendship, and capable of its betrayal. He had developed defenses which blinded me — and I was not the only one to be deceived. And it may well have been that Hemingway himself was so deceived. Nothing in our relationship justified the distortion of the real friend that I was into the Robert Cohn of *The Sun Also Rises*. Without putting each of them into a novel, Hemingway came to distort all his kind friends. Finally, he trusted, it would seem, only Mr. A. E. Hotchner who, in turn, accepted everything that he was told and told everything.

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Planning Committee

February 25, 1991

Dr. James Nagel, Editor
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Department of English
Northeastern University
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Dear Dr. Nagel,

I have your request to reprint "Hemingway's Bitterness" by Harold Loeb from Connecticut Review, October 1967.

This was published before my era, and upon checking the files, I find it unclear whether the copyright is owned by Mr. Loeb's estate or the Connecticut Review. I have set in motion the procedure by which our Board of Trustees grants such permissions, and I don't think you need to anticipate any problem from our end, nor do I believe we will have to charge you a fee.

Nonetheless, I strongly suggest that you check with the literary estate of Harold Loeb in order to be certain that your permission to reprint is ironclad.

I'm sorry I can't make this simpler for you.

Sincerely,

Barry H. Leeds

Barry H. Leeds
Editor

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cc: Dr. Thomas A. Porter

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