

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

BY ABRAHAM FLEXNER

AN attempt to discuss seriously the relations of parents and schools encounters at once a certain skepticism about both. While, of course, everybody would prefer that a child should have worthy parents and attend a good school, experience appears to show that one need not despair just because a child has been more or less unfortunate in the choice of its parents or its school. Some of the most foolish parents who ever lived and some of the worst schools ever conducted have failed to wreck the children committed to them by Divine Providence. I happened lately to be reading the *Life of Richard Cobden*. Cobden had unusually bad luck in his parents, and, if possible, even worse luck in his schools. Yet he developed a sweet disposition, noble purpose, and acute intellect. Sometimes — so unaccountable is human nature — it would appear that schools and parents work by contraries — in other words that a combination of poor schools and incompetent parents may provoke a child to show how easily and completely he can transcend both.

These are, however, probably only exceptions. For, though some capable and gifted individuals fortunately defy both origin and environment, the sound development of most children depends on both. Thus neither parents nor schools can be lightly regarded; and there is a marked tendency to take both more and more seriously. Being a parent used to be one of the most simple, natural and inevitable developments in the world. People used to grow up,

marry, and raise families, — they still do back in the country, — and society was content if parents could clothe, feed, and exercise a general supervision over their offspring. But nowadays one has no business to be married and have children unless, sleeping and waking, one is conscious of the responsibility. Competent modern parents must supervise the feeding, housing, and playing of their children on terms which, if applied a generation ago, would have brought the reproduction of the human race to a dead standstill. And now, responsive to the same forces, competent modern parents must supervise schooling. The schoolmaster is no longer to pursue his own sweet way. Parents are going to inspect him, as they inspect every other factor in the child's life. Modern parenthood has thus become an exacting full-time vocation — that is, persons who enter the profession have no time for other occupations, except the suffrage, and they cut themselves off from all other forms of remunerative and enjoyable activity.

A young and modern parent — one of the most charming of the new species — wrote to me not long since in reference to a newly contrived lecture course in the following terms: 'The object of these four lectures is to interest parents in modern educational methods, so that they will feel the need of going into the subject for themselves.' That sentence is an ominous one for us schoolmasters. Parents are going into the thing for themselves. Precisely as they do not permit their children to eat as they

please, or to play as they please, so they are not going to let teachers teach as they please.

Intimate contact between parents and schools is likely to have important consequences; but, in the first instance, a certain amount of discomfort is apt to result from the lack of an agreed formula regulating their relations. It is understood that parents and schools should cooperate in solving their common problem; but how far they are to defer unquestioningly to each other, or just where they should exercise a separate authority, is not obvious. If parents are indifferent, the schools suffer from loss of contact; if parents are meddling, the schools lose in authority and continuity. Is there no way out of these apparent inconsistencies? To tell parents that they must participate and in the next breath to depict the dangers of participation is not very illuminating or helpful. What then may a well-meaning, conscientious parent safely do, so as to meet the demands of her conscience, and her obligation to the profession, without upsetting the apple-cart?

I

Before proceeding to wrestle with this question, I wish to emphasize two points. In the first place, I shall take for granted that in all that concerns school habits it is the duty of parents to comply conscientiously and vigorously with whatever the school demands. Of course, children must be on hand promptly in the morning, having had long and refreshing sleep; of course, they must not ask to be excused to go to Florida or the horse show. Obedience and regularity are just as important as they are obvious — important to the school, because otherwise there can be no continuity of effort; important to the child, because in this way the child gets into the way of being or-

derly and conscientious. If I make no further allusion to this subject, it is not because I think it unimportant, but rather because I think it so important that our discussion cannot proceed at all unless it is taken for granted.

The second point bears very closely on my entire argument. I am going to try to tell parents how they may legitimately influence technical school procedure. It may fairly be inferred from this that I am not very happy about education, and, in order to be quite frank, I shall confess in advance that I have grave doubts — very, very grave doubts — as to the soundness or value of a very large part of our school procedure. These doubts have not risen lightly; they represent the outcome of some twenty-five years spent in teaching, in observation of teaching, and in efforts to find out what teaching accomplishes. Now, at the same time that I avow in advance my conviction of the futility, wastefulness, and unwisdom of much of our education, I wish with all possible emphasis to declare that teachers and only teachers can effect the necessary improvements. Running a school or a class is a technical or expert job. It cannot as a rule be done by an untrained person; and untrained people, seeking to break in, are likely to do more harm than good. The school situation, indeed, resembles the situation in medicine fifty years ago. The practice of medicine at that time was atrocious; but it had to be improved, and it was improved by doctors, not by laymen. I shall not spare the schools; but schools must be improved by schoolmen — and they will be.

We have then reached this point. Intelligent parents wish to have a say in the education of their children. But schools must be conducted by trained persons. The training of these persons is, however, largely antiquated. Are we not deadlocked?

I think not. Parents cannot tell teachers what to do or how to do it. But what they can do is to ask questions. They can, like the man from Missouri, require 'to be shown.' At first blush, this may not look like very much. But if my readers will bear with me for a moment, perhaps they will see that the right and the duty of asking 'to be shown,' of asking persistently and continuously 'Why?' 'Why?' gives parents all the leverage they need or can use in making over the education of their children.

Our schools could not be perfect. I won't even stop to argue that they can all at a bound make themselves much better than they are. Parents cannot possibly make many practicable suggestions by way of improving them. But just because we all know so little, just because schoolmasters are so hampered by tradition and organization, just because parents are so helpless in making practicable suggestions, for these very reasons the complacent following of traditions is the most inexcusable of attitudes. The schools which are now too conventional, too complacent, too free from deep-seated and unhappy doubts, should be tentative, inquiring, investigating, skeptical in their point of view. They will be assisted in becoming tentative, inquiring, skeptical, and experimental if parents will, year after year, make them tell *why*, make them show *why*. For when people are called on to show why, they begin to look into what they are doing, and out of this critical scrutiny will come doubt, invention, and finally something living in place of something long since dead.

Most teachers do not really know *why* they teach this or that subject; nor, given the subject, do they really know why they teach it in this or that way, at this or that time. In this respect, they are like most other people, who

do not think things through. But as teachers have a large creative opportunity, it is fair to expect them to deal thoughtfully and resourcefully with their problem; just as, for example, it is fair to expect the same of a physician.

The Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota, is suggestive in this connection. To the Mayo Clinic, in that remote little village, scores of patients, accompanied by friends or relatives, resort daily from all parts of this country and from other countries, for medical and surgical advice. The medical and surgical examinations are made with all possible thoroughness, after which the physician or surgeon takes the time to explain to the relative or friend in attendance just what the doctors think is wrong, and why they think so, and what they propose to do about it. Suppose an operation is performed. The relatives, if willing, are taken into the pathologists' laboratory, where the tissues are examined, and no pains are spared to make them understand the significance of what they see. In case of death, a post mortem is almost invariably conducted and the same procedure is followed, if possible. These excellent physicians and surgeons thus regard it as part of their duty to show not only 'what' but 'why.' They do it in part to satisfy the patient's family; but partly too because it is good discipline for the doctors and surgeons themselves. For when a surgeon knows that he must explain why, he is bound to observe and to think more clearly. So, in the long run, the Mayos and their staff have been made more observant, more resourceful, more thorough, because they knew they would have to explain whatever they do.

If laymen can thus after a fashion be led to understand pathology and surgery, should not parents be able to understand why their children must do this or that in school?

Take, for example, the study of Latin. I do not think it would be well for a mother to say, 'I believe in Latin' or 'I do not believe in Latin,' for, if she did, she would perhaps be assuming just as unintelligent an attitude as is assumed by some teachers of the subject. But nevertheless she must question the study of Latin; she must insist on being shown. She should say to the school principal and the Latin teacher, 'Of course, I am quite eager to have John or Sally study Latin, if it is best. But won't you please tell me why?' Only one or two answers are likely to be given. Let us assume that the principal or the Latin teacher avers that children study Latin because of the mental discipline that it affords. Now 'mental discipline' is a very impressive phrase. We have all been silenced by less ponderous artillery. Still, if a mother is resolved to be shown, she must stand her ground. I figure her therefore as saying quite imperturbably, 'Mental discipline? What evidence is there that the study of Latin gives mental discipline?' And she might go on to say, perhaps, 'My brothers studied Latin as boys; my husband did, too. Are they mentally disciplined? Is John or Sally going to get the same kind of mental discipline that my brothers and my husband display? And if my brothers and my husband are not mentally disciplined, why are n't they — for they studied Latin?' And then she might call to mind some of her friends' children, — one always has opinions about the mental and moral discipline of the children of one's friends, — and she might ask to what extent Latin is contributing to the peculiar brand of mental and moral discipline which they exemplify.

The subject is not yet exhausted. We all know people who have not studied Latin. Are they or are they not mentally disciplined? Is Mr. James J. Hill mentally disciplined? If so, he received

his mental discipline through something else than Latin. It would be worth asking the Latin teacher therefore whether he has ever considered the possibility or feasibility of an alternative to Latin as a mental discipline — whether there are any ways of getting mental discipline except through Latin; and if so, what they are? Are there conceivable or imaginable or, as in Mr. Hill's case, actual ways of disciplining the mind that are — shall we say — less slow, less uncertain, to some persons at least less repugnant, than Latin? Is it possible to get any mental discipline through subjects that have also other uses or advantages? How does the teacher know whether there is or not? Did he ever try?

Intelligent mothers might also ask this question: who gets the most discipline from Latin — the child who works hard and never really succeeds, or the child to whom it comes easy, so that he never has to work hard at all? And, by the way, how do bright children get any mental discipline anyhow? for if things come easy, is n't the disciplinary exercise slight?

The other conceivable answer to the question 'Why?' in reference to the study of Latin is culture. Let us see. Boys and girls read six books of Virgil as a cultural exercise. How many are at the close of the process cultivated enough to read the remaining six for themselves? What other Latin authors do they read when relieved of compulsion — or deprived of 'ponies'? Or has the study of Latin refined and improved their English taste? What books do they read? What musical shows do they frequent? Would the literary quality of undergraduate journalism be worse if the editors had not studied Latin? The cultural argument had better not be pressed; 'mental discipline' is safer!

All parents can ask questions. They

can ask them about Latin, about algebra, about plane geometry, about grammar, about home work. And if parents demanded, not that the schools modify their practices or their programmes in any particular way, but merely that every principal and teacher should be able to tell *why*, the curriculum would get an amount of critical scrutiny from teachers such as it is not now getting and never has got. For the truth is that our more or less monastic course of study has survived, in part at least, because it has become a fetich, because successive generations have gone on teaching it, without looking for specific results.

II

This procedure will in time have this effect; it will put an end in education to the age of faith; it will usher in an age of inquiry, reason, or demonstration. Changes like this have already taken place in other domains. It is not only in education that men have been chained to a routine, never critically examined or only superficially examined. Doctors once practiced blood-letting for precisely the same reasons that teachers still teach cube root in arithmetic—namely, that others had done it before. In the South—perhaps too in the East—mothers used to give successive generations of children every spring a nauseous dose of molasses and sulphur. They said it ‘purified the blood.’ The words—‘purified the blood’—were regarded by these mothers as an argument not open to question. Would any one have the effrontery to deny the importance of pure blood? Could any one prove that this mixture did n’t purify the blood? But ultimately science insisted on going behind the words. It soon showed that people who spoke of ‘purifying the blood’ had no clear conception of what they meant; also that a mixture of sul-

phur and molasses might upset the stomach, distort the child’s countenance, and agitate his œsophagus, but that it did nothing to his blood. ‘Mental discipline’ has, as a phrase, had the same effect as ‘purifying the blood,’ and has now to be brought to book.

All proposed reforms have the same experience. They are in the first instance halted by hoary phrases. Legal reforms, political reforms, theological reforms, and educational reforms, all alike make no headway until they challenge certain words and phrases, and succeed in showing that these words and phrases do not embody ideas, but are mere make-believe. The phrase ‘mental discipline’ belongs in this ill-omened category. The facts are probably as follows. Anything one studies represents a positive acquisition in a special kind of knowledge, habit, and skill; and the child who has learned a particular thing can learn other things of the same kind somewhat more readily in consequence. For reasons that need not be discussed here, it seems not improbable that the learning process has to a slight extent general as well as special consequences, so that any kind of education may be better than none at all. Therefore if a child learns some Chinese, he can undoubtedly acquire more Chinese with a reduced expenditure of energy. To some extent also the learning of Chinese may help him to learn other things. If, however, the doctrine of mental discipline as formerly held be sound, the mind can be so trained by the study of Latin and geometry that power acquired through the study of Latin and geometry will be effective in any other study or emergency that the child may subsequently encounter. Now, it is perfectly fair to say that at this time psychologists no longer hold the doctrine of mental discipline in this form. And, indeed, it is extremely fortunate for most children

that mental discipline does not 'carry over' in the way that teachers of Latin and algebra are prone to believe. For, if it did, most children would carry over from Latin and algebra, not good habits, but bad habits. For most students of Latin and algebra as a rule fail to learn those subjects; they fail even to make systematic efforts to acquire them. On the contrary, they fumble and stagger and guess all the way through. If, then, pupils should transfer from the study of Latin and geometry to their other activities the methods pursued in studying Latin and geometry, only in very few instances indeed would this prove to be a matter for congratulation.

If one does not study things because they 'train the mind,' why, then, should one study them? The answer is extraordinarily simple: one studies things because they *serve a purpose*. I do not say, mark you, a *useful* purpose, but a purpose — a valid purpose, a genuine purpose, not a make-believe purpose. Mental discipline is not a valid or genuine purpose — it is a make-believe. Meanwhile the number of purposes, of genuine, valid purposes, is simply infinite. Learning to read Virgil is, of course, just as valid a purpose as learning to play a symphony, or to bake a pumpkin pie. The test is, however, not, did the student get mental discipline? but, can he read and enjoy Virgil? can he play the symphony? will some one eat the pie? And because people rarely care to read Virgil, because almost none of the thousands who study Latin ever can or do read Virgil, therefore, in so far as they are concerned, studying Latin has no purpose. So again, schools must teach arithmetic in so far as it serves a purpose, and just so much as that purpose requires, and not a jot or tittle more.

There are indications that, when the process of asking why is completed, it

will go hard with some of the time-honored elements of our monastic curriculum. Some years ago, Professor Judd of Chicago summarily lopped a whole year off the elementary school of which he was the head. Nothing happened — except that a year was saved. The children now learn just as much and they learn it just as well as when they had the extra year. Boys and girls who go to college from that school now do on the whole as well as those who had a year more of training. So far as results go — and the results have been studied with scientific care — it is like slicing off the end of an earthworm: the earthworm never finds it out.

One wonders what will happen to formal grammar study in the age of reason the coming of which will be accelerated by asking why. Sometimes it is urged that formal grammar teaches children to write and speak correctly; but as all Americans have studied formal grammar, including newspaper reporters and saleswomen, there would appear to be no guaranty that formal grammar study leads to correct habits of speech. On the other hand, I once knew a school where for fourteen years not a minute was spent on formal grammar, and, like the worm who does not miss a slice or two, no one ever knew the difference. I suspect that formal grammar is in for trouble when parents begin to insist on knowing why.

Arithmetic is another subject sorely needing to be questioned. There is, of course, no doubt that people need to know how to manipulate a few figures and how to calculate simple interest. But how much more do they need to know? Do they need to know how to calculate the cost of plastering and carpeting, for example? And if they do not need to know these things, why are they taught? Does this sort of thing also constitute mental discipline?

Euclid is a gentleman from whom

credentials ought also to be required. He has long held a prominent place in education as a matter of tradition. 'Just why should John or Sally study plane geometry, and indeed how does it come about that they are studying it?' That is a question which cannot be put too plainly to teachers of mathematics. I shall consider for a moment two possible answers: Geometry is useful, you may be told, or geometry affords excellent mental discipline. Geometry is useful. Well, how useful and in what ways? Professor David E. Smith, Professor of the Teaching of Mathematics in Teachers College, tells us, 'Not more than twenty-five per cent of the propositions [in geometry] have any genuine applications outside of geometry.' And a distinguished physicist has assured me that the seventy-five per cent of propositions that are of no use are not even needed to prove the twenty-five per cent that are of some use. The teachers of plane geometry have therefore a very considerable task if they are going to justify the time spent on geometry on the ground that geometry is useful. Nor is their task easier if they take the other horn of the dilemma. Suppose one did get 'mental discipline' from geometry. Is it the sort of mental discipline that life calls for and gives? Geometry as taught is a deductive science; that is, from certain assumptions called axioms and postulates a long series of propositions is developed. If the study of geometry really developed that kind of thinking, whom would it help but lawyers? For practical life calls for a very different type of thinking. In actual life, people observe — or they should observe — and on this basis make a limited inference, which leads to action; if the action taken fails, they observe further, construct other hypotheses, and act again. It is the method of trial and error.

If there is to be any mental discipline, ought it not to be of the type represented by science rather than the type represented by the conventional treatment of geometry? At the very least, therefore, asking why will bring about marked changes in the treatment of elementary and secondary-school mathematics.

Parents may also find it worth while 'to be shown' in the matter of home work. A good many experiments have been made as to the comparative merits of having or omitting home work, with a general consensus of opinion unfavorable to home work for less mature children. Supervised study in school appears to save time and energy and also to improve results. I do not urge parents to forbid home work, for I am, as I have said, opposed to direct interference by parents. But I think they should require teachers to explain why the fumbling efforts of little boys and girls at home are supposed to be good for them. I think, too, they may fairly expect teachers to know what has been accomplished without home work, and to explain why, notwithstanding, they adhere to the routine way, if adhere they do.

It is not necessary to labor the point further. I have tried to show that education, whether sound or unsound, is based on assumptions that ought nowadays to be questioned, and that the chief use of a parent in the matter of education is to ask questions that compel teachers to take up a critical attitude toward the tasks they impose. As soon as that attitude prevails, a school will resemble a clinic, and the teacher, like the physician, will look for the specific results of her work in the bearing and development of the individual child. What do parents care whether, generally speaking, Latin does or does not give mental discipline? The one question for them is this: What is Latin

doing for my boy or girl? If a favorable effect cannot be demonstrated, how are they helped by the complacent assurance that, generally speaking, Latin is a grand thing for mental discipline, and has been ever since the fall of Rome — if Rome really ever fell!

Perhaps I can make this point even clearer by an illustration. Modern mothers all know something from experience about the feeding of children. All normal children nowadays present special problems in the matter of diet. And many parents in these emergencies have consulted, let us say, Dr. Holt. We can imagine Dr. Holt, after examining a child, asking, 'Do you give him milk?' 'Alas,' says the mother, 'he does n't assimilate milk.' 'Well,' asks Dr. Holt, 'do you give him eggs?' 'Alas,' says the mother, 'eggs are poison to him.' Does Dr. Holt then say: 'Milk and eggs are the staple food of childhood; if your child can't digest milk and eggs, then a world created on the theory that they are good for children is no place for your darling?'

This answer would be precisely in line with the contention of the schools that Latin is good mental discipline. Whether it is or not, is a question to be settled afresh in every individual case, and it is a question to be settled by objective proofs. Milk and eggs are good for children if children grow fat on them; Latin is good if children thrive mentally on it. If a child does not thrive on milk and eggs, it is the doctor's problem to discover something that he will thrive on — bananas, for example. If boys and girls do not develop in love of learning and keenness of intellect on Latin, then the school, instead of folding its arms and calling them failures, must find out what will develop them. When schools take this attitude, they will be clinics — clinics where children are observed, and where indications of failure will be regarded in the first instance as

impeaching the school rather than the child or his parents; clinics where all the resources of modern knowledge and all varieties of modern activity and experience will be utilized in the effort to save children whom educational blood-letting, or educational molasses and sulphur, will kill.

To the properly conducted school, then, every child is a problem, an individual problem, just as he is to the physician. And just as there are children whom the family physician cannot treat, so there are children whom the ordinary school cannot teach — defective and abnormal children who require such special treatment that special measures must be instituted for their benefit. But the common run of school failures represents, not the defect of the children, but the resourcelessness of the schools. Children fail in Latin: this may mean that, instead of studying Latin at home, they should have had supervised study at school; or it may mean that it is a waste of time for them to study Latin. Perhaps they ought to have been promoted in order to be able to study something else. This is what Mr. Spaulding did when superintendent of the Newton schools, and with marked success. Or, finally, a child may fail in Latin — I am assuming, you see, that it may be well for some children to study Latin — because the monotony of the school course depresses all his energies below the level at which he can succeed at anything.

The monotony of the school course! One could discourse almost endlessly on that theme. President Eliot has characterized the conventional school course as essentially monastic, as mainly a thing of words and symbols. Meanwhile, the world is full of objects, interests, problems, and our children abound in energy, spirit and desire! In *such* a world with *such* children, does it not stand to reason that an education in

words and symbols ought to be made to justify itself? Our children are granted annually a four months' vacation: how often does it happen that the spontaneous activities of the long vacation reflect and continue activities set up or developed at school? Typical is the case of a very capable boy who worked out for himself the mechanism of wireless telegraphy and had constructed a working wireless apparatus. Though he had taken high rank at school, there was no place in the school curriculum for his main interest. At school, he was getting *mental discipline* through the commonly accepted studies — and nothing else. Meanwhile other children, less surely and effectively led by their own bent and capacity, spend a four months' vacation idly and aimlessly, because the schools, instead of organizing their normal interests, belabor them excessively with mere words and mere symbols.

Teachers may concede some force to what I am saying and still refuse to be held responsible. They may say, 'This is all very well. But what can I do about it? The school has a curriculum — I don't know whether the monks made it or not; all I know is that I didn't. I was taken in to do this or that. If I don't do it — some other person in my place will.' And the principal may say, 'What you are saying is, to be sure, an exaggeration, but it is not altogether without an element of truth. Still what can we do about it? The children must go to college. And

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the colleges insist on Latin and all the rest of it.'

This explanation is somewhat beside the mark. I should not primarily blame schools for teaching any particular subject if, while doing what they are forced to do, teachers and principals were actively engaged in studying the results of their efforts and exhibiting them to the world. How many teachers of Latin and mathematics ever raise the question: What evidence is there that John or Sally gets any mental discipline from Caesar or algebra? 'The colleges have no business to run the secondary schools.' How many headmasters plainly tell them so?

Fortunately, teachers who desire to view their problems and activities in a scientific light need no longer suffer from loneliness. There is no dearth of men and women who are subjecting to analysis first this aspect and then that aspect of school work. And experiments are in progress, devised to ascertain and to test results. As this attitude of mind has come to prevail in medicine, so it must come to prevail in education. Mothers and fathers can hasten it if they will refuse to take anything for granted; if they will refuse to be overawed by tradition or large question-begging phrases; if they will refuse to allow their questions to be side-stepped. They have a right 'to be shown,' and there is something the matter if a school principal or a school-teacher cannot convince them that there is a good reason 'why.'

ELLEN FORTH AND THE PAINTER BOY

BY WILLIAM JOHN HOPKINS

I

I WAS running for harbor under close-reefed mainsail and the remnant of my jib, before a roaring southerly gale. I had known that something was coming, of course, before I started on my night run, but I had not expected that it would come so soon or that there would be so much of it. That was one of the times when I was fooled. I have been fooled many times, and shall be many more, but I am not often fooled by the weather. And I was behind time, and thought I would make up a little. I did.

It came on to blow hard about eleven o'clock, when the hospitable harbor which I had left was well astern, and a most inhospitable shore stretched for miles and miles; and I reefed down under difficulties, for I was alone, and it was so dark that I could scarcely make out the reef-points, and my jib split from top to bottom. I managed to tie down the jib somehow. I have no clear recollection of the further events of that night. It is all a nightmare of wind, and more wind, and lashing rain, and great seas which came at me out of the darkness fiercely, as if they would devour me. But I knew they would not. I knew my boat. There is every comfort in knowing your boat.

Morning dawned at last. I shall never forget that morning. I seemed to be alone in the middle of the Atlantic, which was but a mass of spume and spray and roaring seas. The wind came in fierce gusts, and each fresh gust, fiercer than the last, came howling and

whistling and singing over the water, driving before it the spray from the tops of the waves. There was a mist of spray for six feet or so above the surface of the water, and it stung where it struck, and obscured my vision. I could not tell whether it was raining or not; but the dark clouds overhead were rolling and twisting and writhing just out of reach, and the driving scud seemed as low as my masthead. My mast is not very tall. Hours passed, and I caught a glimpse, through the spray, of a heavily-laden coaster under very short sail, and then of land, and I knew where I was. There was a little haven which I would run for. Haven! It seemed like Heaven, the very sound of it.

So I was roaring in for harbor under a close-reefed mainsail and the remnant of my jib, before a southerly gale. I was wet through and cold and sleepy and hungry and almost worn out. Everything aboard the boat was wet. I had breakfasted on a few soggy pilot biscuits, for I could not leave the wheel to cook anything, even if I had wanted to cook. I had few desires left, and the desire to cook was probably the least of them. I had had my fill of cooking. I would not cook another meal if I had to live on ready-cooked canned things for the rest of my life. I had rather starve. As I stood dripping at the wheel and listened and waited for each fresh gust to come roaring and whistling and singing over the water, it seemed to me that it would be easy to starve. One would have nothing to do but to do nothing. And then that roar-