

Analysis of peyton farquhar's character from an occurrence at owl creek bridge

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Jacob Wilson 14 February 2013 Professor Horan The Bold Farquhar Ambrose Bierce allows the reader to have a glimpse of Peyton Farquhar's character, while he is on a bridge being prepared to hang by Union soldiers. Farquhar is portrayed as a wealthy, high-class plantation owner who is receiving punishment for attempting to destroy the Owl Creek Bridge. While Farquhar does not have an actual affiliation with the Confederate Army due to his high social rank, he does have a prideful obsession with pursuing glory; he only desires the praise that comes with differentiating himself from the rest.

Peyton Farquhar is illustrated as a "well-to-do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family." All of the joys associated with wealth, property, and political power are his, thus he yearns to be recognized as going the extra mile. The simple phrase "opportunity for distinction" summarizes the meaning behind his quest for even more fame. Peyton will use all resources available to accomplish this desire. When the "larger than life" soldier, Peyton Farquhar, is sitting with his wife on his property, an exciting opportunity presents itself following a conversation with a Confederate soldier in disguise.

Farquhar is tempted to pursue an honorable act, and that he does. After the soldier explains the situation, Farquhar smiles as he ponders the opportunity, "Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel . . . what could he accomplish?" The chance of delaying the northern troops is too great a temptation for Peyton to resist. The conceited politician reveals his true

pursuit: glory and honor. The wealthy civilian immediately decides to burn the bridge.

Farquhar may have better protected his livelihood had he not been so enthused to destroy the bridge. As it turns out, " That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in war time. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the South, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier". So great was his devotion to the South and his chase for prominence that nothing could get in his way. Armed with a plethora of pride and a fearless spirit, Farquhar is apprehended while attempting to destroy the bridge.

The reader is continually reminded of Farquhar's bravado. He perceives himself well in every aspect that defines a superior human. During the period Farquhar constructs from imagination his escape, while he in is the creek, he praises his accurate shooting. While his method is very sly, upon further investigation it is also very boastful. " He observed that it was a grey eye and remembered having read that grey eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed. " Early in the story Bierce specifically recognizes that Farquhar has grey eyes.

Though it be discreet, it is yet another charge in favor of his selfish pride. The physical features of a man in his mid-thirties are not expected to be pristine, although Farquhar would qualify as an exception. Specific detail is added in two paragraphs deciphering every aspect of his superiority. It is comical that Farquhar is simply experiencing a daydream. Nonetheless,

minute details are thought up in his head. " He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert.

Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt ripples upon the face . . . saw the individual trees, the leaves and veining of each leaf—saw the very insects upon them . . . The humming of the knats that danced above the eddies. " The details may have been so easily described due to a mass of emotions rushing through the brain of the one to be executed, but a large piece of boastfulness again presents itself by the confidence and belief Farquhar still possesses at this point.