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Grove and the Ants

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise." That is the epigraph of the last book that Frederick Philip Grove published; and in the few revisions that he made in the introduction, shortly before he suffered his final stroke, the book contains the last writing that he ever did, and therefore it is of special interest. It's different from anything else he ever wrote in that it's an animal fable, a journey undertaken by ants from the Orinoco Valley in Venezuela to New York City, in the course of which they observe and judge the race of men. Grove said of it, "Perhaps there is as much laughter in it as I shall ever evoke."

The Ant Book, as he called it for years, had a long history and a number of titles. It was published in 1947 as *Consider Her Ways*; in 1940 he had submitted it to Lorne Pierce as "Go To The Ant"; and the earliest manuscript that we have of it, about 1925, is called "MAN, His Habits, Social Organization, and Outlook." The radical difference between that title and the other ones indicates the radical difference in content, style, and perspective between the first version and the one that he wrote shortly after settling in Simcoe. That manuscript is dated 1933. The only thing that he left unchanged was the introduction, the framework of ant wisdom. Otherwise it is the published version.

The first mention that we have of this work is in a letter from Grove to Watson Kirkconnell, January 11, 1927, when he was commenting on a volume that Kirkconnell had lent him of the essays of Dean Inge, known as "the gloomy dean." He says, "I have read parts of it to Mrs. Grove who says, 'Sounds as if it were in your "Ant-book"'—I don't know whether you've ever heard of my 'Ant-book' which, for 20 years or so I used to consider *the* book of mine, till one day A.L.P. [Phelps] knocked the conceit out of me by saying, 'A pretty good sermon, that.' Since then I haven't read any of it." A couple of months later, and again to Kirkconnell, Grove writes, "Generally speaking, I'm not so sure about instinct. My own, very limited observations—the only ones I have made under scientific conditions were made on ants—lead me to the conclu-

sion that you may just as well ascribe the building of the city hall at Winnipeg to instinct as, for instance, the careful and scientific fungus-farming of the oecodoma ants of Central America and South America north of the Amazons. I have not found anything new, but I have seen observations of Bates, Belt, and others confirmed, and they seem to point to the fact that education, among ants, plays at least the same part as with us—though, as you know, I do not call it education but inducation.”

The 1925 manuscript is over two hundred pages, typed single space, and it consists of the fantasy introduction and a mass of dull, stodgy sermonizing. Phelps was quite right. But its genesis is a fascinating journey into Grove's mind, and an interesting example of the way in which he created his fiction.

For the introduction, the Framework, Grove borrowed freely from a book published by Jonathan Cape (Nelson handled it in Canada) in the summer of 1924, by Professor Arpad Ferenczy, a professor of sociology and jurisprudence at the University of Budapest, called *The Ants of Timothy Thümmel*, and sub-titled “A Satire on the History of Mankind.” It is, in effect, an allegory of World War I and the Russian Revolution, tracing the development of ant society through the rise of parasitic clergy, landholder, and warrior classes, with the subjugation of the workers, until a World Ant War came when the workers overthrew their rulers and established a harmonious egalitarian society under a new divine revelation that work is the only title to life. Grove followed closely the details of the machinery for this narrative. Ferenczy chose for his exemplars the Aruwimi ants, living in a forest glade in Central Africa north of the Congo. Grove chose the *Atta Gigantea* ants living in a valley in central South America, north of the Amazon. The fictional scribe in the one is Professor Thümmel, a renowned zoologist; in the other, F. Philgrove, an amateur myrmecologist. Thümmel deciphers his history in ant tracings on certain leaves; an ant scholar communicates with Philgrove by dotting letters on a page of his open book. When Thümmel returns home he is put in a madhouse where he commits suicide; Philgrove admits, “I knew I was living at the very edge of the dreamland of insanity.”

Grove also takes over most of the bibliography of the literature of ant life which appears at the end of Ferenczy's book, compiled for him by two (non-fictional) Fellows of the Entomological Society of London; for the incidents in Ferenczy's tale were founded on scientific data in the works of such authorities as Forel, Latreille, Huber, Emery, and W.M. Wheeler—the last of whom Ferenczy quoted on the comparative age and

sophistication of ant and human societies. Wheeler says, "Our ancestors were probably just forsaking that life among the tree-tops which has left its ineffaceable impress on all the details of our anatomy. A large part of the diet of these early Hominids probably consisted of those same ants, which had already developed a co-operative communism so complete that in comparison the most radical of our bolsheviks are ultra-conservative capitalists." Grove even takes over a detail from Ferenczy's appendix on the foresight of the ants in storing food. Ferenczy says, "The ancients were quite convinced of it . . . Aristotle, Virgil, Horace and Pliny held a similar view of the ants." Grove's version, "My study of ants went back to a time when the science was just developing into something like a systematic survey; and, I being by training a classicist, it had taken its starting-point from such ancient observations as those of Pliny and Aristotle." To Ferenczy's bibliography, Grove adds Thomas Belt's *The Naturalist in Nicaragua*, and Henry Bates's *A Naturalist on the River Amazon* (he notes that both works are available in the Everyman editions), and from them he borrows freely for authoritative detail on the geographic setting which he chose. But nowhere does he mention his considerable indebtedness to the professor of sociology and jurisprudence of the University of Budapest.

However, the title of the 1925 manuscript, which obviously could not have been written before the publication of Ferenczy's book, is "MAN, His Habits, Social Organization, and Outlook," and that is a close parody of Wheeler's remarkable study published in 1910, *Ants, Their Structure, Development and Behaviour*. In his introduction, Wheeler notes, "Some anthropologists like Topinard, distinguish in the development of human societies six different types or stages, designated as the hunting, pastoral, agricultural, commercial, industrial, and intellectual. The ants show stages corresponding to the first three of these—the hunting, pastoral and agricultural stages—the three great phases in the history of human development." But ant society, like human society, can degenerate, and in one of his later sections, Wheeler enumerates the seven permanent social parasites (among them one species that corresponds to the warrior class), and he goes on to say, "The zoologist, as such, is not concerned with the ethical and sociological aspects of parasitism, but the series of ants we have been considering in this and the four preceding chapters cannot fail to arrest the attention of those to whom a knowledge of the paragon of social animals is, after all, one of the chief aims of existence. He who without prejudice studies the history of mankind will note that many organizations that thrive on the capital accumulated by other members of the community, without an adequate

return in productive labor, bear a significant resemblance to many of the social parasites among ants. This resemblance has been studied by sociologists, who have also been able to point to detailed coincidences and analogies between human and animal parasitism in general" (502 - 503). It's easy to see the basis for the allegorical satire of Ferenczy the sociologist, and for Grove's dark denunciations.

On the other hand, as Thomas Belt, another of Grove's authorities, says in *A Naturalist in Nicaragua*, the ants are a measure of civilised society: "When we see these intelligent insects dwelling together in orderly communities of many thousands of individuals, their social instincts developed to a high degree of perfection, making their marches with the regularity of disciplined troops, showing ingenuity in the crossing of difficult places, assisting each other in danger, defending their nests at the risk of their own lives, communicating information rapidly to a great distance, making a regular division of work, and all imbued with laboring not for itself alone, but also for its fellows—we may imagine that Sir Thomas More's Utopia might have been applied with greater justice to such a community than to any human society" (25 - 26).

The ant world, then, affords not only a vehicle for Ferenczy's political satire, but in its life pattern it presents a social structure, a biological structure, which gives an alternative to the human one; and this alternative is a matriarchy. The anthropologists, the biologists, the sociologists, and Grove suggest, hint at, possible mutations in man's societal development—an inescapable theme with Grove.

The body of the 1925 Ant Book is the report of the delegation that this ideal world had sent on a long and dangerous journey to examine human society to see if it had any saving vestiges of reason. The report has been considered and sentence passed: Man must be exterminated to save creation, for Man is too destructive. In this fictional framework, the venerable scholar Wawa-quee, who had communicated the report to the human scribe, dies; and Philgrove has the responsibility of warning his race of their doom unless they change their ways.

Following the fictional introduction, however, the ant world disappears almost entirely, except for a few references and scattered foot-notes, and what is left is some flat-footed preaching which is very heavy going. Yet this mass of material is important, I think, because it is a repository for Grove's ideas and convictions, which by this time were fixed. They change very little in the twenty years of his writing life that follow, as they imbue what he had already done. By 1925 he had completed *A Search For America*; he had published *Over Prairie Trails* and

The Turn of the Year; and *Settlers of the Marsh* came out in the fall of that year. The 1925 Ant Book gives a valuable and central view of Grove's intellectual equipment.

For the most part, it's a melange of Rousseau and Thoreau with a fair admixture of Goethe's scientific thought. Grove had already done homage to Rousseau in a paper "Rousseau as Educator" and to Thoreau and indeed Goethe in *Prairie Trails* and *The Turn of the Year*. Now he organises his arguments and elaborates them. The work is in four divisions: Part I, Man as Part of Creation; Part II, Man's organisation, Economic; Part III, Man's organisation, Social and Political; and Part IV, Man's Higher Life, Spiritual and Intellectual.

In a general way, the first book, *Man in Nature*, is in sympathy with the views of Goethe (who read and admired the botanical writings of his contemporary J.J. Rousseau) in such works as his *Comparative Anatomy* and *The Morphology of Plants*. Here Goethe emphasizes the logic of nature, the great diversity within a system of unity, the rigid laws that govern particular forms ("no animal can burst the bonds of its type"), the mutual interdependence of all organic life, and the function of reason given us to discover a mental and spiritual unity. Nature is god—the pantheism characteristic of the nineteenth century. But Grove insists, following Rousseau's declaration at the opening of *Emile*, that Man has fallen away from that ideal, has enslaved nature and destroyed universal unity.

In Part II the economic views expound Thoreau's slogan "Simplify, simplify" and follow his dictum that the needs of man are few beyond food and shelter, that artificial needs and desires are wasteful of life. And here Grove gets carried away in an evangelical outburst against women's dress, and he plods mercilessly through the chemise, the corset, the corset-cover, the blouse, and the folly of importing such. (Sybil, in *The Master of the Mill* is put through a similar strip-tease at the hands of a raging mob.) Luxury begets trade, and as Thoreau thunders, "Trade curses everything it handles," and creates the injustices and artificiality, in terms of real wealth, of supply and demand. Grove proposes a measure of wealth which would have a real base, and here in large part is the argument later in *The Master of the Mill*: "In a civilization like man's, where property is private and dependent upon trade, another property of wealth becomes even more important than these two; and this property is exchange value. . . . Let us probe for some fundamental and unalterable measure of wealth. Nobody can doubt for a moment that such a measure consists for man, as for all animals, in food. In America, wheat comes nearest to such an ideal standard . . .

The real values of this wheat would be fixed and determinate as the sustenance for so-and-so many heads of population and for a given length of time . . . [wheat] would form a practically unchangeable standard of all values. . . [the value of other commodities] relative to wheat would then be determined by the amount of wheat consumed during the time required for their production." Other implications in this scheme, of course, are that Commerce and Industry, the two stages of development beyond that of Agriculture, are virtuous in so far as they grow out of agriculture and serve man's basic needs. Thus the work of the master of the Mill is "The world's work," as Grove called it, and entirely virtuous in its fundamental nature. But there is still a dubious element: "all private ownership is unjust. That is the real cause of the evils prevalent in the so-called civilization of man." It's not hard to see why Grove ran for the CCF.

Moving from economics to Part III, man's social and political organization, Grove begins with what amounts to a paraphrase of the opening of Rousseau's essay "The Origins of Inequality," in which Rousseau distinguishes two species of inequality among men and explains that there is "one which I call natural or physical inequality because it is established by nature, and consists in the difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind, or of the soul; the other which may be termed moral or political inequality, because it depends on a kind of convention . . . and consists in the different privileges, which some men enjoy, to the prejudice of others, such as that of being richer, more honored, more powerful, and even that of exacting obedience from them." On this subject Grove—or the scholar ant—becomes quite emotional: "And this leads me on to the darkest of all those features which make human life the inexorable, bitter, and contemptible thing which it is: which makes it that image of crime and folly which I have tried and am still trying to depict. Inequality there will always be among all animate things: but that inequality is one predetermined by Nature or God. In the last resort, he who wins the great prizes of life, namely real achievement and real greatness, will do so by no virtue of his own, for even the industrious owe their industry to things beyond their control . . . one will with or without effort, turn the thoughts into immortal treasures of deed or word; the other will strive and struggle and yet, by some freak of heredity, always fall short of the highest achievement, the one will reap where the other merely sowed. Such is Nature's relentless law." But man has added a system of artificial inequality to the natural one, "economic inequality becomes social inequality," and so the basis of subservience in one degree or another, what Thoreau calls "unofficial slavery."

In this section Grove also depends heavily upon Rousseau's other well-known essay "The Social Contract," with its famous opening line, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains." Following Rousseau, Grove says that civilization was a "transition from pure and undisguised individualism to a state of organized interdependence" although "no actual contract was ever made." But man has distorted interdependence by his "peculiar way of holding property . . . which is held by private individuals" and so inequities arise even by a failure in crops, which can make a man a slave either to the land or to another; and he repeats the idea, "The violation of the conditions of a fundamental social contract . . . though such a contract was probably never entered upon in so many words, yet brings about a very real inequity . . . The misfortune of one is the opportunity of another."

And here perhaps it's worth remembering that Grove was then working on a novel published several years later as *The Yoke of Life*, but which in the first manuscript he titled "Equal Opportunities." It's of the farm lad, Len Sterner, shackled by the needs of his family and their land, thwarted in his desire for education and a chance to develop his talents, a novel in which the first part is permeated by Rousseau. Even the final title come from "Origins of Inequality"—"All gladly offered their necks to the yoke, thinking they were securing their liberty."

However, out of the inequities there does come another phenomenon—one that Lincoln Steffens had explored—the 'good bad man', who also appears later in *The Master of the Mill*: "There is another consideration worth mentioning. The single, enormously rich man is rather apt to be conscience stricken at his own enormous inequity, and thus in a futile attempt at expiation, he may devote at least part of his wealth to worthy purposes; to the large-scale endowment of charity or education."

The last section, *Man's Higher Life*, leads back to the anthropologists' outline of the stages of civilization (hunting, pastoral, agricultural, commercial, industrial, intellectual) and links up with Goethe's rejection of theological theories of the origin and metamorphosis of animal life and with his view of Mother Nature as "a single great organism." Grove argues that leisure is needed to release the powers of reason to try "to understand the underlying laws and to find out how to conform to them," and with Thoreau he says that such leisure can be achieved only by "reducing necessities to a minimum." And all of this leads to a consideration of education (with monotonous repetition of the education/induction slogan) in which he repeats most of what he had said in the paper "Rousseau as Educator" and adds theories of the German educationist Froebel. Grove summarizes the

various views: "in a reasonable as well as natural view, education consists, not in the repression of powers, nor in their creation, but in the awakening of directing instincts which in the individual lie dormant This education ends only at the point of death, of course, but it consists essentially in the 'drawing out' of latent powers." Unfortunately, current methods discouraged the desire for knowledge in children: "They are 'inducted'; that is, broken to the yoke of human insanity." In this section can be found the talks that Grove gave in Simcoe ten years later on the need for practical education, the destructive influence of the school room, and so forth. It's something of a grab bag. But his lasting convictions are here, and the sources from which he drew them.

After the triumphal tours, after the move east, after the peculiar experience in Ottawa, after the destruction of hopes of either a sinecure from the government or a highly paid post in the publishing world, after he settled in Simcoe in fact, Grove reshaped, redirected the whole body of the Ant Book while retaining the framework of the ants of the Orinoco Valley. In place of the pulpit-thumping jeremiads in which Grove cried "Repent ye!" to everybody else, there is an amusing, entertaining work of wry humor and mature perspective, even though it has a sombre ending. The manuscript is dated October, 1933.

This is the version, retitled "Go To The Ant," that Grove sent to Lorne Pierce saying, "This is the Ant-Book so often mentioned on which I have been at work since the fall or early winter of 1919. It has had even more rewriting than 'A Search for America' or the 'Life'; in fact, I believe it is the most laboriously-produced book of mine, the plan of which reaches back to 1892 or 1893. . . . Perhaps there is as much laughter in it as I shall ever evoke It has one merit—that of utter originality. And I think it contains a few things which are important."

The purpose of the ants' journey, and with it the tone of the book, has changed. It is no longer to examine, judge, or condemn man; rather it is to undertake a scientific expedition "to complete a survey of antdom . . . a cataloguing and classification of all forms of ant life on earth," and to trace "the definite scale of development up to our own race . . . the very apex of creation," the *Atta Gigantea* ants. It's obvious from this remark that ants are not ideal creatures, not superhuman, for they share the human weakness of vanity. They also share human skepticism of new ideas or of different people. Even the great scholar Wawa-quee says, "I cannot imagine a state of affairs in which, the animal in question having reached the stage where a social life (as distinct from a herd life) becomes possible, as man has, the male is the dominant sex; and it is

with man. This is against all reason. Every male is capable of fertilizing many females unless it dies in copula (male man does not); yet, the seminal fluid discharged in a single copulation suffices (at least with us) to fertilize thousands of ovules;—even where the male is not restricted to a single copulation (as it is with us), it is the rule that, after having fulfilled its proper function, it serves for such menial offices only as defence or the labour of procuring food, etc. I cannot think of any other animal which has developed to the social stage—distinctly an achievement of the female—and which nevertheless supports its males in a dominant position. I therefore conclude that, in the past, man, too, has lived under matriarchy as we do today Man is a degenerate type.” Grove’s views and those of the venerable ant coincide.

But the ant world harbors not only vanity and incredulity; it is also capable of treachery. This comes from Assa-ree, the ambitious military commander, and it is her nature and actions that give a quite remarkable degree of suspense to the narrative.

There are vestiges of the earlier version, but they are properly subordinated to the new purpose. For instance, a long dissertation on man’s perverse waste of the bounty of nature in the burning of forests is here limited to a sentence, “The native vegetation on which the rest of creation depends for shelter and food they destroy by fire or otherwise.”(23) The exposition of Goethe’s views on the unknown and the unknowable is given dramatic force when the views are expounded by Anna-zee, botanist and philosopher, in the course of the great exploration. Azteca, the recorder, dilates on the insanity of English spelling, but fortunately only for about a page. More entertainingly, Wheeler, the renowned myrmecologist, enters the narrative as a character, The Wheeler (because he rides a bicycle), a monster, a source of terror as he goes about scooping up ants. The real and the fictional merge.

Grove’s narrative, like Ferenczy’s, is firmly based on the findings of reputable scientists, and some of the seemingly impossible incidents come from scientific accounts. For instance, Bissa-tee, the zoologist, gathered twelve Eciton army ants that had been decapitated in her presence by a human physician, and brought them along to observe “the protoplasmic vitality of the Eciton body as such.” These ants kept on marching, and “never discovered that they were not with an army of their own kind It was sometimes ludicrous to see how they begged for food, palpating us with imaginary antennae and lifting the stumps of their necks as though they were opening shadowy mouths They lived for 39 days and kept up sufficient energy to continue marching to within the last but one day of their lives.” That tale comes, according to

Grove's footnote, from an article in the *Scientific American*, 1893, on "Tenacity of Life in Ants," by Miss A.M. Fielde. With it, Grove gives a beautiful satiric touch about the military mind—or lack of it. By such means he presents his fantasy as completely credible and at the same time makes us newly aware of the remarkable phenomena in nature. It is an excellent fictional technique.

Sometimes satire and allegory mingle. On one occasion the explorers became aware of a peculiar odor. "It was a scent of death and decay, uncanny, alarming." As they went to investigate, they saw "an enormous heap of dead ants . . . There were hundreds of thousands of them, piled to the height of a hundred ant-lengths; and all were stark-dead. It was a scene to shake the stoutest heart. Far in the east the grey of dawn stood in a sky of featureless cloud; a sloping plain stretched away to meet it, without a tree, without a shrub, without even a tall weed, featureless like the sky which it seemed to reflect. It looked like chaos before the creation." Iridescent germs of pestilence were floating in the air, and yet a long line of ants were hurrying to join the pile of dead. Grove holds the suspense well, and at length reveals that the scent which has created the havoc is "the perfume of royal favour"; it is called Money. An ant once perceiving it, "She will follow no matter where it leads; for it seems to promise power and everlasting satisfaction of all desires . . . She has, from that moment on, no other desire than to inhale this money. Nothing will hold her back; no consideration of honour, no love of kind; no sense of formicarian dignity. Have it she must should it lead her to death."

Then, among the honey-ants were the repletes, "strange spherical bodies," filled with honey from which the others fed, and attached to the roof of some of the inner galleries, "suspended above the common herd, unable to take part in their pleasure and diversions except as lookers-on; debarred from all friendly and intimate intercourse." These were the authors, who "first of all were required to fast for a full year, or for a quarter of their lives, many of them dying during this period of their training. Next they were, for a period of from two to three moons, exposed to all sorts of practical jokes, expressions of contempt, and an utter isolation, only critics or minims having access to them. . . . and they had to be at the beck and call of even the humblest of their fellow ants who, no matter how excellent the honey they furnished might be, thought themselves entitled to nag at the food they received; and that in the exactly inverse ratio of their qualifications as judges."

The narrative which the scholar ant recounts is, like the expedition itself, a command performance from the queen, "it pleased Her Majesty

to ask me to compose a popular account of the whole undertaking, to serve as an introduction to the detailed study of special subjects." The great expedition began in 1925, led by Wawa-quee at the head of the cream of *Atta Gigantea* scholars, a Supreme Command of 162 specialists in five divisions—zoologists, botanists, geographers, communications experts, and recorders—and protected by an army of 10,000 under the separate command of Assa-ree. The journey took eight years, and of all the host only Wawa-quee survived.

They went up the isthmus by night marches, for it was the territory of their deadly enemies, the Ecitons; they crossed the Panama Canal with great ingenuity; in the mountains they found the pastoral, aphid-keeping ants, and in the fifth summer (1929) they came to the Garden of the Gods and the honey ants with their repletes. Taking winter quarters in a human barn, they lost some of their number to The Wheeler, and more to barnyard animals—a hen demolished the geographer-in-chief. On the Slope they met the agriculturalists, "the great harvesting ants, most interesting and civilized in their habits," with storage chambers filled with "carefully husked and cleaned grains"; and on the Plain they found the slave ants. But "it proved much harder to descend the mountains than it had been to ascend them," and they fought a continuous battle on the march east. Great disasters befell them. The Wheeler scooped up 12 soldiers and 8 scholars; the terrible red ants, advancing "in twenty-five ranks twelve abreast" cut a swath of death through them and "our total number was now reduced to less than 1,800"; an automobile roared along the road and "sixty-six great scholars, everyone a leader in her field . . . were reduced to a greasy smear on a highway!" Crossing the Mississippi many more were killed when lightning struck a metal cable they were clinging to. Assa-ree mutinied and she and the rest of the army were destroyed. Only three scholars were left—the botanist Bissa-tee, the recorder Azte-ca, and Wawa-quee. They reached the seaboard in the box car of "a space machine," and found refuge in the New York City Library, where they lived on molds and devised a way to read the human records. After a year or so, fumigators came one morning, and Azte-ca, who was a flighty soul and had become addicted to detective stories, perished because she couldn't tear herself away from the whodunit she was reading. The other two escaped through a broken window. On the arduous way back Bissa-tee died that Wawa-quee might live.

There is yet another facet to this prismatic work, and that is its analogy with Grove's personal life in the years 1925 to 1933. The way up to the mountains was hard, the Garden of the Gods (if Ottawa can be

called such) was reached, but the stay was brief and the descent was much harder. What the ant calls, "the disastrous march east," is echoed in *In Search of Myself*: "what happened to us. . . was done by the east." The analogy is kept light, but it glances in and out all along the way. Occasionally Grove brings it forcibly to our notice. When the pathetic threesome remnant of the great host reaches New York City, they are in constant danger of being stepped on by the great throngs of humans, but they escape because these callous creatures simply don't notice them. However, "Suddenly I was observed. A human hurrying along, with his head bent low, saw me and stopped. He stopped, and deliberately lifting his near hind-foot, he brought it down on top of me in order to crush me out of existence . . . I was furiously digging myself into the snow before the enormous flat sole of that foot descended. No longer as nimble as I had been in my youth, I was not quite fast enough and so I felt my carapace crack and nearly swooned. I don't know how I know, but that man's name was Ayr; and I want to hand at least his appellation over to the everlasting condemnation of antkind." The reference is to Robert Ayre's article about Grove in the *Canadian Forum* April, 1932, in the series "Canadian Writers of Today." It was not particularly laudatory.

And there is the extraordinary scene between Bissa-tee and Wawa-quee, the two wretched survivors on the way back, in which there are repeated references to "six years ago," which would have been the time of the death of the Groves' young daughter. The narrator says, "Every now and then I caught Bissa-tee, now recovered to a point to which I, being so much older, could not recover any longer, looking wistfully across the brook and scanning the horizon; and I knew that she was blaming me in her heart." A quarrel comes: "For more than an hour we indulged in mutual recriminations. Both of us were partly in the right; and that fact blinded us to that other fact that we were both wholly in the wrong. I retired to our temporary quarters, angry and despondent, but at the same time longing for comfort and companionship, longing for Bissa-tee to come and make it up. She did at last; slowly and shamefacedly she came in . . . Both of us felt stirred to our depths; and we begged forgiveness from each other, blaming fate, blaming the state we were in; feeling sorry for each other, feeling sorry for ourselves." I don't know of any other passage in Grove that is as intimate, compassionate, and self-critical as that.

The Ant Book, then, provided Grove first with a storehouse for his ideas, and later with a vehicle for science fiction, satire, and a record of his own recent life. It seems also to have given impetus to another work.

In letters to Dents in March 1934, Grove says, "It took me eight months to hammer the 'Ant-Book' into shape"; two days later he is proposing a novel about "The Rise and Fall of a Small Western Town: the rise as a consequence of growing industry (flour milling)—the fall as a consequence of ever-increasing mechanization (automatic machinery)" and by March 28, "that confounded novel of mine, the one about the Rise and Fall of Langholm, Manitoba, has actually gripped me." The ant world and the conceptions of the ant world glint in and out of *The Master of the Mill*.

There is the very structure of the mill "which towered up, seventeen stories high, like a huge pyramid . . . [with] the wide ground floor with its eight cavelike openings through which led the tracks of the trains that carried the wheat in and the flour out, day and night, never ceasing, year after year." Here is the mound of "the great harvesting ants" with the chambers filled with grain, which "like those of most ants, must have taken its inception from a single and unattended queen who, having excavated a tiny chamber and piled the matter removed in a fan-shaped mound north of the entrance, at once proceeded to rear her first brood of minims." So the mill with its layout in units, at present with 170 units, "yet the lower part of the present north wall is still the original one."

Of course there are the slave-owners. In the insect world, the proportion was "at least three Subsericeas for every Rubicunda," but with the mill owners the proportion is much greater; even in the mansion it is something like ten to one. Then again, the small Clark men in successive generations have served the mill and a matriarchal society—the three Clark queens, "tall and full figured," who were all named Maude. And in this book, as in the latter part of *Consider Her Ways*, Rousseau's question of who is slave and who is master permeates all relationships, and has its ironic presence in the title, *The Master of the Mill*.

Overall is the conception of wheat as the foundation of trade and commerce, that Grove expounded so enthusiastically in the 1925 version of the ant book, here becoming also the power of government: "the issue is whether ignorance or knowledge is to govern this country, and, wheat being its principal product, control of the mill, in the long run, means control of the country." And of course the enterprise connected with wheat forms a transition from the agricultural phase of human development to the phase of commerce and industry in a worthy way, because it is founded on agriculture which, according to Wheeler, is the highest stage. There is also present, in the highly cultivated Jew who admires Baudelaire, the final, intellectual stage of development.

In this world as in the ant world (after Rousseau) justice is relative. Wawa-quee can put down a mutiny ruthlessly; with the mill owners, fraud can be a virtuous act: "It was against man's law; granted. He obeyed a higher law. No great man has ever hesitated about breaking man's law when a greater purpose was to be served by its breach . . . Consumed by flames it could be fertilized. The end justified the means; it has always done so; it will always do so." Thoreau with his I/not I query is here too, as Sam Clark ponders, "Who are we? What is the reality in us? That which we feel ourselves to be? Or that which others conceive us to be?"

At the end, the women are left alone, the matriarchs. Man being now degenerate will go back to the beginning, and they rehearse the anthropological stages of development. There is just room enough left for a little Goethe on the unknown and the unknowable: there will come "Some entirely unforeseen thing. Some development of which we cannot even dream yet. It is useless to try to divine it."

There are, of course, other themes in *The Master of the Mill* but few, I think, that do not occur in "MAN, His Habits, Social Organization and Outlook." The Ant Book, in one version or another, encompasses most of Grove's convictions, and those convictions are remarkably consistent, even monotonous, throughout his books. It was on August 17, 1939 that Grove wrote to Richard Crouch, "The Master is finished, thank the Lord."

After Ellen Elliott had accepted *Consider Her Ways* for publication in December 1945, Grove wrote to her, "I want to cancel the appendix of the ant-book and replace the first 23 pages with a few changes, for which I need another few days." By April 21 he had received galleys for the autobiography which she had also accepted for Macmillans, and a sample page of Ants. The changes that he had made in the introduction were his final writing. The second stroke came at the beginning of May.

The ending of the introduction is changed. Whereas the aged scholar, Wawa-quee, having completed her task of passing on her knowledge, then died, and the human scribe said "Peace be to her dust" and dropped a tear, now the pathetic disappears and so does the ant, "I never again saw my friend," he says. And that shift is a shift in tone consonant with the tone of the new body of the work. The other changes have to do with the human scribe, and grow out of the means of communication between ant and man.

In the first version there is an elaborate scheme, following Ferenczy, a sort of parlor game, taking up seven or eight pages altogether, in which the trivial machinery is as painstaking as it is tiresome, and its ef-

fect is to underline the impossibility, the unreality of such a happening. In his final revision, Grove cuts all the ingenious devices. In their stead is a conception that was a profound reality to him from the time of our first knowledge of him in Canada. It is that of the unity of nature. The astonishing thing is how simply this is done, and once done, how logical it seems to be. There is no need for devices. All nature is one. There is a communion too deep for words.

The effect of this change is to create once more a figure of multiple oneness, a conception that underlies the persistent autobiographical elements in so many of his works, from *A Search for America*, written in Rapid City to *Two Generations*, coming out of Simcoe. This time it is a fusion of authors. There is the I-narrator who is the ant-scholar, and there is the I-narrator who is the amateur myrmecologist who traveled to Venezuela, the obedient human scribe to whom the adventure happened. This narrator signs the introduction F.P.G., but F.P.G. is both fictional and real, an embodiment of the life of the man who called himself Grove. He is man-traveler and ant-traveler, fictional narrator and Frederick Philip Grove, the name that appears on the title page—and someone beyond that.

The change begins with a kind of mental metamorphosis as the ants mesmerize the man intently watching them, until "Moments of clear but vacant consciousness were obliterated by lapses of an absolute mental void." He falls and strikes his head. "On awaking I had had a very peculiar sensation. I had not seemed to be I." Up to this point, Grove had cut about two pages of devices, and had succeeded in focusing attention on the I/not I theme. By cutting another five pages of contrivances and substituting a new ending of less than four pages, Grove details the movement from general metamorphosis to a complete fusion of man and ant, "By some mesmeric action I, my individuality, had been sucked up or down into an alien mass-consciousness which communed with me through channels other than those of the senses. The moment I surrendered myself, my consciousness was that, not of my former self, but that of ants, and of no individual ant, so far, but of all antdom." The unity of nature has triumphed, and F.P.G. goes on to the "mesmeric transposition of personality" with the ant-scholar of "extreme old age." "I walked and acted like a human being; but my mind was that of the ant: I had lived her life; and her memory was mine." The identification prepares for, establishes the element of personal analogy within the narrative.

In the tone of the revised introduction, as in the tone of the revised body of the work, Grove seems to be even amused at the I/not I frenzy

that had preoccupied him. If "life in all its forms is one," if one form of it flows into another and can take the mind of another, if society is in transition and individuals are mutants, what price the individual, or the pose he assumes, or his name? "I surrendered myself." Has Thoreau given way to Goethe—"Surrender is the ultimate joy"?

But this is Frederick Philip Grove—and we have to remember that at the time he was making these changes, he was also reading proofs for perhaps the most unsurrendering and unrevealing of all autobiographies, *In Search of Myself*.