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PROBLEM

*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity,
Saieth the preacher;*

But about this particular specimen of humanity
Opposite, who will be our teacher?

Is it really so very odd
That a chap with a body like a Greek god
Should want to glory in it
Every waking minute?
Isn't it his positive duty
To share his beauty?

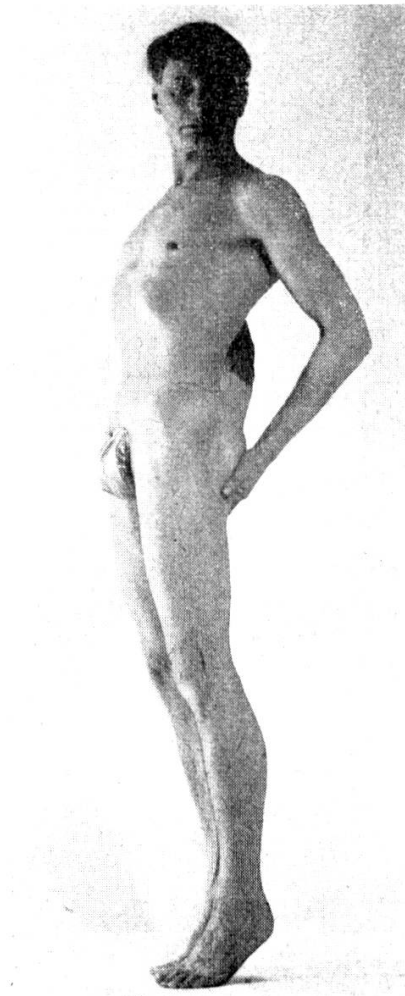
I'm not interested in theories —
In abstractions strung together in neat logical series —
Give me the answer
About this particular nude male dancer:

Not interested in his private life or his past history —
It's today I want to penetrate his body's mystery,
And know the slim
Brown naked *him*:

Who is able to reconcile
Those who find that nakedness vile
With those of us who see death forever defied
In his quiet, triumphant body-pride? —
And think it's as near as we get to the divine
In nineteen-hundred-and-fifty-nine.

One more look. To you all I appeal.
What truly is it proper for us to feel?
Attraction, inspiration, worship, trust —
Or horror and disgust?

In a nutshell, is this nude
Evil — or good?



by O. F. Simpson

THE PRIVILEGES OF BEAUTY are enormous. By its mysterious alchemy the truckdriver becomes a king, the delivery boy an emperor. The one to whom it is given rises above all of us even though he is a servant. We are his willing subjects. He can trample us with his boots, demand of us outrageous tribute, humiliate us and maltreat us and command us, and we forgive him everything. We voluntarily blind ourselves, passing the glowing bowls of molten copper before our eyes, so that we no longer see our ruler's arrogance or treachery or inadequacies or faults. We give him a kind of adoration that puzzles him at first. He cannot understand it nor comprehend our generosity and forgiveness. He is baffled to see us prostrate before him. Come, he says — rise and look into my face. We turn our blinded eyes upon him and feel the warmth and radiance of his presence, and in our trance-like mindless state we move to do his bidding like a captive Trilby before her master, or a robot activated by buttons on a switchboard.

-Steward.

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The extreme dignity and restraint of the whole exactly accords with my own ideas; in fact I gladly admit that to look through that splendid gallery of fine young men for the first time brought tears to the eyes.

I could write a great deal in detail about the effect of this astonishingly beautiful book — the facial expressions, the use of slips and clothes, outdoor versus indoor, and so on — but you'll be getting too many such tributes, so I will shut up. But thanks indeed.

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