# Brrons 1100 W30

## W21

### LOCKED IN AN IVORY EDIFICE\*

Prince Siddhartha Gautama was the scion of a family of warrior kings in northern India. He was being indoctrinated for the time when he would assume his father’s throne. Growing up in an atmosphere of opulence, the young prince was constantly shielded from the cruel realities of the world. An army of obsequious servants and tutors catered to his every desire, providing Siddhartha with instruction in riding, fencing, dancing, and painting—while lavishing fulsome praise upon him. It wasn’t until the prince was thirty that he took the first step that led to his becoming the Buddha, one of the world’s greatest spiritual leaders.

### SIDDHARTHA’S EYES ARE OPENED

One day, Prince Siddhartha expressed the desire to leave his lush surroundings and ride out among his people. He was profoundly shaken by the misery, destitution, disease, and excruciating\* pain with which his people were constantly afflicted.\* Retiring to his room to ponder over what he had seen, he remained there for several days, deaf to the supplication of those who pleaded with him to come forth. It seemed to Siddhartha that his life had been redolent\* with decadence, and he was determined to make amends.

### THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

Siddhartha exchanged his sumptuous\* garments for a monk’s yellow robe and went out into the world to do penance for what he considered to be his previous life of sin. First he would cleanse himself by becoming an ascetic; then he would study Hindu wisdom in order to be prepared to help his suffering people. After six years of desultory wandering and attracting only a handful of disciples, Siddhartha came to a huge tree near the Indian city of Gaya. For seven weeks he sat beneath its branches, seeking an answer for his personal torment. Finally, it is said, he underwent a metamorphosis, becoming the Enlightened One—the Buddha.

### LOVE OVER HATRED, GOODNESS OVER EVIL

Buddha outlined the three paths that men might travel: worldly pleasure, self-torment, and the middle path. Only through the middle path could man achieve bona fide peace and salvation. One had to repudiate\* materialism, keep his self-control, restrict speech, be open-minded, never lie or steal, reject selfish drives, nurture goodness, etc. Buddha continued to preach until the age of eighty, spreading the philosophy that man has the power to shape his own destiny. Through good deeds and pure thoughts man may reach nirvana. Interestingly enough, the man who objected to traditional religious worship was to become idolized by millions throughout the world.

## W22

### FEMALE ALCOHOLICS

When we juxtapose the words “woman” and “alcoholic” many readers are surprised. However, the plight of America’s several million female alcoholics is rapidly increasing in intensity. But the statistics are inexact because it is estimated that there are nine covert alcoholics for every one under treatment. Women drink to help themselves to cope with life’s vicissitudes.\* Like men, they drink because of financial pressures, incompatibility, frustration,\* and related reasons.

### A PROFILE OF THE WOMAN WHO DRINKS TO EXCESS

The typical alcoholic woman is above average in intelligence, in her forties, married, with two children. She started drinking socially in high school or college. Although frequently incapacitated, she can fabricate a story skillfully and thus conceal her true physical condition. She often attributes her alcoholism to connubial stress, boredom, or depression. A large percentage of the women give family histories of alcoholism. Most female drinkers would demur at the appellation of “alcoholic”—and that makes their treatment all the more difficult.

IMPORTANT NOTE: How good a detective are you? Did you spot one of the new words that had been introduced earlier? (fabricate) It should be part of your vocabulary now. From time to time in the lessons that follow, your alertness will be tested as a previously learned word is reintroduced.

### NEFARIOUS\* EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

Aside from the causes offered earlier, doctors have other interesting reasons for the escalation in female drinking. They also indict\* social acceptance and indifference to alcohol’s potential danger as contributory factors. If women realized the harmful extent of the cumulative effect of alcohol, they might taper off in their public and recondite drinking. Forty-three percent of the female alcoholics in a survey showed evidence of liver damage, and a quarter of the whole group had a high white blood cell count. Almost five percent of the patients died shortly after their release from the hospital.

### DANGER SIGNALS

A potential\* female alcoholic should be cognizant\* of certain danger signals:

1. Using alcohol in an attempt to palliate her problems.
2. Deluding herself about the extent of her drinking habits.
3. Drinking at regular time periods, both day and night.
4. Reliance upon alcohol as a prelude to a major social obligation.
5. Making unrealistic promises about terminating\* her drinking.
6. Using alcohol as a medication for real or chimerical illnesses.

If in evaluating\* her drinking, a woman acknowledges that several of the danger signals apply to her, she should see a physician.

## W23

### FROM A TO Z

Ellis Sloane, a teacher of science at a large metropolitan high school, first paid little attention to the fact that his two biology classes were so disparate\* in their performance. In most schools the classes are alphabetically heterogeneous, with youngsters’ names running the gamut from Adams to Zilch. But Biology 121 had only A’s and B’s, whereas Biology 128 had T’s, V’s, W’s, Y’s, and Z’s. Mr. Sloane, a perspicacious teacher, began to perceive\* differences between the two groups: while their reading scores and I.Q.’s were roughly analogous, it was apparent that Biology 128 was replete\* with maladjusted students, while Biology 121 had the normal ones.

### WHAT’S IN A NAME?

As Mr. Sloane pursued his investigation of the phenomenon, he discovered that a Dr. Trevor Weston of the British Medical Association had corroborated\* his findings. Dr. Weston had studied British mortality rates over a decade, finding that people whose names began with letters ranging from “S” to “Z” had a life expectancy that averaged twelve years fewer than the rest of the population. Furthermore, those at the bottom of the alphabet tended to contract more ulcers, were more susceptible to heart attacks, and were more likely to be neurotic than those at the top of the alphabet.

### THE PERILS OF THE ALPHABET

Dr. Weston is convinced that the pedagogue is the culprit.\* Since teachers seat their pupils in alphabetical order, the “S” to “Z” child is usually the last to receive his test marks, the last to eat lunch, the last to be dismissed, and so on. As they are the last to recite, these youngsters feel frustrated\* because what they had to say had usually been enunciated earlier. The inordinate amount of waiting that this group has to do causes them to become irascible and jittery. Some “S” to “Z” people also may become quite introspective, convinced that they are inferior to those at the top of the alphabet.

### IN THE NATURE OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Mr. Sloane did not want to perpetuate the disorders that stemmed from the alphabetical arrangement. Not only did he reverse the seating in his other classes, but he began to badger\* the school’s administration for a mandate to bring about such changes throughout the building. He called it a compensatory factor to neutralize the catastrophic effects of the traditional policy. Soon, Mr. Sloane earned the appellation\* of “Mr. Backwards.”

## W24

### PRIMITIVE MAGIC

In the course of their studies of other cultures, anthropologists have reported numerous customs and practices that seem bizarre to the average American. Some indigenous\* people believe that certain inanimate objects have a will of their own and possess magical powers. These fetishes may be simple things like a particular feather of a bird or a unique pebble. The fetish might have derived its power, according to some peoples, from a god who lives within the object and has changed it into a thing of magic. Fetishes need not only be natural objects, however. An artifact such as a sculpture or carving may also be believed to possess supernatural powers.

### FORBIDDEN

An outgrowth of the idea of a fetish\* is the closely related practice of taboo. Whereas the gods or supernatural powers merely inhabit an object that is a fetish and lend it magic, they will punish the imprudent native who violates their prohibition of an act or use of an object or word that has become a taboo. If a taboo has been broken, it becomes imperative for the offender to be punished. In many cases, however, the taint on the community may be removed after the priests have performed a special ceremony. Often, the violator of the taboo will be punished or die merely through his own fears of the terrible thing he has done.

### AN ABSURDITY

Although it is probably universal human behavior to be contemptuous of the bizarre\* superstitions practiced by inhabitants of unfamiliar cultures, it seems to be somewhat imprudent\* to laugh at others before one takes a good, hard look at the absurd taboos\* and fetishes\* one accepts as part of one’s own everyday life. For example, why do people fear a black cat crossing their paths? Why do we acknowledge\* a rabbit’s foot as good luck? Is it logical to believe that crosses or garlic will ward off abhorrent (although fictional) vampires? And why are some buildings built without an “unlucky” 13th floor? These may seem to be foolish superstitions, but what harm do they really do?

### GESUNDHEIT!

During the Middle Ages most people believed that the devil could enter our bodies when we sneezed, because at that propitious\* moment we left our bodies vulnerable. However, this catastrophic\* event could be avoided if another person immediately made an entreaty to God. This was how the practice began of saying “God bless you” after someone sneezes. Although the tradition continues today, few people are aware of its history. A superstition\* originates in ignorance when people are unsure of the causes of events. But it remains inviolable over the years because it usually represents our deepest fears.

## W25

### THE EXPLOSION OF KRAKATOA

There are few sights that are more impressive and awesome than the eruption of an active volcano. There are few natural events that so singularly\* dwarf man’s puny attempts to control his environment. Perhaps the greatest volcanic eruption of modern times took place in 1883 when the island of Krakatoa in Indonesia blew up as the result of a volcanic explosion. An enormous tidal wave resulted that proved catastrophic\* to the nearby coasts of Java and Sumatra. New islands were formed by the lava that poured out, and debris was scattered across the Indian Ocean for hundreds of miles. Volcanic material, dispersed seventeen miles into the atmosphere, created startlingly beautiful sunsets for years afterwards.

### A UNIVERSAL\* DANGER

Man’s ability to obliterate life on this planet has increased at a rapid rate. We are now faced with the deplorable prospect of new weapons that can cause destruction of life and property on a scale far beyond our imagination. No matter who takes the first step to initiate a conflict, the possibility exists that the conflagration will spread and envelop the world. Much thought has been given to ways and means of preventing this catastrophe.\* Some consider it mandatory\* that the nuclear powers seek agreement on methods of limiting and controlling these weapons, for in the absence of such an agreement, we may rue the day atomic energy was made practical.

### TAKEN FOR GRANTED

The presence of an ever-flowing supply of fresh, clean water is taken for granted. Unfortunately, this congenial condition is fast disappearing. As our population increases, as industry consumes more water each year, the level of our underground water supply sinks measurably. There is no way to hoard water; there are many ways to conserve it. During a particularly dry spell, New York City found its reservoirs going dry. Only then did the residents begin to heed the sage advice to limit the wasteful uses of water. Under the aegis of the Water Commissioner, citizens were encouraged to develop habits that would save water. The continued imprudent\* waste by each of us of this most basic resource will work to the detriment of all.

### AN AGELESS STORY

Every so often we can read about a man or woman who has reached an age far beyond the limits we ordinarily expect. Reports of a man in Chile or a woman in Turkey who has celebrated the 105th or 110th birthday occur regularly. The natural question is, to what do these people owe their longevity? Frequently, the answer concerns the fact that the ancient one liked to imbibe regularly of some hard liquor. The photograph will show an apparently virile man or robust woman. Somehow, people who reach this advanced age seem to remain eternally sturdy. There are no signs that they have become senile. Smoking a pipe, or sewing on some garment, these rare specimens of hardy humanity are far from the doddering folk we expect to see.

## W26

### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Public opinion has an important place in a democracy. The public, often lethargic, is susceptible\* to a wide variety of influences. The most prevalent of these is the mass media. These communications media—the press, social media, radio, and television—have a paramount position in initiating,\* influencing, and shaping public opinion. Bearing this responsibility, the mass media are often accused of being remiss in their duty to inform the public. There has been a great deal of hostile comment leveled against these opinion molders.

### THE LACK OF FOREIGN NEWS

The critics rebuke the press for the fact that most newspapers devote somewhat less than 10 percent of their news space to foreign items. In many hundreds of papers, this falls below two percent. Why is there this aversion to foreign news? Newsmen claim that readers evince no interest in foreign affairs. In order to increase reader interest in foreign news, the vogue among editors is to sensationalize it to the point of distortion. Many other papers do only the most superficial kind of reporting in this area.

### PLAYING IT SAFE

The average newspaper office receives many times the amount of foreign news than it has space to print. An editor must include or jettison items as she sees fit. It is inevitable that her ideas of what the readers want to know, or should know, are decisive. Because the newspaper owners do not want to endanger a lucrative business, there is the constant tussle between personal opinion and the desire not to offend too many readers or advertisers. It is intrinsic to the operation of all mass media that they avoid being extremist in their news coverage or editorials.

### A FAVORITE NEWS SOURCE

The electronic media—television and radio—have more acute problems than newspapers do when it comes to news reporting. A normal broadcast can cover only a small part of a news day. The object is to transmit the gist of a story without supplying its background. Another difficulty of electronic news broadcasting is its transient nature; the viewers or listeners may miss an important story if their attention wanders. On the other hand, because radio and television present news in a more terse and exciting way, they are accepted as the most cogent presentation of news and are preferred and believed above newspapers by most people.

## W27

### A MUSICAL WORLD

Classical music reached its pinnacle in the nineteenth century. Every leading nation produced its share of great composers. There was a bewildering array of national schools and musical styles as the once obscure musician came into his own. Music became a widespread and democratic art. The ardent music lover turned to Vienna as the music center at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, Paris was not far behind, especially in the field of operatic music. As the century progressed, the Germans became paramount\* in orchestral and symphonic music. The growth of German music can be said to have culminated with Ludwig van Beethoven.

### A GIANT COMPOSER

Beethoven was able to free music from the traditions\* that had tended to constrict it. He was a child prodigy who held an important musical post at the age of 14. He was a successful concert pianist, but when his health began to fail, he turned to composing. Even though bereft of hearing at the age of 49, he did not falter in his work. Some of his later compositions reflect his sadness with his physical condition, but they also evince\* an exultation about man and life.

### A WORTHY SUCCESSOR

A successor to Beethoven was Johannes Brahms. Also a prodigy,\* he was the object of vitriolic attacks by other composers because of the individuality of his work. They heaped invective upon him for the intensely emotional quality and Germanic style of his writings. However, it was impossible to besmirch his talents for long, and he was soon one of the most popular composers in Europe. He produced voluminous varieties of compositions. Today, in retrospect, his originality is appreciated, and he is placed among the top romantic composers.

### GRUFF BUT LIKEABLE

In his private life Brahms was considered by his friends as an egotist. He had an extremely lofty opinion of himself and his talents. He was not noted for his humility. Along with this quality, Brahms was known for his pungent sense of humor. While his closest friends could accept his biting jokes, others found him difficult to warm up to. Brahms was an inveterate stay-at-home. Cambridge University conferred an honorary degree upon him, but he was adamant about staying at home and did not go to receive the honor. Despite the ardent\* and romantic nature of his music, Brahms remained single throughout his life.

## W28

### A DANGEROUS SPORT

Racing car drivers are vulnerable to dangers that other sportsmen seldom face. Drivers agree that controlling a car at top speeds on a winding course is a singularly\* awesome\* experience. There is the bedlam caused by the roaring motors that move the car from a standing start to 100 miles an hour in eight seconds. One is shaken by the cacophony of the brakes, larger than the wheels and producing, during the course of a 350-mile race, enough heat to warm an eight-room house through a hard winter. The driver needs to be on the alert to exploit any mistake by an opponent, and he must be constantly aware of the propinquity of sudden death. All of this makes car racing one of the most demanding games of all.

How was your recall today? Did you spot vulnerable as a reintroduced word?

### THE MYSTERY OF CREATIVITY

In order to create, it is said that a person must be disgruntled. The creative individual is usually one who is dissatisfied with things as they are; he wants to bring something new into the world—to make it a different place. There is no infallible way to identify a potentially creative person. The speed-up in the sciences has forced schools and industry to seek a panacea for the shortages that they face. The need to discover and develop the creative person has been the source of much study. The paramount\* objectives of the research are to eradicate anything that will impede the discovery of creative talent and to exploit\* this talent to the limit.

### THE DUTCH

The first impression one gets of Holland is that it is a calm, sedate, and simple land. The slow rhythm of life is even seen in the barges on the canals and the bicycles on the roads. One gradually discovers this equanimity of daily existence is not in accord with the intrinsic\* nature of the Dutch. These people are moved by strong feelings that are not compatible with the serenity of the world around them. There is a conflict between the rigid, traditional\* social rules and the desire for liberty and independence, both of which the Dutch revere.

### TULIP FEVER

The tulip reached Holland in 1593 and was, at first, looked upon as a curiosity. There soon developed an irrational demand for new species. Specimens were sold at awesomely\* high prices. In their avarice, speculators bought and sold the same tulip ten times in one day. The entire Dutch population got swept up in the craze. There was an insatiable desire for each new color or shape. At one point a man purchased a house for three bulbs! Before long the inevitable\* crash came and the demand for bulbs quickly reached its nadir. A $1,500 bulb could be bought for $1.50. With the moribund tulip market came financial disaster for thousands of people.

## W29

### A SPORT FOR EVERYONE

Of the many highly popular sports in the United States, football must be rated at or near the top. This sport allows the speedy and lithe athlete to join with the slower and burly one in a team effort. The skills and strengths of many men are welded together so that one team may work as a unit to gain mastery over its opponent. The knowledgeable adherent of a team enjoys following action covering many parts of the playing field at the same time. He is in a state of bliss when his team executes a movement to perfection. However, there is no one more forlorn than the same fan when the opposition functions to equal perfection.

### RAH! RAH! RAH!

The spectators at a football game play more than a superficial\* role. A spirited cheer from the stands often gives the player on the field a reason to try even harder. Cheer leaders exhort the fans, who may be in a state of apathy because their team is losing, to spur on the players. In particularly close games between rivals of long standing, feelings begin to run high, and from time to time a fracas may break out in the stands. While the teams compete below, the fan who is a bit inebriated may seek out a personal adversary. On the whole, the enthusiasm of the spectators is usually constricted\* to cheering and shouting for their favorite teams.

### THE 32-INCH FOOTBALL FIELD

The football fan who cannot attend a contest in person may watch any number of games on television. This has the great advantage of permitting an indolent fan to sit in the comfort of his living room and watch two teams play in the most inclement\* weather. However, some of the spirit, the gusto, is missing when one watches a game on a small screen away from the actual scene of the contest. Also, the viewer is constantly exposed to a garrulous group of announcers who continue to chatter in an endless way throughout the afternoon. Should the game be a dull one, the announcers discuss the most banal bits of information. Even in the poorest game there is constant chatter involving one platitude after another about the laudable\* performances of each and every player.

### WHAT’S ON?

The majority of college football games are played on Saturdays, and most professional ones are on Sundays. Most fans enjoy both varieties. Nothing can put an avid\* viewer into a pique more quickly than missing an important contest. It is the dilettante who eschews\* the amateur variety and watches only the professional games. The atypical fan will watch only his home team play; however, enthusiasts will continue to view the most nondescript contests involving teams that have no connection with their own town or school. Some intrepid\* fans have been known to watch high school games when that was all that was offered. Public interest in football grows each year, while interest in some other sports may be on the wane.

## W30

### IN DAYS GONE BY

The man who best described the now extinct life aboard a steamer on the Mississippi River is Mark Twain. Having actually worked aboard the river boats, his writing captures the tranquil\* or turbulent\* events of those days. In his book about life on the Mississippi, Twain recalls the idyllic times when man was not in such a great rush to get from one place to another. One chapter deals with the races conducted between the swiftest of the boats. When a race was set, the excitement would galvanize activity along the river. Politics and the weather were forgotten, and people talked with gusto\* only of the coming race. The two steamers “stripped” and got ready; every encumbrance that might slow the passage was removed. Captains went to extremes to lighten their boats. Twain writes of one captain who scraped the paint from the gaudy figure that hung between the chimneys of his steamer.

### THE JOHN J. ROE

Mark Twain’s boat was so slow no other steamer would condescend to race with it. With the utmost candor, Twain comments that his boat moved at such a pathetic pace, they used to forget in which year they left port. Nothing would mortify Twain more than the fact that ferryboats, waiting to cross the river, would lose valuable trips because their passengers died waiting for his boat, the John J. Roe, to pass. Mark Twain wrote in a jocose manner about the races his steamer had with islands and rafts. With quiet humor he continued to malign the riverboat, but his book is replete\* with love for this sort of life.

### THE RIVERBOAT PILOT

The riverboat pilot was a man considered omnipotent by all. Mark Twain once held that high position. He writes that he felt at the zenith of his life at that time. Starting out as a fledgling pilot’s apprentice, he could not give up dreams of the time he would become “the only unfettered and entirely independent human being that lived in the earth.” Kings, parliaments, and newspaper editors, Twain comments, are hampered and restricted. The river pilot issued peremptory commands as absolute monarch. The captain was powerless to interfere. Even though the pilot was much younger than the captain, and the steamer seemed to be in imminent\* danger, the older man was helpless. The captain had to behave impeccably,\* for any criticism of the pilot would establish a pernicious\* precedent that would have undermined the pilot’s limitless authority.

### THE DOUBLE CROSS

Many incidents that took place aboard his ship are retold by Twain. One has to do with a wealthy cattle man who was approached by three gamblers. The cattle farmer had let it be known that he had a great deal of money, and the gamblers were trying to wheedle him into a card game. He protested that he knew nothing about cards. His rustic appearance confirmed that fact. On the last night before landing, the three gamblers got him drunk. When the first hand was dealt, a jubilant expression came over his face. The betting became furious. All of the proper decorum was put aside, and ten thousand dollars soon lay on the table. With the last wager, one of the gamblers showed a hand of four kings. His partner was to have dealt the sucker a hand of four queens. At this point the victim, the charlatan, removed the veneer\* of respectability, and showed a hand of four aces! One of the three professional gamblers was a clandestine\* confederate of the “rich cattle farmer.” They had been planning this duplicity\* for many weeks.