Interlude

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IT WAS hot. Heat waves danced along the top of the threshing machine and the horses were dark with sweat. A bank of black clouds in the west held promise of relief from the heat and the vicious bites of the flies strengthened that promise of rain.

The horses hitched to the racks around the threshing machine shuddered and quivered and switched unceasingly at the flies. The blue chambray shirts of the farmers clung stickily to their backs and they all talked of the heat.

One of the men, a short, stocky fellow, swung down from his hay rack, piled high with shocks of oats, and went to the windmill, cursing the lack of wind which made pumping necessary. He pumped the coffee can full of the clear, cool liquid and drank
deeply, spilling it out around the corners of his mouth in his eagerness.

HE DROPPED the cup, wiped his chin with his hand and started back to his rack. When he passed in front of his team, the off horse, a big roan, shied and reared on his hind legs, tangling the harness. The man lunged at the reins and jerked savagely at the bit, bringing the horse back down on his fore-feet.

When he released his hold on the rein and turned to go around the other horse the roan bared his teeth and, stretching his neck, bit viciously at the man's shoulder. Strips of blue shirt and bloody flesh came away in his teeth, and the man screamed. He whirled, and struck the horse full on the nose with his clenched fist.

The roan snapped at him again, and the man turned, seeking a weapon. His one arm hung limp at his side, wrapped from the elbow down in a sleeve turned scarlet with blood. He ran to the side of the barn and picked up a single-tree. When he brought the thing down on the roan's head, squarely between the ears, there was a dull, sickening thud, and the horse's eyes rolled wildly.

He expelled his breath in a long sigh, and his legs buckled beneath him. He fell beside the other horse in a tangle of straps and chains. The other horse stood shivering with fear and excitement.

The men, who had stood fascinated during the fight, gathered around the dead horse. "Jesus, he's dead," one of them said in an awed voice.

Sketches From Life

(Gleaned from a thousand pages of best Freshman themes of Spring quarter are the following "Sketches From Life." Typical of the best of Freshman work, they tell simply and briefly of a student's day and his dreams.)

BLACK to grey. I was awake. Slowly I became aware that it was very early. The stillness was something one doesn't hear at another time in the twenty-four hours; it was a part of the greyness.