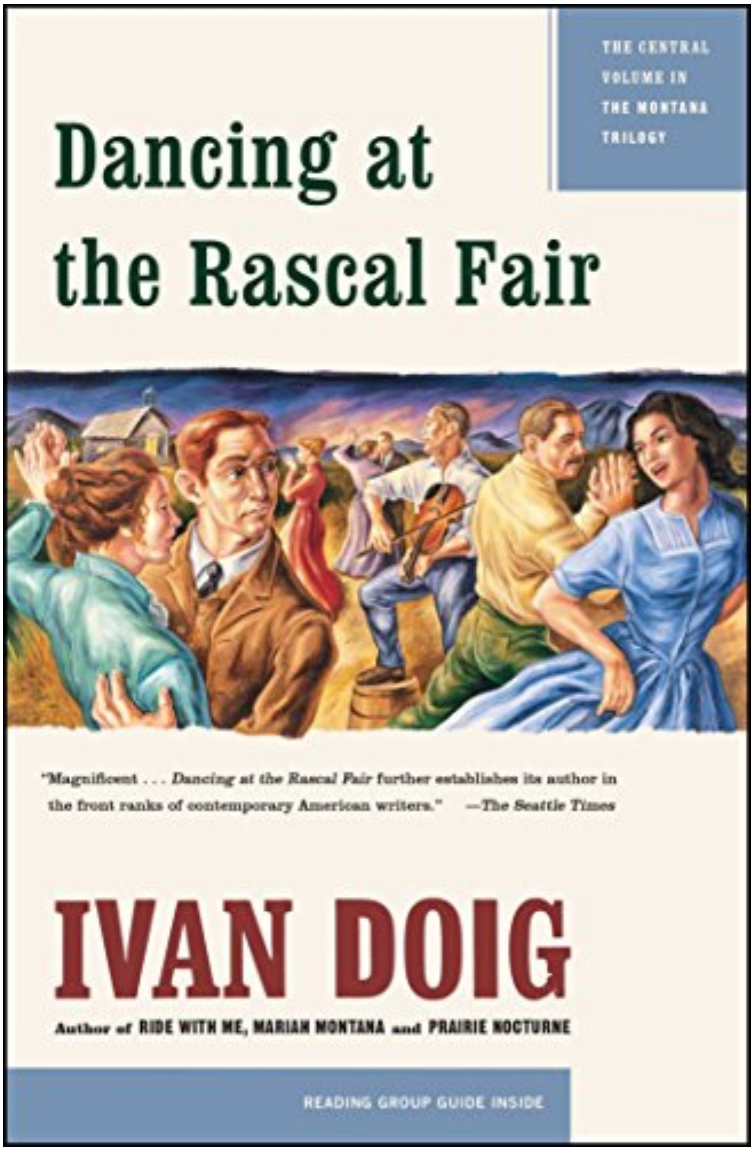
Dancing at the Rascal Fair



Par Ivan Doig
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[E-BOOK] Dancing at the Rascal Fair

Par Ivan Doig : Dancing at the Rascal Fair before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dancing at the Rascal Fair:

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe central volume in Ivan Doig's acclaimed Montana trilogy, Dancing at the Rascal Fair is an authentic saga of the American experience at the turn of this century and a passionate, portrayal of the immigrants who dared to try new lives in the imposing Rocky Mountains.Ivan Doig's supple tale of landseekers unfolds into a fateful contest of the heart between Anna Ramsay and Angus McCaskill, walled apart by their obligations as they and their stormy kith and kin vie to tame the brutal, beautiful Two Medicine country.ExtraitChapter 1SCOTLAND AND HELENAHarbour Mishap at Greenock. Yesterday morning, while a horse and cart were conveying a thousand-weight of sugar on the quay at Albert Harbour, one of the cartwheels caught a mooring stanchion, which caused the laden conveyance and its draft animal to

fall over into the water. The poor creature made desperate efforts to free itself and was successful in casting off all the harness except the collar, which, being attached to the shafts of the sunken cart, held its head under water until it was drowned. The dead animal and the cart were raised during the forenoon by the Greenock harbour diver.Glasgow Caledonian, Octobert 23, 1889To say the truth, it was not how I expected -- stepping off toward America past a drowned horse.You would remember too well, Rob, that I already was of more than one mind about the Atlantic Ocean. And here we were, not even within eyeshot of the big water, not even out onto the slow-flowing River Clyde yet, and here this heap of creature that would make, what, four times the sum total of Rob Barclay and Angus McCaskill, here on the Greenock dock it lay gawping up at us with a wild dead eye. Strider of the earth not an hour ago, wet rack of carcass now. An affidavit such as that says a lot to a man who cannot swim. Or at least who never has.But depend on you, Rob. In those times you could make light of whatever. There was that red shine on you, your cheeks and jawline always as ruddy and smooth as if you had just put down the shaving razor, and on this largest day of our young lives you were aglow like a hot coal. A stance like a lord and a hue like a lady. You cocked your head in that way of yours and came right out with:"See now, McAngus. So long as we don't let them hitch a cart to us we'll be safe as saints.""A good enough theory," I had to agree, "as far as it goes."Then came commotion, the grieved sugar carter bursting out, "Oh Ginger dear, why did ye have to tumble?" and dockmen shouting around him and a blinkered team of horses being driven up at full clatter to drag their dead ilk away. Hastily some whiskered geezer from the Cumbrae Steamship Line was waving the rest of us along: "Dead's dead, people, and standing looking at it has never been known to help. Now then, whoever of you are for the James Watt, straight on to the queue there, New York at its other end, step to it please, thank you." And so we let ourselves be shooed from the sight of poor old horsemeat Ginger and went and stepped onto line with our fellow steerage ticketholders beside the bulk of the steamship. Our fellow Scotland-leavers, half a thousand at once, each and every of us now staring sidelong at this black iron island that was to carry us to America. One of the creels which had held the sugar was bobbing against the ship's side, while over our heads deckhands were going through the motions of some groaning chore I couldn't begin to figure."Now if this was fresh water, like," sang out one above the dirge of their task, "I'd wager ye a guinea this harbor'd right now taste sweet as treacle.""But it's not, ye bleedin' daftie. The bleedin' Clyde is tide salt from the Tail of the Bank the full way up to bleedin' Glasgow, now en't it? And what to hell kind of concoction are ye going to get when ye mix sugar and salt?""Ask our bedamned cook," put in a third. "All the time he must be doing it, else why's our mess taste like what the China dog walked away from?" As emphasis he spat a throat gob over the side into the harbor water, and my stomach joined my other constituent parts in trepidation about this world-crossing journey of ours. A week and a half of the Atlantic and dubious food besides?That steerage queue seemed eternal. Seagulls mocked the line of us with sharp cries. A mist verging on rain dimmed out the Renfrewshire hills beyond Greenock's uncountable roofs. Even you appeared a least little bit ill at ease with this wait, Rob, squinting now and again at the steamship as if calculating how it was that so much metal was able to float. And then the cocked head once more, as if pleased with your result. I started to say aloud that if Noah had taken this much time to load the ark, only the giraffes would have lasted through the deluge, but that was remindful of the waiting water and its fate for cart horses and others not amphibious.Awful, what a person lets himself do to himself. There I stood on that Greenock dock, wanting more than anything else in this life not to put foot aboard that iron ship; and wanting just as desperately to do so and do it that instant. Oh, I knew what was wrestling in me. We had a book -- Crofutt's Trans-Atlantic Emigrants' Guide -- and my malady was right there in it, page one. Crofutt performed as our tutor that a shilling was worth 24 American cents, and how much postal stamps cost there in the big country, and that when it came midnight in old Scotland the clocks of Montana were striking just five of the afternoon. Crofutt told this, too, I can recite it yet today: Do not emigrate in a fever, but consider the question in each and every aspect. The mother country must be left behind, the family ties, all old associations, broken. Be sure that you look at the dark side of the picture: the broad Atlantic, the dusty ride to the great West of America, the scorching sun, the cold winter -- coldest ever you experienced! -- and the hard work of the homestead. But if you finally, with your eyes open, decide to emigrate, do it nobly. Do it with no divided heart.Right advice, to keep your heart in one pure piece. But easier seen than followed.I knew I oughtn't, but I turned and looked up the river, east up the great broad trough of the Clyde. East into yesterday. For it had been only the day before when the pair of us were hurled almost all the way across Scotland by train from Nethermuir into clamorsome Glasgow. A further train across the Clyde bridge and westward alongside mile upon brown mile of the river's tideflats and their smell. Then here came Greenock

to us, Watt's city of steam, all its shipyards and docks, the chimney stalks of its sugar refineries, its sharp church spires and high, high above all its municipal tower of crisp new stone the color of pie crust. A more going town than our old Nethermuir could be in ten centuries, it took just that first look to tell us of Greenock. For night we bedded where the emigration agent had advised, the Model Lodging House, which may have been a model of something but lodging wasn't it; when morning at last came, off we set to ask our way to the Cumbrae Line's moorage, to the James Watt, and to be told in a Clydeside gabble it took the both of us to understand:"The Jemmy, lads? Ye wan' tae gi doon tae the fit of Pa'rick."And there at the foot of Patrick Street was the Albert Harbor, there was the green-funneled steam swimmer to America, there were the two of us.For I can't but think of you then, Rob. The Rob you were. In all that we said to each other, before and thereafter, this step from our old land to our new was flat fact with you. The Atlantic Ocean and the continent America all the way across to Montana stood as but the width of a cottage threshold, so far as you ever let on. No second guess, never a might-have-done-instead out of you, none. A silence too total, I realize at last. You had family and a trade to scan back at and I had none of either, yet I was the one tossing puppy looks up the Clyde to yesterday. Man, man, what I would give to know. Under the stream of words by which you talked the two of us into our long step to America, what were your deep reasons? I am late about asking, yes. Years and years and years late. But when was such asking ever not? And by the time I learned there was so much within you that I did not know and you were learning the same of me, we had greater questions for each other.A soft push on my shoulder. When I turned to your touch you were smiling hard, that Barclay special mix of entertainment and estimation. We had reached the head of the queue, another whiskery geezer in Cumbrae green uniform was trumpeting at us to find Steerage Number One, go forward toward the bow, descend those stairs the full way down, mind our footing and our heads...You stayed where you stood, though, facing me instead of the steamship. You still had the smile on, but your voice was as serious as I ever had heard it."Truth now, Angus. Are we both for it?"Standing looking at it has never been known to help. I filled myself with breath, the last I intended to draw of the air of the pinched old earth called Scotland. With no divided heart."Both," I made myself say. And up the Jemmy's gangplank we started.Robert Burns Barclay, single man, apprentice wheelwright, of Nethermuir, Forfarshire. That was Rob on the passenger list of the James Watt, 22nd of October of the year 1889. Angus Alexander McCaskill, single man, wheelworks clerk, of Nethermuir, For-farshire, myself. Both of us nineteen and green as the cheese of the moon and trying our double damnedest not to show it.Not that we were alone in tint. Our steerage compartment within the Jemmy proved to be the forward one for single men -- immediately the report went around that the single women were quartered farthest aft, and between them and us stood the married couples and a terrific populace of children -- and while not everyone was young, our shipmates were all as new as we to voyaging. Berths loomed in unfamiliar tiers with a passageway not a yard wide between them, and the twenty of us bumped and backed and swirled like a herd of colts trying to establish ourselves.I am tall, and the inside of the ship was not. Twice in those first minutes of steerage life I cracked myself."You'll be hammered down to my size by the time we reach the other shore," Rob came out with, and those around us hoohawed. I grinned the matter away but I did not like it, either the prospect of a hunched journey to America or the public comment about my altitude. But that was Rob for you.Less did I like the location of Steerage Number One. So far below the open deck, down steep stair after stair into the iron gut of the ship. When you thought about it, and I did, this was like being a kitten in the bottom of a rainbarrel."Here I am, mates," recited a fresh voice, that of the steward. "Your shepherd while at sea. First business is three shillings from you each. That's for mattress to keep you company and tin to eat with and the finest saltwater soap you've ever scraped yourself with." Ocean soap and straw bed Rob and I had to buy along with everyone else, but on Crofutt's advice we'd brought our own trustworthy tinware. "Meals are served at midship next deck up, toilets you'll find in the deckhouses, and that's the circle of life at sea, mates," the steward rattled at us, and then he was gone.As to our compartment companions, a bit of listening told that some were of a fifty embarking to settle in Manitoba, others of a fifty fixed upon Alberta for a future. The two heavenly climes were argued back and forth by their factions, with recitations of rainfall and crop yields and salubrious health effects and imminence of railroads, but no minds were changed, these being Scottish minds.Eventually someone deigned to ask us neutral pair what our destination might be."Montana," Rob enlightened them as if it was Eden's best neighborhood. "I've an uncle there these seven years.""What does the man do there," sang out an Alberta adherent, "besides boast of you as a nephew? Montana is nothing but mountains, like the name of it.""He's the owner of a mine," Rob reported with casual grandness, and this drew us new looks from the compartment citizenry. Rob, though, was not one to quit just

because he was ahead. "A silver mine at Helena, called the Great Maybe."All of steerage except the two of us thought that deserved the biggest laugh there was, and for the next days we were known as the Maybe Miners. Well, they could laugh like parrots at a bagpiper. It was worth that and more, to have Lucas Barclay there in Montana ahead of us."Up?" offered Rob to me now, with a sympathetic toss of his head. Back to deck we climbed, to see how the Jemmy's departure was done.As I look on it from now, I suppose the others aboard cannot but have wondered about the larky companion beside me at the deck rail, dispensing his presiding smile around the ship as if he had invented oceangoing. The bearing of a bank heir, but in a flat cap and rough clothes? A mien of careless independence, but with those workworn wheelwright's hands at the ends of his young arms? And ever, ever, that unmatchable even-toothed smile, as though he was about to say something bright even when he wasn't; Rob could hold that smile effortlessly the way a horse holds the bit between his teeth. You could be fooled in a hurry about Rob, though. It maybe can be said my mind lacks clench. Rob had a fist there in his head. The smile gave way to it here when he spotted a full family, tykes to grandfolks, among us America-goers."They all ought've come, Angus. By damn, but they ought've. Am I right?" He meant all the rest of his own family, his father and mother and three older brothers and young sister; and he meant it hotly. Rob had argued for America until the air of the Barclay household was blue with it, but there are times when not even a Barclay can budge Barclays. Just thinking about it still made him tense as a harp. "They ought've let the damned 'wright shop go, let old Nethermuir doze itself to death. They can never say I didn't tell them. You heard.""I heard.""Lucas is the only one of the bunch who's ever looked ahead beyond his nose. See now, Angus, I almost wish we'd been in America as long as Lucas. Think of all he must've seen and done, these years.""You'd have toddled off there when you were the age of Adair, would you?" Adair was Rob's sister, just twelve or so, and a little replica of Rob or at least close enough; tease her as I did by greeting her in gruff hard-man style Hello you, Dair Barclay, and she always gave me right back, snappy as beans, Hello yourself, old Angus McCaskill."Adair's the one in the bunch who most ought've come," Rob persisted. "Just look around you, this ship is thick with children not a minute older than Adair." He had a point there. "She'd positively be thriving here. And she'd be on her way to the kind of life she deserves instead of that" -- Rob pointed his chin up the Clyde, to the horizon we had come from -- "back there. I tried for her.""Your parents would be the first to say so.""Parents are the world's strangest commodity, haven't you ever noticed -- Angus, forgive that. My tongue got ahead of itself.""It went right past my ears. What about a walk around deck, shall we?"At high tide on the Clyde, when the steam tug arrived to tow this behemoth ship of ours to deep water at the Tail of the Bank, Rob turned to me and lifted his cap in mock congratulation."We're halfway there," he assured me."Only the wet part left, you're telling me."He gave my shoulder a push. "McAngus, about this old water. You'll grow used to it, man. Half of Scotland has made this voyage by now."I started to retort that I seemed to belong to the half without webfeet, but I was touched by this, Rob's concern for me, even though I'd hoped I was keeping my Atlantic apprehensions within me. The way they resounded around in there -- Are we both for it? Both -- I suppose it was a wonder the entire ship wasn't hearing them like the thump of a drum.We watched Greenock vanish behind the turn of the Firth. "Poor old River Carrou," from Rob now. "This Clyde makes it look like a piddle, doesn't it?"Littler than that, actually. We from an inland eastern town such as Nethermuir with its sea-seeking stream Carrou were born thinking that the fishing ports of our counties of Fife and Forfar and Kincardine and Aberdeen must be the rightful entrances to the ocean, so Rob and I came with the natural attitude that these emigration steamships of Greenock and Glasgow pittered out the back door of Scotland. The Firth of Clyde was showing us otherwise. Everywhere around us the water was wider than wide, arms of it delving constantly between the hills of the shore, abundant islands were stood here and there on the great gray breadth as casually as haycocks. Out and out the Jemmy steamed, past the last of the beetle-busy packet boats, and still the Clyde went on carving hilly shores. Ayr. Argyll. Arran. This west of Scotland perhaps all sounded like gargle, but it was as handsome a coast as could be fashioned. Moor and cliff and one entire ragged horizon of the Highlands mountains for emphasis, shore-tucked villages and the green exactness of fields for trim.And each last inch of it everlastingly owned by those higher than Angus McCaskill and Rob Barclay, I reminded myself. Those whose names began with Lord. Those who had the banks and mills. Those whitehanded men of money. Those who watched from their fat fields as the emigrant ships steamed past with us.Daylight lingered along with the shore. Rain came and went at edges of the Firth. You saw a far summit, its rock brows, and then didn't."Just damp underfoot, try to think of the old ocean as," Rob put in on me."I am trying, man. And I'd still just as soon walk to America.""Or we could ride on each other's shoulders, what if?." Rob swept on. "No, McAngus, this steam yacht is the way to travel." Like the duke of

dukes, he patted the deck rail of the Jemmy and proclaimed: "See now, this is proper style for going to America and Montana."rAmerica. Montana. Those words with their ends open. Those words that were ever in the four corners of my mind, and I am sure Rob's, too, all the minutes since we had left Nethermuir. I hear that set of words yet, through all the time since, the pronouncement Rob gave them that day. America and Montana echoed and echoed in us, right through my mistrust of journeying on water, past Rob's breeze of manner, into the tunnels of our bones. For with the Jemmy underway out the Firth of Clyde we were threading our lives into the open beckon of those words. Like Lucas Barclay before us, now we were on our way to be Americans. To be -- what did people call themselves in that far place Montana? Montanese? Montanians? Montaniards? Whatever that denomination was, now the two of us were going to be its next members, with full feathers on.My first night in steerage I learned that I was not born to sleep on water. The berth was both too short and too narrow for me, so that I had to kink myself radically; curl up and wedge in at the same time. Try that if you ever want to be cruel to yourself. Too, steerage air was thick and unpleasant, like breathing through dirty flannel. Meanwhile Rob, who could snooze through the thunders of Judgment Day, was composing a nose song below me. But discomfort and bad air and snores were the least of my wakefulness, for in that first grief of a night -- oh yes, and the Jemmy letting forth an iron groan whenever its bow met the waves some certain way -- my mind rang with everything I did not want to think of. Casting myself from Nethermuir. The drowned horse Ginger. Walls of this moaning ship, so close. The coffin confines of my bedamned berth. The ocean, the ocean on all sides, including abovehead. Dark Neptune's labyrinthine lanes/'Neath these savage liquid plains. I rose in heart-rattling startlement once when I accidentally touched one hand against the other and felt wetness there. My own sweat.I still maintain that if the Atlantic hadn't been made of water I could have gone to America at a steady trot. But it seems to be the case that fear can sniff the bothering places in us. Mine had been in McCaskills for some eighty years now. The bones of the story are this. With me on this voyage, into this unquiet night, came the fact that I was the first McCaskill since my father's grandfather to go upon the sea. That voyage of Alexander McCaskill was only a dozen miles, but the most famous dozen miles in Great Britain of the time, and he voyaged them over and over and over again. He was one of the stonemasons of Arbroath who worked with the great engineer Robert Stevenson to build the Bell Rock lighthouse. On the clearest of days I have seen that lighthouse from the Arbroath harbor and have heard the story of the years of workships and cranes and winches and giant blocks of granite and sandstone, and to this moment I don't know how they could do what was done out there, build a hundred-foot tower of stone on a reef that vanished deep beneath every high tide. But there it winks at the world even today, impossible Bell Rock, standing in the North Sea announcing the Firth of Forth and Edinburgh beyond, and my great-grand-father's toolmarks are on its stones. The generations of us, we who are not a sea people, dangle from that one man who went to perform stonework in the worst of the waters around Scotland. Ever since him, Alexander has been the first or second name of a McCaskill in each of those generations. Ever since him, we have possessed a saga to measure ourselves against. I lay there in the sea-plowing Jemmy trying to think myself back into that other manhood, to leave myself, damp sackful of apprehension that I was, and to feel from the skin inward what it would have been like to be Alexander McCaskill of the Bell Rock those eighty years ago. A boat is a hole in the water, began my family's one scrap of our historic man, the solitary story from our McCaskill past that my father would ever tell. In some rare furlough from his brooding, perhaps Christmas or Hogmanay and enough drinks of lubrication, that silence-locked man my father would suddenly unloose the words. But there was a time your great-grandfather was more glad than anything to see a boat, I'm here to tell you. Out there on the Bell Rock they were cutting down into the reef for the lighthouse's foundation, the other stonemen and your great-grandfather, that day. When the tide began to come in they took up their tools and went across the reef to meet their boat. Stevenson was there ahead of them, as high as he could climb on the reef and standing looking out into the fog on the water. Your great-grandfather knew there was wrong as soon as he saw Stevenson. Stevenson the famous engineer of the Northern Lights, pale as the cat's milk. As he ought have been, for there was no boat on the reef and none in sight anywhere. The tide was coming fast, coming to cover all of the Bell Rock with water higher than this roof. Your great-grandfather saw Stevenson turn to speak to the men. "This I'll swear to, Alexander the Second," your great-grandfather always told me it just this way. "Mister Stevenson's mouth moved as if he was saying, but no words came out. The fear had dried his mouth so." Your great-grandfather and the men watched Stevenson go down on his knees and drink water like a dog from a pool in the rock. When he stood up to try to speak this time, somebody shouted out, "A boat! There, a boat!" The pilot boat, it was, bringing the week's mail to the workship. Your great-

grandfather always ended saying, "I almost ran out onto the water to hail that boat, you can believe.""You ask was I afraid, Alexander the Second?" My father's voice became a strange, sad thunder when he told of my great-grandfather's reply to him. "Every hour of those three Bell Rock years, and most of the minutes, drowning was on my mind. I was afraid enough, yes. But the job was there at the Bell Rock. It was to be done, afraid or no afraid."The past. The past past, so to speak, back there beyond myself. What can we ever truly know of it, how can we account for what it passes to us, what it withholds? Employ my imagination to its utmost, I could not see myself doing what Alexander McCaskill did in his Bell Rock years, travel an extent of untrustable water each day to set Abroath stone onto reef stone. Feed me first to the flaming hounds of hell. Yet for all I knew, my ocean-defying great-grandfather was afraid of the dark or whimpered at the sight of a spider but any such perturbances were whited out by time. Only his brave Bell Rock accomplishment was left to sight. And here I lay, sweating steerage sweat, with a dread of water that had no logic newer than eighty years, no personal beginning, and evidently no end. It simply was in me, like life's underground river of blood. Ahead there, I hoped far ahead, when I myself became the past -- would the weak places in me become hidden, too? Say I ever did become husband, father, eventual great-grandfather of Montana McCaskills. What were they going to comprehend of me as their firstcomer? Not this sweated night here in my midnight cage of steerage, not my mental staggers. No, for what solace it was, eventually all that could be known of Angus Alexander McCaskill was that I did manage to cross the Atlantic Ocean.If I managed to cross it.Through the night and most of the next day, the Jemmy steamed its way along the coast of Ireland to Queenstown, where our Irish came aboard. To say the truth, I was monumentally aware of Queenstown as the final chance to me to be not aboard; the outmost limb-end where I could still turn to Rob and utter, no, I am sorry, I have tried but water and I do not go together. So far I had managed not to let my tongue say that. It bolstered me that Rob and I had been up from Steerage Number One for hours, on deck to see whatever there was, blinking now against the sun and its sparkle on the blue Queenstown harbor. And so we saw the boats come. A fleet of small ones, each catching the wind with a gray old lugsail. They were steering direct to us and as the fleet neared we could make out that there was one man in each boat. No. One woman in each boat."Who are these, then?" I called to a deckhand sashaying past."Bumboats," he flung over his shoulder. "The Irish navy. Ye'll learn some words now."Two dozen of the boats nudged against the steamship like piglets against a sow, and the deckhand and others began tossing down ropes. The women came climbing up like sailors -- when you think of it, that is what they were -- and with them arrived baskets, boxes, creels, buckets, shawls. In three winks the invaders had the shawls spread and their wares displayed on them. Tobacco, apples, soap. Pickled meat. Pinafores. Butter, hardbread, cheese. Pots of shamrock. Small mirrors. Legs of mutton. Then began the chants of these Irishwomen singing their wares, the slander back and forth between our deckhands and the women hawkers, the eruptions of haggling as passengers swarmed around the deck market. The great deck of the steamship all but bubbled over with people.As we gaped at the stir of business Rob broke out in delight, "Do you see what this is like, Angus?" And answered himself by whistling the tune of it. I laughed along with every note, for the old verse thrummed as clear to me as an anthem.Dancing at the rascal fair,devils and angels all were there,heel and toe, pair by pair,dancing at the rascal fair.From the time we could walk Rob and I had never missed a rascal fair together -- that day of lest when Nethermuir farmers and farm workers met to bargain out each season's wages and terms and put themselves around a drink or so in the process. The broad cobbled market square of our twisty town, as abrupt as a field in a stone forest, on that one day of magic filled and took on color and laughter. Peddlers, traveling musicians, the Highland dancer known as Fergus the Dervish, whose cry of hiiyuhh! could be heard a mile, onlooking townfolk, hubbub and gossip and banter, and the two of us like minnows in that sea of faircomers, aswim in the sounds of the ritual of hard bargaining versus hard-to-bargain.I see you wear the green sprig in your hat. Are you looking for the right work, laddie?Aye, I am.And would you like to come to me? I've a place not a mile from here, as fine a field as ever you'll see to harvest.Maybe so, maybe no. I'll be paid for home-going day, will I?Maybe so, maybe no. That locution of the rascal fair, up there with Shakespeare's best. I have wondered, trying to think back on how Rob and I grew up side by side, how the McCaskills and the Barclays began to be braided together in the generation before us, how all has happened between us since, whether those bargaining words are always in the air around us, just beyond our hearing and our saying, beyond our knowing how to come to terms with them. But that is a thought of now, not then. Then I knew of no maybes, for Rob was right as right could be when he whistled of the rascal fair there on the Jemmy's deck; with these knots of dickering and spontaneous commotion and general air of mischief-about-to-be, this shipboard bazaar did seem more than anything like

that mix of holiday and sharp practice we'd rambled through in old Nethermuir.Remembered joy is twice sweet. Rob's face definitely said so, for he had that bright unbeatable look on him. In a mood like this he'd have called out "fire!" in a gunshop just to see what might happen. The two of us surged along the deck with everybody else of the Jemmy, soaking in as much of the surprise jubilee as we could."Have your coins grown to your pockets there in Scotland?" demanded the stout woman selling pinafores and drew laughing hoots from us all."But mother," Rob gave her back, "would any of those fit me?""I'd mother you, my milktooth boy. I'd mother you, you'd not forget it.""Apples and more apples and more apples than that!" boasted the next vendor."Madam, you're asking twice the price of apples ashore!" expostulated a father with his wife and eager-eyed children in a covey around him."But more cheap, mister man, than the ocean's price of them.""I tell ye," a deckhand ajudged to another, "I still fancy the lass there with the big cheeses --"The other deckhand guffawed. "Cheese, do ye call those?""-- and ye know I en't one that fancies just anyoldbody.""No, just anybody born of woman.""Muuuht'n, muuuht'n," bleated the sheep-leg seller as we jostled past."Green of the sod of Ireland!" the shamrock merchant advertised to us.So this was what the world was like. I'd had no idea.Then we were by a woman who was calling out nothing. She simply stood silent, both hands in front of her, a green ball displayed in each.Rob passed on with the others of our throng, I suppose assuming as I first did that she was offering the balls as playthings. But children were rampant among this deck crowd and neither they nor their parents were stopping by the silent woman either.Curiosity is never out of season with me. I turned and went back for a close look. Her green offerings were not balls, they were limes.Even with me there in front of her, the woman said nothing. I had to ask. "Your produce doesn't need words, missus?""I'm not to name the ill they're for, young mister, else I can't come onto your fine ship."Any schoolboy knew the old tale of why Royal Navy sailors came to be called limies, and so I grinned, but I had to let Madam Irish know I was not so easily gulled. "It takes a somewhat longer voyage than this to come down with scurvy, missus.""Tisn't the scurvy.""What, then?""Your mouth can ask your stomach when the two of them meet, out there on the herring pond."Seasickness. Among my Atlantic thoughts was whether the crossing would turn me as green as the rind of these limes. "How can this fruit of yours ward off that, then?""Not ward it off, no. There's no warding to that. You only get it, like death. These fruit are for after. They clean your mouth, young mister. Scour the sick away.""Truth?"She nodded. But then, what marketeer wouldn't.It must have been the Irish sun. I fished for my coins. "How much for a pocketful?"Doubtful transaction done, I made my way along the deck to where Rob was. He and the majority of the other single men from our compartment had ended up here around the two youngest Irishwomen, plainly sisters, who were selling ribbons and small mirrors. The flirting seemed to be for free.The sight of the saucy sisters elevated my mood some more, too, and so I stepped close behind Rob and caroled appropriately in his ear:"Dancing at the rascal fair,show an ankle, show a pair,show what'll make the lasses stare,dancing at the rascal fair.""Shush, you'll be heard," he chided, and glanced around to see whether I had been. Rob had that prim side, and I felt it my duty every so often to tweak him on it."Confess," I urged him. "You'd give your ears for a smile from either of these lovelies."Before he could answer me on that, the boatswain's whistle shrilled. The deck market dissolved, over the side the women went like cats. In a minute their lugsails were fanned against the sparkling water of Queenstown harbor, and the Jemmy was underway once more.After Queenstown and with only ocean ahead for a week and a day, my second seagoing night had even less sleep in it than my first. Resolutely telling myself there was no back door to this ship now, I lay crammed into that stifling berth trying to put my mind anywhere -- multiplication, verse, Irish sisters -- other than Steerage Number One.What I found I could spend longest thoughts on, between periodic groans from the Jemmy that required me to worry whether its iron was holding, was Nethermuir. Rascal fair town Nethermuir. Old grayrock town Nethermuir, with its High Street wandering down the hill the way a drowsy cow would, to come to the River Carrou. Be what it may, a fence, a house, a street, the accusing spire of a church, Nethermuir fashioned it of stone, and from below along River Street the town looked as though it had been chiseled out complete rather than erected. Each of the thousand mornings that I did my route to open the wheelwright shop, Nethermuir was as asleep as its stones. In the dark -- out went the streetlights at midnight; a Scottish town sees no need to illumine its empty hours -- in the dark before each dawn I walked up River Street from our narrow-windowed tenements past the clock tower of the linen mill and the silent frontages of the dye works and the paper mill and other shrines of toil. Was that the same me back there, trudging on stone past stone beneath stone until my hand at last found the oaken door of the 'wright shop? Climbing the stair to the office in the nail loft and coaxing a fire in the small stove and opening the ledger, pen between my teeth to have both hands free, to begin on the accounts? Hearing the workmen say their day-

starting greetings, those with farthest to come arriving first, for wasn't that always the way? Was that truly me, identical with this steerage creature listening to a steamship moan out greetings to disaster? The same set of bones called Angus McCaskill, anyway. The same McCaskill species that the Barclays and their wheelwright shop were accustomed to harboring.To see you here is to lay eyes on your father again, Angus, Rob's father Vare Barclay told me at least once a week. A natural pleasantry, but Vare Barclay and I equally knew it was nowhere near true. When you saw my father there over his forge in an earlier time, you were viewing the keenest of wheelsmiths; the master in that part of Scotland at making ninety pounds of tire-iron snugly band itself onto a wagon wheel and become its invincible rim. Skill will ask its price, though. The years of anvil din took nearly all of my father's hearing, and to attract his attention as he stood there working a piece of iron you would have had to toss a wood chip against his shirt. Do that and up he would glance from his iron, little less distant when he was aware of you than when he wasn't. Never did I make that toss of contact with him, when sent by my mother on errand to the 'wright shop, without wondering what it would take to mend his life. For my father had gone deaf deeper than his ears.I am from a house of storm. My parents Alex and Kate McCaskill by the middle of their marriage had become baffled and wounded combatants. I was their child who lived. Of four. Christie, Jack and Frank, who was already apprenticing with my father at the Barclay 'wright shop -- in a single week the three of them died of cholera. I only barely remember them, for I was several years the youngest -- like Rob's sister Adair in the Barclay family, an "afterthought" child; I have contemplated since whether parents in those times instinctively would have a late last child as a kind of insurance -- but I recall in all clarity my mother taking me to the farm cottage of a widow friend of hers when the killing illness began to find Nethermuir. When my mother came for me six weeks later she had aged twice that many years, and our family had become a husk the epidemic left behind. From then on my father lived -- how best to say this? -- he lived alongside my mother and me rather than with us. Sealed into himself, like someone of another country who happened to be traveling beside us. Sealed into his notion, as I grew, that the one thing for me was to follow into his smithy trade. I'm here to tell you, it's what life there is for us and ours. A McCaskill at least can have an honest pair of hands. Oh, there was war in the house about that. My father could not see why I ought to do anything but apprentice myself into hammer work in the Barclay wheelshop as he had, as my brother Frank had; my mother was equally as set that I should do anything but. His deafness made their arguments over me a roaring time. The teacups rattled when they went at it. The school-leaving age was thirteen, so I don't know how things would have gone had not my father died when I was twelve. My mother at once took work as a spinner in the linen mill and enrolled me with the 'venture schoolteacher Adam Willox. Then when I was sixteen, my mother followed my father into death. She was surprised by it, going the same way he had; a stroke that toppled her in the evening and took her in the early morning. With both of them gone, work was all the family I had. Rob's father put me on as clerk in the 'wright shop in the mornings, Adam Willox made me his pupil-teacher in the afternoons. Two half-occupations, two slim wages, and I was glad enough to have them, anything. Vare Barclay promised me full clerkwork whenever the times found their way from bad to good again, Adam Willox promised I could come in with him as a schoolkeeper whenever pupils grew ample enough again. But promises never filled the oatmeal bowl. So when Rob caught America fever, I saw all too readily the truth in what he said about every tomorrow of our Nethermuir lives looking the same. About the great American land pantry in such places as his uncle's Montana, where homesteads were given -- given! -- in exchange for only a few years of earnful effort. The power of that notion of homesteading in America, of land and lives that would be all our own. We never had known anything like it in our young selves. America. Montana. This ship to them. This black iron groaner of a ship that --I was noticing something I devoutly did not want to. The Jemmy seemed to be groaning more often. I held myself dead still to be sure.Yes, oh sweet Christ and every dimpled disciple, yes: my berth was starting to sway and dive.A boat is a hole in the water. And a ship is a bigger boat.I heard Rob wake with a sleepy "What?" just before full tumult set in. The Jemmy stumbled now against every wave, conked its iron beak onto the ocean, rose to tumble again. The least minute of this behavior was more than enough storm for a soul in steerage, but the ruckus kept on and on. Oftener and oftener the ship's entire iron carcass shuddered as the propellor chewed air. Sick creatures shudder before they die, don't they. I felt each and every of these shakings as a private earthquake, fear finding a way to tremble not merely me but every particle of existence. Nineteen did not seem many years to have lived. What if the old Bell Rock had drowned me? my father remembered being asked in boyhood by Alexander McCaskill at the end of that floodtide tale. Where would you be then, Alexander the Second? What if, still the question.Even yet this is a shame on me to have to say, but fear brought a more immediate

question, too, insistent in the gut of me and below. I had to lay there concentrating desperately not to soil myself.Amid it all a Highlands voice bleated out from a distant bunk, "Who'd ever think she could jig like this without a piper?" Oh, yes, you major fool, the ranting music of bagpipes was the only trouble we lacked just now. The Atlantic had its own tune, wild and endless. I tried to wipe away my sweat but couldn't keep up with it. I desperately wanted to be up out of Steerage Number One and onto deck, to see for myself the white knuckles of the storm ocean. Or did I. Again the ship shook; rather, was shaken. What was out there? My blood sped as I tried to imagine the boiling oceanic weather which could turn a steamship into an iron cask. Cloudcaps darker than night itself. High lumpy waves, foaming as they came. Wind straining to lift the sea into the air with it, and rain a downward flood determined to drown the wind.The storm stayed ardent. Barrels, trunks, tins, whatever was movable flew from side to side, and we poor human things clung in our berths to keep from flying, too. No bright remarks about jigs and pipes now. The steerage bunks were stacked boxes of silence now. Alberta, Manitoba, Montana were more distant than the moon. I knew Rob was clamped solidly below me, those broad wheelwright hands of his holding to whatever they had met. The worst was to keep myself steady there in the bunk while all else roved and reeled. Yet in an awful way the storm came to my help; its violence tranced a person. From stem to stern the Jemmy was 113 of my strides; I spent time on the impossibility of anything that length not being broken across canyons of waves. The ship weighed more than two thousand tons; I occupied myself with the knowledge that nothing weighing a ton of tons could remain afloat. I thought of the Greenock dock where I ought to have turned back, saw in my closed eyes the drowned cart horse Ginger I was trying every way I knew not to see, retraced in my mind every stairstep from deck down into Steerage Number One; which was to say down into the basement of the titanic Atlantic, down into the country where horses and humans are hash for fish.Now the Jemmy dropped into a pause where we did not teeter-totter so violently. We were havened between crags of the sea. I took the opportunity to gasp air into myself, on the off chance that I'd ever need any again. Rob's face swung up into view and he began, "See now, McAngus, that all could have been worse. A ship's like a wagon, as long as it creaks it holds, and --" The steamship shuddered sideways and tipped ponderously at the same time, and Rob's face snapped back into his berth.Now the ship was grunting and creaking constantly, new and worse noises -- you could positively feel the Jemmy exerting to drag itself through this maelstrom -- and these grindstone sounds of its effort drew screams from women and children in the midship compartments, and yes, from more than a few men as well, whenever the vessel rolled far over. Someone among the officers had a voice the size of a cannon shot and even all the way down where we were could be heard his blasts of "BOS'N!" and "ALL HANDS!" Those did not improve a nonswimmer's frame of mind, either.The Jemmy drove on. Shuddering. Groaning. Both. Its tremors ran through my body. Every pore of me wanted to be out of that berth, free from water. But nothing to do but hold onto the side of the berth, hold myself as level as possible on a crooked ocean.Nothing, that is, until somebody made the first retching sound.Instantly that alarm reached all our gullets. I knew by heart what Crofutt advised. Any internal discomfort whilst aboard ship is best ameliorated by the fresh air of deck. Face the world of air; you will be new again. If I'd had the strength I'd have hurled Crofutt up onto that crashing deck. As it was, I lay as still as possible and strove not think of what was en route from my stomach to mouth.Steerage Number One's vomiting was phenomenal. I heaved up, Rob heaved up, every steerage soul heaved up. Meals from a month ago were trying to come out of us.Our pitiful gut emptyings chorused with the steamship's groans Our poor storm-bounced guts strained, strained, strained some more. Awful, the spew we have in us at our worst. The stench of it all and the foulness of my mouth kept making me sicker yet. Until I managed to remember the limes.I fumbled them out and took desperate sucks of one. Another I thrust down to the bunk below. "Rob, here. Try this."His hand found mine and the round rind in it."Eat at a time like now? Angus, you're --""Suck it. For the taste." I could see white faces in the two bunks across from us and tossed a lime apiece over there as well. The Jemmy rose and fell, rose and fell, and stomachs began to be heard from again in all precincts of the compartment. Except ours.Bless you, Madam Irish. Maybe it was that the limes put their stern taste in place of the putrid. Maybe that they puckered our mouths as if with drawstrings. Maybe only that any remedy seemed better than none. Whatever effect it may have been, Rob and I and the other lime-juiced pair managed to abstain from the rest of the general gagging and spewing. I knew something new now. That simply being afraid was nowhere near so bad as being afraid and retching your socks up at the same time.Toward dawn the Atlantic got the last of the commotion out of its system. The Jemmy ploughed calmly along as if it had never been out for an evening gallop at all. Even I conceded that we possibly were going to live, now."Mates, what's all this muss?" The steward put in his appearance and chivied us into sluicing and

scrubbing the compartment and sprinkling chloride of lime against the smell, not that the air of Steerage Number One could ever be remedied much. For breakfast Rob and I put shaky cups of tea into ourselves and I had another lime, just for luck. Then Rob returned to his berth, claiming there was lost sleep to be found there, and I headed up for deck, anywhere not to be in that ship bottom.I knew I still was giddy from the night of storm. But as I began to walk my first lap of the deck, the scene that gathered into my eyes made me all the more woolheaded.By now the weather was clement, so that was no longer the foremost matter in me. And I knew, the drybrain way you know a map fact, that the night's steaming progress must have carried us out of sight of land on all sides. But the ocean. The ocean I was not prepared for nor ever could be.Anywhere my eyes went, water bent away over the curve of the world. Yet at the same time the Jemmy and I were in a vast washbasin, the rims of the Atlantic perfectly evident out there over us. Slow calm waves wherever I faced, only an occasional far one bothering to flash into foam like a white swimmer appearing and disappearing. No savage liquid plains these. This was the lyric sea, absently humming in the sameness of the gray and green play of its waves, in its pattern of water always wrinkling, moving, yet other water instantly filling the place. All this, and a week of water extending yet ahead.I felt like a child who had only been around things small, suddenly seeing there is such a thing as big. Suddenly feeling the crawling fear I had known the past two nights in my berth change itself into a standing fact: if the Jemmy wrecked, I would sink like a statue, but nobody could outswim the old Atlantic anyway, so why nettle myself over it? Suddenly knowing that for this, the spectacle of the water planet around me, I could put up with sleepless nights and all else; when you are nineteen and going to America, I learned from myself in that moment, you can plunder yourself as much as is needed. Maybe I was going to see the Atlantic each dawn through scared red eyes. But by the holy, see it I would.I made my start that very morning. Ocean cadence seemed to be more deliberate, calmer, than time elsewhere, and I felt the draw of it. Hour by slow hour I walked that deck and watched and watched for the secret of how this ocean called Atlantic could endlessly go on. Always more wrinkling water, fresh motion, were all that made themselves discernible to me, but I kept walking and kept watching."How many voyages do you suppose this tea has made?""Definitely enough for pension.""Mahogany horse at dinner, Aberdeen cutlet at supper." Which was to say, dried beef and smoked haddock. "You wouldn't get such food just any old where.""You're not wrong about that.""The potatoes aren't so bad, though.""Man, potatoes are never so bad. That's the principle of potatoes.""These ocean nights are dark as the inside of a cow, aren't they.""At least, at least.""We can navigate by the sparks." The Jemmy's funnel threw constant specks of fire against the night. "A few more times around the deck will do us good. Are we both for it?""All right, all right, both. Angus, you're getting your wish, back there on the Clyde.""What's that, now.""You're walking us to America.""Listen to old Crofutt here, will you. We find, from our experience, that the midpoint of the journey is its lowest mark, mentally speaking. If doubt should afflict you thereabout, remonstrate with yourself that of the halves of your great voyage, the emigration part has been passed through, the immigration portion has now begun. Somewhere there on the Atlantic rests a line, invisible but valid, like Greenwich's meridian or the equator. East of there, you were a leaver of a place, on your way FROM a life. West across that division, older by maybe a minute, know yourself to be heading TO a life.""Suppose we're Papists yet?" Sunday, and the priest's words were carrying to us from the Irish congregation thick aa bees on the deck's promenade."I maybe am. There's no hope whatsoever for you.""This Continental Divide in Montana that old Crofutt goes on about, Angus. What is that exactly?""It's like, say, the roof peak of America. The rivers on this side of it flow here to the Atlantic, on the other they go to the Pacific.""Are you telling me we're already on water from Montana, out here?""So to say.""Angus, Angus. Learning teaches a man some impossible things, is what I say.""Too bad they're not bumboats. I could eat up one side of a leg of mutton and down the other about now." Autumn it may have been back in Scotland, but there off Newfoundland the wind was hinting winter, and Rob and I put on most of the clothes we possessed to stay up and watch the fishing fleets of the Newfoundland coastal banks."And an Irish smile, Rob, what about. Those sisters you were eyeing at Queenstown, they'd be one apiece for us if my arithmetic is near right.""Angus, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. I only hope for your sake that they have women in America, too.""There's a chance, do you think?""Shore can't be all so far now.""No, but you'll see a change in the color of the ocean first. New York harbor will be cider instead of water, do you know, and it'll start to show up out here."Then came the day."Mates," the steward pronounced, "we're about to pass old Sandy Hook. New York will step right out and meet us now. I know you've grown attached to them, but the time is come to part with your mattresses. If you'll kindly all make a chain here, like, and pass them along one to the next to the stairway..." Up to deck and overboard our straw beds proceeded, to float off behind us

like a flotilla of rafts. A person would think that mine ought to have stood out freshest among them, so little of the sleep in it had been used.New York was the portal to confusion, and Castle Garden was its keyhole. The entire world of us seemed to be trying to squeeze into America through there. Volleys of questions were asked of us, our health and morals were appraised, our pounds and shillings slid through the money exchange wicket to come back out as dollars and cents. I suppose our experience of New York's hustle and bustle was every America-comer's: thrilling, and we never wanted to do it again. Yet in its way, that first hectic experience of America was simply like one of the hotting-up days back in the 'wrightshop, when the bands of tire iron were furnaced to a red heat and then made to encircle the newly crafted wagon wheels. Ultimately after the sweating and straining and hammering, after every kind of commotion, there was the moment as the big iron circle was cooling and clasping itself ever tighter around the wheel when you would hear a click, like a sharp snap of fingers. Then another, and another -- the sound of the wheelspokes going the last fraction of distance into their holes in the hub and the rim, fitting themselves home. And if you listened with a bit of care, the last click of all came when the done wheel first touched the ground, as if the result was making a little cluck of surprise at its new self. Had you been somewhere in the throng around Rob and me as we stepped out of Castle Garden's workshop of immigration into our first American day, to begin finding our way through a city that was twenty of Glasgow, you might have heard similar sounds of readiness.Then the railroad and the westward journey, oceanic again in its own way, with islands of towns and farms across the American prairie. Colors on a map in no way convey the distances of this earth. What would the place Montana be like? Alp after alp after alp, as the Alberta adherent aboard ship assured us? The Territory of Montana, Crofutt defined, stands as a tremendous land as yet virtually untapped. Already planetarily famous for its wealth of ores, Montana proffers further potentialities as a savannah for graziers and their herds, and where the hoofed kingdom does not obtain, the land may well become the last great grain garden of the world. Elbow room for all aspirants will never be a problem, for Montana is fully five times the size of all of Scotland. How was it going to be to live within such distances? To become pioneers in filling such emptiness? At least we can be our own men there, Rob and I had told each other repeatedly. And now we would find out what kind of men that meant.America seemed to go on and on outside the train windows, and our keenness for Montana and Lucas Barclay gained with every mile."He'll see himself in you," I said out of nowhere to Rob. I meant his uncle; and I meant what I was saying, too. For I was remembering that Lucas Barclay had that same burnish that glowed on Rob. The face and force to go with it, for that matter. These Barclays were a family ensemble, they all had a memorable glimmer. Years and years back, some afterschool hour Rob and I were playing fox-chase in the woodyard of the wheelwright shop, and in search of him I popped around a stack of planks into my father and Lucas and Rob's father Vare, eyeing out oak for spokes. I startled both myself and them by whirling into the midst of their deliberation that way, and I remember as clear as now the pair of bright Barclay faces and my father's pale one, and then Lucas swooping on me with a laugh to tickle his thick thumb into my ribs, I met a man from Kingdom Come, he had daggers and I had none, but I fell on him with my thumb, and daggered and daggered 'um! Was that the final time I'd seen Lucas before his leaving of Scotland, that instant of rosy smile at a flummoxed boy and then the tickling recital? The lasting one, at least."I hope Lucas doesn't inspect too close, then," Rob tossed off. "Else we may get the door of the Great Maybe slammed in our faces.""Man," I decided to tease, "who could ever slam a door to you? Shut with firmness and barricade it to keep you from their wives, daughters and maiden aunts, maybe, but -- "Rob gave my shoulder a push. "I can't wait to see the surprise on Lucas," he said, laughing. "Seven years. I can't wait.""I wonder just what his life is like, there.""Wonder away, until sometime tomorrow. Then you can see the man himself and know."In truth, we knew little more than the least about Lucas Barclay in these Montana years of his. Rob said there had been only a brief letter from Lucas to Nethermuir the first few Christmases after he emigrated, telling that he had made his way to the city of Helena and of his mining endeavor there; and not incidentally enclosing as his token of the holiday a fine fresh green American banknote of one hundred dollars. You can be sure as Rob's family was that more than a greeting was being said there, that Lucas was showing the stay-at-homes the fruit of his adventure; Lucas's decision against the wheelwright shop and for America had been the early version of Rob's: too many Barclays and not enough wagon wheels any more. Even after his letters quit -- nobody who knew Lucas expected him to spend time over paper and pen -- that hundred dollars arrived alone in an envelope, Christmas after Christmas. The Montana money, Rob's family took to calling it. Lucas is still Lucas, they said with affection and rue for this strayed one of the clan; as freehanded a man as God ever set loose.I won't bother to deny that in making our minds up for America Rob and I found it persuasive that money was sent

as Christmas cards from there. But the true trove over across in Montana, we considered, was Lucas himself. Can I make you know what it meant to us to have this uncle of his as our forerunner? As our American edition of Crofutt, waiting and willing to instruct? Put yourself where we were, young and stepping off to a new world in search of its glorious packets of land called homesteads, and now tell me whether or not you want to have a Lucas Barclay ahead, with a generous side that made us know we could walk in on him and be instantly welcome; a Lucas who would know where the best land for homesteading beckoned, what a fair price was for anything, whether they did so-and-so in Montana just as we were accustomed to in Scotland, whether they ever did thus-and-such at all. Bold is one thing and reckless is another, yes? I thought at the time and I'll defend it yet, the steamship ticket could only take us to America and the railroad ticket could only deliver us across it -- Rob and I held our true ticket to the Montana life we sought, to freedom and all else, in Lucas Barclay.Helena had three times the people of Nethermuir in forty times the area. Helena looked as if it had been plopped into place last week and might be moved around again next week. Helena was not Hellenic.A newcomer had to stand and goggle. The castellated edge of the city, high new mansions with sharp-towered roofs, processioned right up onto the start of the mountains around. Earth-old grit side by side with fresh posh. Then grew down a shambles of every kind of structure, daft blurts of shack and manor, with gaping spots between which evidently would be filled when new fashions of habitation had been thought up. Lastly, down the middle of it all was slashed a raw earthquakelike gash of gulch, in which nested block after block of aspiring red-brick storefronts."Quite the place," I said."So it is," said Rob.Say for Helena, gangly capital city of the Territory of Montana and peculiar presbytery of our future with Lucas, it started us off with luck. After the Model Lodging House of Greenock, we knew well not to take the first roost we saw, and weary as we were, Rob and I trudged the hilly streets until we found a comparatively clean room at Mrs. Billington's, a few blocks away from Last Chance Gulch. Mrs. Billington observed to us at once, "You'll be wanting to wash the travel off, won't you," which was more than true. Those tubbings in glorious hot water were the first time since Nethermuir that we had a chance to shed our clothes."Old Barclay? Oh hell yeah," the most veteran boarder at Mrs. Billington's table aided us. "He works down at the depot. Watch sharp or you'll trip right over him there."Here was news, Lucas in a railroad career, and our jauntiness was tinged with speculation as to how that could have come about. Down the steep streets of Helena Rob wore the success of our journey as if it was a helmet. And when we came into sight of the depot, his triumphant face could not have announced us more if he'd had a trumpet in front of it. I was proud enough myself.Until we stepped into the depot, asked a white-haired shrimp of a fellow in spectacles where we might find the railway clerk named Barclay, and got: "I'm him. Elmer W. Barclay. Who might you be?"Elmer W. was nothing at all like Lucas, but he definitely was the Barclay everyone in Helena seemed to know about, in our next few hours of asking and asking. We found as well the owner of the Great Maybe mine, but he was not Lucas either. Nor were any of the three previous disgusted owners we managed to track down. In fact, Lucas's name was six back in the record of ownership the Second Deputy Clerk and Recorder of Lewis and Clark County grudgingly dug out for us, and there had been that many before Lucas. It grew clear to Rob and me that had the Great Maybe been a silver coin instead of a silver mine, by now it would be worn smooth from being passed around.By that first night, Rob was thoughtful. "What do you suppose, Lucas made as much money from the Great Maybe as he thought was there and moved on to another mine? Or didn't make money and just gave the mine up?""Either way, he did move on," I pointed out."Funny, though," Rob deliberated, "that none of these other miners can bring Lucas to mind."That point had suggested itself to me too, but I decided to chide it on its way. "Rob, how to hell could they all remember each other? Miners in Montana are like hair on a dog.""Still," he persisted, "if Lucas these days is anything like the Lucas he was back in Nethermuir, somebody is bound to remember him. Am I right?""Right enough. We just need to find that somebody.""Or Lucas. Whichever happens first.""Whichever. Tomorrow we scour this Helena and make Lucas happen, one way or the other."But the next day Helena provided us not Lucas, but history. Rob and I met our first Montana frost that November morning when we set out, and saw our breath all the way to the post office, where we asked without luck about Lucas. We had just stepped from there, into sunshine now, to go and try at the assay office when I saw the fellow and his flag on a rooftop across the street."Stay"-something, he shouted down into the street to us, "stay"-something, "stay"-something, and ran the American flag with 41 stars on it up a tall pole.Cheers whooped from others in the street gaping up with us, and that in turn brought people to windows and out from stores. Abruptly civilization seemed to be tearing loose in Helena as the crowd flocked in a tizzy to the flag-flying edifice, the Herald newspaper building."What is this, war with somebody?" Rob asked, as flabbergasted as

I."Statehood!" called out a red-bearded man scurrying past. "The president just signed it! It took goddamn near forever, but Montana's a state at last! Follow me, I'm buying!"And so that eighth day of November arose off the calendar and grabbed Rob and me and every other Helena Montanian by the elbow, the one that can lever liquid up to the lips. Innocents us, statehood was a mysterious notion. However, we took it to mean that Montana had advanced out of being governed from afar, as Scotland was by the parliament in London, into running its own affairs. Look around Helena and you could wonder if this indeed constituted an improvement. But the principle was there, and Rob and I had to drink to it along with everyone else, repeatedly."Angus, we must've seen half the faces in Helena today," Rob estimated after we made our woozy way back to the lodging house. "And Lucas's wasn't among them.""Then we know just where he is," I found to say. "The other half."The day after that and the next several, we did try the assay office. The land office. The register of voters. The offices of the newspapers. The Caledonian Club. The Association of Pioneers. The jail. Stores. Hotels.Saloons, endless saloons. The Grand Central or the Arcade or the Iroquois or the Cricket, the IXL or the Exchange or the Atlantic, it all ran the same:"Do you know a man Lucas Barclay? He owned the Gre -- a mine.""Sometimes names change, son. What does he look like?""More than a bit like me. He's my uncle.""Is he now. Didn't know miners had relatives." Wipe, wipe, wipe of the bartender's towel on the bar while he thought. "You do look kind of familiar. But huh-uh. If I ever did see your face on somebody else it was a time ago. Sorry."Boarding houses."Good day, missus. We're trying to find the uncle of my friend here. Lucas Barclay is his name. Do you happen to know of him?""Barkler? No, never heard of him.""Barclay, missus. B-A-R-C-L-A-Y.""Never heard of him, either."Finally, the Greenwood cemetery."You boys are good and sure, are you?" asked the caretaker from beside the year-old gravestone he had led us to.We stood facing the stark chiseled name. "We're sure," said Rob.The caretaker eyed us regretfully."Well, then," he declared, abandoning hope for this stone that read LEWIS BERKELEY PASSED FROM LIFE 1888, "that's about as close as I can come to it for you. Sorry.""See now, we can't but think it would need to be a this year's burial," Rob specified to the caretaker, "because there's every evidence he was alive at last Christmas." He meant by this that the Montana money from Lucas had arrived as always to Nethermuir."B-A-R-C-L-A-Y, eh?" the caretaker spelled for the sixth time. "You're sure that's the way of it?" Rob assured him for the sixth time he was. The caretaker shook his head. "Nobody by that name among the fresh ones. Unless he'd be there." He nodded to the low edge of the graveyard, down near where the railroad right-of-way crossed the Fort Benton road. The grave mounds there had no markers.Realization arrived to Rob and me at the same instant. The paupers' field.Past a section of lofty monuments where chiseled folds of drape and tassels were in style, we followed the caretaker down to the poorfield."Who are these, then?" asked Rob."Some are loners, drifters, hoboes. Others we just don't know who the hell they are. Find them dead of booze some cold morning up there in the Gulch. Or a mine timber falls on them and nobody knows any name for them except Dutchy or Frenchy or Scotty." I saw Rob swallow at that. The caretaker studied among a dozen bare graves. "Say, last month I buried a teamster who'd got crushed when his wagon went over on him. His partner said the gent called himself Brown, but a lot of folks color theirselves different when they come west. Maybe he'd be yours?"It did not seem likely to either Rob or me that Lucas would spurn a life of wagons in Nethermuir and adopt one here. Indeed, the more we thought, the less likely it seemed that Lucas could be down among the nameless dead. People always noticed a Barclay.Discouragement. Perplexity. Worry. All those we found abundantly that first week in Helena but no Lucas.Not one least little bit did Rob let go of the notion of finding him, though. By week's end he was this minute angry at the pair of us for not being bright enough to think where Lucas might be, the next at Lucas for not being anywhere. Then along came consternation -- "Tell me truth, Angus, do you think he can be alive?" -- and then around again to bafflement and irk: "Why to hell is that man so hard to find?""We'll find him," I said steadily to all this. "I can be stubborn and you're greatly worse than that. If the man exists in this Montana, we'll find him."Yet we still did not.We had to tell ourselves that we'd worn out all investigation for a Helena version of Lucas, so we had better think instead of other possible whereabouts. The start of our second week of search, we went by train to try Butte. That mining city seemed to be a factory for turning the planet inside out. Slag was making new mountains, while the mountains around stood with dying timber on their slopes. The very air was raw with smelter fumes and smoke. No further Butte, thank you, for either Rob or me, and we came away somehow convinced it was not the place Lucas Barclay would choose either.Back at Helena we questioned stagecoach drivers, asking if they had heard of Lucas at their destination towns, White Sulphur Springs and Boulder and Elkhorn and Diamond City. No and no and no and no. Meanwhile, we were hearing almost daily of some new silver El Dorado where a miner might have been drawn to.

Castle. Glendale. Granite. Philipsburg. Neihart. We began to see that tracking Lucas to a Montana mine, if indeed he was still in that business of Great Maybes, would be like trying to find out where a Gypsy had taken up residence.That week of search ended as empty as our first.Sunday morning, our second Sabbath as dwellers of Helena, I woke before the day did, and my getting out of bed roused Rob. "Where're you off to?" he asked as I dressed."A walk. Up to see how the day looks."He yawned mightily. "McAngus, the wheelwright shop is all the way back in Scotland and you're still getting out of bed to open it." More yawn. "Wait. I'll come along. Just let me figure which end my shoes fit on."We walked up by the firebell tower above Last Chance Gulch. Except for the steady swimming flight of an occasional magpie, we were up before the birds. Mountains stretched high everywhere around, up in the morning light which had not yet found Helena. The business streets below were in sleeping gray. Over us and to the rim of the eastern horizon stretched long, long feathers of cloud, half a skyful streaked extravagantly with colors between gold and pink, and with purple dabs of heavier cloud down on the tops of the Big Belt Mountains. A vast sky tree of glow and its royal harvest beneath."So this is the way they bring morning into Montana," observed Rob. "They know their business.""Now that I've got you up, you may as well be thoroughly up, what about." I indicated the firebell tower, a small open observation cabin like the top of a lighthouse but perched atop an open spraddle of supports.arRob paused as we climbed past the big firebell and declared, "I'd like to ring the old thing and bring them all out into the streets. Maybe we would find Lucas then."Atop the tower, we met more of dawn. The land was drawing color out of the sky. Shadows of trees came out up near the summit of Mt. Helena, and in another minute there were shawls of shadow off the backs of knolls. Below us the raw sides of Last Chance Gulch now stood forth, as if shoveled out during the night for the next batch of Helena's downtown to be sown in.Rob pondered into the hundred streets below, out to the wide grassy valley beyond. Nineteen thousand people down there and so far not a one of them Lucas Barclay. A breeze lazed down the gulch and up the back of our necks. "Where to hell can he be, Angus? A man can't vanish like smoke, can he?"Not unless he wants to, I thought to myself. But aloud: "Rob, we've looked all we can. There's no knowing until Christmas if Lucas is even alive. If your family gets the Montana money from him again, there'll be proof. But if that doesn't happen, we have to figure he's -- " Rob knew the rest of that. Neither of us had been able to banish that Lewis Berkeley tombstone entirely from mind. I went on to what I had been mulling. "It's not all that far to Christmas now. But until then, we'd better get on with ourselves a bit. Keep asking after Lucas, yes. But get on with ourselves at the same time."Rob stirred. He had that cocked look of his from when we stepped past the drowned horse on the Greenock dock, the look that said out to the world surely you're fooling? But face it, this lack of trace of Lucas had us fooled, fully. "Get on with ourselves, is it. You sound like Crofutt.""And who better?" I swept an arm out over the tower railing to take in Helena and the rest of Montana. As full sunrise neared, the low clouds on the Big Belts were turning into gold coals. On such a morning it could be believed there was a paunch of ore on every Montana mountain. By the holy, this was a country to be up and around in. "Look at you here, five thousand miles from Scotland and your feet are dry, your color is bright, and you have no divided heart. Crofutt and McCaskill, we've seen you through and will again, lad. But the time has arrived to think of income instead of outgo. Are we both for that?"He had to smile. "All right, all right, both. But tell me this, early riser. Where is it you'd see us to next, if you had your way?"We talked there on the bell hill until past breakfast and received the scolding of our lives from Mrs. Billington. Which was far short of fair, for she gained profit for some time to come from that fire tower discussion of ours. What Rob and I chose that early morning, in large part because we did not see what else to decide, was to stay on in Helena until Christmas sent its verdict from Nethermuir.Of course we needed to earn while we tried to learn Montana, and if we didn't have the guidance of Lucas Barclay we at least had an honest pair of hands apiece. I took myself down to a storefront noticed during our trekking around town, Cariston's Mercantile. An Aberdeen man and thus a bit of a conniver, Hugh Cariston; but just then it made no matter to me whether he was the devil's half-brother. He fixed a hard look on me and in that Aberdonian drone demanded:"Can ye handle sums?""Aye." I could, too.I am sure as anything that old Cariston then and there hired me on as a clerk and bookkeeper just so he could have a decent Scots burr to hear. There are worse qualifications.In just as ready a fashion, Rob found work at Weisenhorn's wagon shop. "Thin stuff," he shook his head about American wheels, but at least they made a job.So there is the sum we were, Rob, as our Scotland-leaving year of 1889 drew to a cold close in new Montana. Emigrants changed by the penstrokes of the Cumbrae Steamship Line and Castle Garden into immigrants. Survivors of the Atlantic's rites of water, pilgrims to Helena. Persons we had been all our lives and persons becoming new to ourselves. How are past and present able to live in the same instant, and

together pass into the future?You were the one who hatched the fortunate notion of commemorating ourselves by having our likenesses taken on that Hogmanay, New Year's Eve, as they tamely say it here in America. "Angus, man, it'll be a Hogmanay gift such as they've never had in Nethermuir," you proclaimed, which was certainly so. "Let them in old Scotland see what Montanians are." We had to hustle to get to Bali's Photographic Studio before it closed.That picture is here on my wall, I have never taken it down. Lord of mercy, Rob. Whatever made us believe our new muttonchop sidewhiskers became us? Particularly when I think how red mine were then, and the way yours bristled. We sit there in the photograph looking as if the stuffing is coming out of our heads. Once past those sidewhiskers, the faces on us were not that bad, I will say. Maybe an opera house couldn't be filled on the basis of them, but still. Your wide smile to match the wide Barclay chin, your confident eyes. Your hair black as it was and more than bountiful, the part in it going far back on the right side, almost back even with your ear. It always gave you that look of being unveiled before a crowd, a curtain tugged aside and the pronouncement: Here, people, is Robert Burns Barclay. Then, odd -- I know this is only tintype history, catching a moment with the head-rod in place on the back of the neck -- but there is a face-width gap between us as we pose, Rob, as if the absence of Lucas fit there. And then myself, young as you. As for my own front of the head, there beside you I show more expanse of upper lip than I wish was so, but there is not much to be done about that except what I later did, the mustache. The mouth could be worse, the nose could be better, but they are what I was given from the bin. The jaw pushes forward a little, as if I was inspecting into the camera's lens tunnel. My eyes -- my eyes in our photograph are watching, not proclaiming as yours are. Even then, that far ago, watching to see what will become of us.Revue de presseMichael Dorris The Seattle Times Magnificent....Dancing at the Rascal Fair further establishes its author in the front ranks of contemporary American wrriters.Henry Kaisor Chicago Sun-Times Doig's prose is so muscular and sculpted, so simple and purposeful that I can think only of Edward Hoagland and Wallace Stegner as Doig's equals.Lee K. Abbott The New York Times Book Against this masterfully evoked backdrop. Mr. Doig addresses his real subject: love between friends, between the sexes, between the generations....His is a prose as tight as a new thread and as special as handmade candy....Dancing at the Rascal Fair races with real vigor and wit and passion.Pamela Guillard San Francisco Chronicle Dazzling...I find myself filled With such high praise for this book that instead of relating paltry bits of it, I want to quote the whole glorious thing....Doig plunges right in and, while giving us a gorgeous story, simultaneously peels that tale back to expose, the nubbins of human despair -- injustice, failure, and that incalculable restlessness exemplifled by the immigrant.