

## Erratum

For the benefit of our subscribers, we are repeating the excerpt from Aldous Huxley's *Point Counter Point* (1928) in its complete form. It was mistakenly published in two parts in Volume 138, Number 4, and Volume 139, Number 2.

... THE CHILD made a sudden spasmodic movement under the sheets. His face contracted with pain. He uttered a little whimpering moan.

"His head hurts him so much," said Miss Fulkes. There was a look of terror and misery in her eyes...

Elinor sat down by the bed. She took the little hand that lay on the turned-back sheet, she passed her fingers through the child's pale hair caressingly, soothingly. "Sleep," she whispered, as her fingers caressed him, "sleep, sleep." But the child still stirred uneasily; and every now and then his face was distorted with sudden pain; he shook his head, as though trying to shake off the thing that was hurting him, he uttered his little whimpering moan... he fidgeted restlessly in his bed, turning his head from one side to the other, now drawing up his legs, now straightening them out with a sharp spasmodic kick under the sheets. And still the pain returned, stabbing; and the face made its grimace of agony, the parted lips gave utterance to the little whimpering cry, again and again.

Next day, instead of whimpering with every return of pain, the child began to scream—cry after shrill cry, repeated with an almost clockwork regularity of recurrence for what seemed to Elinor an eternity of hours. Like the scream of a rabbit in a trap. But a thousand times worse; for it was a child that screamed, not an animal; *her* child, trapped and in agony. She felt as though she too were trapped. Trapped by her own utter helplessness to alleviate his pain. Trapped by that obscure sense of guilt, that irrational belief (but haunting in spite of its irrationality), that ever more closely pressing and suffocating conviction that it was all, in some inscrutable fashion, *her* fault, a punishment, malevolently vicarious, for *her* offence... The doctor came at last with his opiates.

Philip arrived by the twelve-twenty. He had been in no hurry to get up and come by an earlier train. It annoyed him to have to leave town. His late arrival was in the nature of a protest. Elinor must really learn not to make such a fuss every time the child had a stomach-ache. It was absurd.

She met him at the door as he stepped out of the car, so white and haggard, and with such dark-circled and desperate eyes, that he was shocked to see her.

"But you're the one who's ill," he said anxiously. "What is it?" She did not answer for a moment, but stood holding him, her face hidden on his shoulder, pressing herself against him. "Dr. Crowther says it's meningitis," she whispered at last...

The child now dozed away his days in a kind of stupor, suffering no pain (Elinor was thankful for that), but disquietingly unresponsive to what was going on about him, as though he were not fully alive. When he opened his eyes she saw that the pupils were so enormously dilated that there was hardly any iris left. Little Phil's blue and mischievous regard had turned to expressionless blackness. The light which had caused him such an agony during the first days of his illness no longer troubled him. No longer did he start and tremble at every sound. Indeed, the child did not seem to hear when he was spoken to. Two days passed and then, quite suddenly and with a horrible sinking sense of apprehension, Elinor realized that he was almost completely deaf. "Deaf?" echoed Dr. Crowther, when she told him of her dreadful discovery. "Common symptom..."

Early next morning when, in her dressing-gown, she tiptoed upstairs for nurse's report on the night, she found the child already awake. One eyelid was wide open and the eye, all pupil, was looking straight up at the ceiling; the other was half shut in a permanent wink that imparted to the thin and shrunken little face an expression of ghastly facetiousness.

"He can't open it," the nurse explained. "It's paralysed..."

Between those long and curly lashes, which she had so often envied him, Elinor could see that the eyeball had rolled away to the exterior corner of the eye and was staring out sideways in a fixed unseeing squint . . . When he had been deaf for a couple of days, little Phil ceased also to see. The squinting eyes were quite blind. And after nearly a week's respite there was a sudden recurrence of the pain of the first days; he began to scream. Later he was seized several times with violent attacks of convulsions; it was as though a devil had entered into him and were torturing him from within. Then, one side of his face and half his body became paralysed and the flesh began to waste almost visibly from off his bones, like wax melting away in the heat of some inward and invisible fire . . . His face was almost unrecognizably fleshless and shrunken, and the paralysed side of it was twisted into a kind of crooked grin. His little hands plucked unceasingly at the bed-clothes. He breathed now very quickly, now so slowly that one began to wonder whether he was breathing at all . . .

. . . an extraordinary thing had happened. Suddenly and without warning, little Phil had opened his eyes and looked about him. They met his mother's. As well as his twisted face would permit him, he smiled.

"But he can see!" cried Elinor. And kneeling down by the bed, she put her arms round the child and began to kiss him with a love that was quickened by an outburst of passionate gratitude. After all these days of squinting blindness, she was thankful to him, she was profoundly grateful for that look of answering intelligence in his eyes, that poor twisted essay at a smile.

. . . "I'm hungry," said little Phil suddenly.

Elinor was down on her knees again beside the bed. "What would you like to eat, my darling?" But the child did not hear her question.

"I'm hungry," he repeated.

"He's still deaf," said Philip.

"But he can see again, he can speak." Elinor's face was transfigured. She had known all the time, in spite of everything, that it was impossible he shouldn't get well. Quite impossible. And now she was being proved right.

Luncheon that day was like a festival of resurrection, an Easter sacrament. Elinor was unfrozen, a woman of flesh again, not of stone . . . "Where's father?" Elinor enquired, when she came down to tea. Mrs. Bidlake shook her head. "He's not feeling very well again."

"Oh, dear."

There was a silence, and it was as though death were suddenly in the room with them. But, after all, he was old, Elinor reflected; the thing was inevitable. He might be worse, but little Phil was better; and that was all that really mattered. She began to talk to her mother about the garden. Philip lighted a cigarette.

There was a knock at the door. It was the housemaid with a message from Nurse Butler: would they please come up at once. The convulsions had been very violent; the wasted body was without strength. By the time they reached to nursery, little Phil was dead.

Point Counter Point, *Aldous Huxley, 1928.*