NCERT Solutions for Class 12 English Vistas Chapter 7

Question 1.
Reflecting on the story, what did you feel about Evans having the last laugh?
Answer:
In this story, James Roderick Evans, a young criminal, manipulated a situation to outsmart a team of officers, headed by the Governor of HM Prison, Oxford. His ingenuity impresses the readers. One views him as a law breaker; he was a kleptomaniac, not a ferocious criminal.There was no record against him for any violence. On the contrary, he was praised by the Governor as a pleasant and amusing person. He was one of the stars at the Christmas concert and was good at imitation.

He was called “Evans the Break” by the prison officers as he had escaped three times from prison. His ability to outsmart the officers is viewed as more of a battle of wits, than a serious offence. One marvels at his cleverness—his plea to keep the hat on, impersonating the invigilator and having his friend pose as a tutor, and above all hoodwinking the police into escorting him out. One cannot but help admire him for his never-say- die attitude.

Question 2.
When Stephens comes back to the cell he jumps to a conclusion and the whole machinery blindly goes by his assumption, without even checking the identity of the injured ‘McLeery’. Does this show how hasty conjectures prevent one from seeing the obvious? How is the criminal able to predict such negligence?
Answer:
When Stephens walked beside ‘McLeery’, he noticed that his Scots accent was more pronounced and he looked slimmer. He was happily ruminating on the fact that the Governor had asked him, and not Jackson, to see McLeery off the premises. But much to his horror, when he decided to take just one last look at Evans, he saw the injured ‘McLeery’ instead and raised an alarm. McLeery, who was actually Evans in disguise, managed to have himself escorted to the hospital from where he escaped.

Though the police had seen Evans day in and day out, yet he had managed to give them the slip. Negligence to corroborate evidence and to fall for the general frenzy, outwitted the officers and the governor. The criminal, on the other hand, observed the people around him and plotted to take advantage of their complacence and weakness. Jackson and Stephens were so anxious to outdo one another that they were taken on a ride by the criminal.

Question 3.
What could the Governor have done to securely bring back Evans to the prison when he caught him at the Golden Lion? Does that final act of foolishness really prove that “he was just another good-for-a-giggle, gullible governor, that was all”?
Answer:

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The Governor was not necessarily foolish. It was he who tracked down Evans at the Golden Lion. He was perceptive and was shown to unravel the mystery, almost single-handedly.Yet, when the prison officer handcuffed the recaptured Evans, the Governor put him in the van and easily let him escape. He committed the same mistake of assuming that Evans could no longer pull another trick. His self¬assured attitude caused him to lose to Evans who seemed alert as ever, and quick-witted.

Though the Governor was outsmarted by Evans once, he failed to anticipate that Evans could pull off a similar trick with the police officer. However, Evans comes across as a mastermind who outwitted one and all, it seemed impossible to keep up with his antics.

Question 4.
While we condemn the crime we are sympathetic to the criminal. Is this the reason why the prison guards develop a soft corner for those in custody?
Answer:
The reason why the prison guards develop a soft comer for those in custody is that constant interaction brings people closer. There is increased understanding between them. With the passage of time they grow to empathise with the criminal. As ordinary individuals, we too identify with the characters in a book or a film, we can identify with their pain and suffering. The prison guards tend to form their personal favourites and alleviate their suffering by the little compassion they can, within legal boundaries. In this story, Evans knew of Jackson's compassionate nature which he took advantage of, to stage his escape. Jackson let Evans keep on his tattered hat and spared him the discovery of his new haircut, facilitating his escape.

Question 5.
Do you agree that between crime and punishment it is mainly a battle of wits?
Answer:
Between crime and punishment, it is mainly a battle of wits. Courts have become battlegrounds of sophistry, hyperbole, and obfuscation. This is the reason why seasoned criminals, taking advantage of the situation, go unpunished. There is a relationship between intelligence and crime. As in the story, Evans was a kleptomaniac but managed to outsmart the entire team of police officers. So much so that he was escorted out of the prison by the men in uniform, arrested and he managed to escape again in the wake of a confession.

His plan was brilliant and his tactics ingenious, such as getting his friends to masquerade as a German teacher and as the invigilator, concealing blood in a rubber ring, getting directions through the means of a question paper, and the correction of the paper. He manages to outwit the entire police force.

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