

The Luncheon (A short story)
By - S. Maugham

The Luncheon is one of the nice stories written by S. Maugham. This is a plotless story, full of humour. This is a significant story for its art of characterization. There are only two characters in the story around whom the story revolves. The writer presents the two characters at a particular place against a particular set of circumstances. Both the characters remain unproved, and the narrator of the story happens to be the hero of the story. He talks about a lady who is in fact the heroine of the story. The narrator sees her inside a theatre and she requests him to go with her. But the narrator fails to recognize her. She reminds him that twenty years ago he had arranged for her a luncheon.

The narrator was then a young writer. He had written a book which the lady had gone through and written a letter of admiration to him. In reply, she was thanked too. She proposed for a luncheon at Foyot's which the narrator could not turn down, though at that time he had little income. It may be possible that he might be expecting that the lady would excite passion and love in him.

As the two met for a luncheon at the Foyot's, the real character of the lady appears. She imposes of heavy built and slightly deformed which makes the narrator disappointed. The worst thing about her is that she is very talkative and makes several excuses for eating more and more. At the outset, she says that she does not take anything at luncheon, but when the host requests her, she expresses her desire to have a dish of salmon. While it is being cooked, she wishes to get a dish of caviare. On the other hand, the poor narrator orders for the cheapest mutton chop for himself. She rebuked him mildly that he would destroy his stomach by overloading it with heavy things like a chop. She advises him to follow her and take only one thing at a time.

Then comes the question of drinks, she plays the same trick and says that she would not take anything presently, the narrator dithers her as well. But she

OF STUDIES (EXTRAVAGANCES)

① For expert men that are learned.

These lines have been extracted from Bacon's essay, 'OF Studies'. In these lines the essayist dwells on the superiority of the learned over the specialists. The specialist's range is limited. They specialise in certain performances which they can accomplish and even judge very well. They have not the large perspective of the learned. The well read men have the vast knowledge. Therefore, they are the most competent in planning and managing an affair as a whole. They can very well lay down broad rules and procedures of work. Again, general advice and guidance come best from them. The experts can only be entrusted with the execution of these plans within the framework chalked out by the learned.

The essayist is speaking from his own experience. Naturally, his words carry conviction. The lines are packed with thoughts and meanings that need elaboration.

② To spend too much of a scholar.

In these lines, extracted from OF Studies Bacon warns the readers against the misuse of studies arising out of excesses. The three advantages of studies turn into disadvantages when reading is pushed to an excessive limit. It is good to read for pleasure and recreation in leisure hours. But to keep on reading day and night is sheer idleness, because it involves negligence of works and duties that a man has to do. So reading should not be allowed to develop into a mania. It is also not good to read too much to improve one's language and adorn one's style of speech. The foolish scholars shut the eyes of commonsense and see only through the books.

The essayist means to say that we should take help from our knowledge gained from books, but at the same time we should also exercise our brain and apply our wisdom which alone teaches us the correct use of studies. Otherwise, we shall be quite impractical.

The Eve of St. Agnes

Explanation

① Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far
..... St. Agnes' moon hath set. (Stanza-36)

These lines are extracted from Keats' impassioned love poem, ~~from the poem~~ The Eve of St. Agnes. Madeline and Porphyro were in deep love with each other. Since they belong to two breading families, the love affairs met with hostility. Their possible marriage was disapproved by both the towns. On St. Agnes' Eve, Madeline was dreaming of Porphyro. She complained that Porphyro was pure and clear in the dream but now he was changed into a gloomy and pale person. She confessed her ardent love for him. On hearing this unmistakable confession of love from Madeline, Porphyro became very happy.

Here Keats describes the reaction of Porphyro to Madeline's confession of love for him. His joy at this moment was more intense than ever felt by a man. He was extremely happy to hear the confession of love for him. His joy at this moment was moved with passion. Now he was on his feet like a divine figure trembling with emotion and blushing all over. He looked like a twinkling shining in the deep blue calm sky. The actual Porphyro was transformed into the ideal or visionary Porphyro. In the meanwhile the storm was raging outside and the gusts of frosty wind were striking the window panes with hail and rain.

This stanza indicates a change in the pattern of the love story, for the lovers are now urged to utilise the opportunity to escape from the dangerous place of Madeline's family.