"The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber"

Hemingway has often been praised for his concise, suggestive use of detail and dialogue. It is this use of detail and dialogue to which Hemingway referred when he spoke of writing on the principle of the iceberg: "There is seven-eighths of it [meaning] under water for every part that shows." Look at the following passages below. What do we learn about the characters involved?

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"Will you have lime juice or lemon squash?" Macomber asked.
"I'll have a gimlet," Robert Wilson told him.
"I'll have a gimlet too. I need something," Macomber's wife said. (3)

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She was an extremely handsome and well-kept woman of the beauty and social position which had, five years before, commanded five thousand dollars as the price of endorsing, with photographs, a beauty product which she had never used. (4)

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He [Francis Macomber] was dressed in the same sort of safari clothes that Wilson wore except that his were new…. (4)

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He [Wilson] smiled at her [Mrs. Macomber] and, not smiling, she looked curiously at her husband. (4)
Wilson looked over at her without smiling and now she smiled at him. (5)

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[After Macomber shoots an impala]
"That was a good shot," Wilson said. "They're a small target."
"Is it a worth-while head?" Macomber asked.
"It's excellent," Wilson told him. "You shoot like that and you'll have no trouble."
"Do you think we'll find buffalo tomorrow?"
"There's a good chance of it. They feed out early in the morning and with luck we may catch them in the open."
"I'd like to clear away that lion business," Macomber said. "It's not very pleasant to have your wife see you do something like that."
I should think it would be even more unpleasant to do it, Wilson thought, wife or no wife, or to talk about it having done it. (11)

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[Shooting the lion]
"How far is it?" asked Macomber, raising his rifle.
"About seventy-five. Get out and take him."
"Why not shoot from where I am?"
"You don't shoot them from cars," he heard Wilson saying in his ear. "Get out. He's not going to stay out there all day." (14)

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[On approaching the injured lion]
"You don't have to go in, of course," Wilson said. "That's what I'm hired for, you know. That's why I'm so expensive."
"You mean you'd go in by yourself? Why not leave him there?"
Robert Wilson, whose entire occupation had been with the lion and the problem he presented, and who had not been thinking about Macomber except to note that he was rather windy, suddenly felt as though he had opened the wrong door in a hotel and seen something shameful.
"What do you mean?"
"Why not just leave him?"
"You mean pretend to ourselves he hasn't been hit?"
"No. Just drop it."
"It isn't done."
"Why not?"
"For one thing, he's certain to be suffering. For another, some one else might run onto him." (18)

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"Could I have a drink of water?" Macomber said. Wilson spoke to the older gun-bearer, who wore a canteen on his belt, and the man unbuckled it, unscrewed the top and handed it to Macomber, who took it noticing how heavy it seemed and how hairy and shoddy the felt covering was in his hand. He raised it to drink and looked ahead at the high grass with the flat-topped trees behind it. A breeze was blowing toward them and the grass rippled gently in the wind. (19)

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[After Macomber runs away from lion]
He came toward Wilson, his tallness all seeming a naked reproach, and Wilson looked at him and said:
"Want to take pictures?"
"No," he said. (20)

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Macomber did not know how the lion had felt before he started his rush, nor during it when the unbelievable smash of the .505 with a muzzle velocity of two tons had hit him in the mouth, nor what kept him coming after that, when the second ripping crash had smashed his hind quarters and he had come crawling on toward the crashing, blasting thing that had destroyed him. Wilson knew something about it and only expressed it by saying, "Damned fine lion," but Macomber did not know how Wilson felt about things either. (21)

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[Macomber] knew about that [the fact that his wife would never leave him], about motor cycles—that was earliest—about motor cars, about duck-shooting, about fishing, trout, salmon and big-sea, about sex in books, many books, too many books, about all court games, about dogs, not much about horses, about hanging on to his money, about most of the other things his world dealt in, and about his wife not leaving him. (21)

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[After Macomber's "metamorphosis"]
The car was parallel to the patch of bush. Macomber, Wilson and the gun-bearer got down. Macomber, looking back, saw his wife, with the rifle by her side, looking at him. He waved to her and she did not wave back. (35)

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Hemingway is normally considered a master of the short, meaning-filled sentence. Then comes one like this:

> Wilson, who was ahead was kneeling shooting, and Macomber, as he fired, unhearing his shot in the roaring of Wil-

son's gun, saw fragments like slate burst from the huge boss of the horns, and the head jerked, he shot again at the wide nostrils and saw the horns jolt again and fragments fly, and he did not see Wilson now and, aiming carefully, shot again with the buffalo's huge bulk almost on him and his rifle almost level with the on-coming head, nose out, and he could see the little wicked eyes and the head started to lower and he felt a sudden white-hot, blinding flash explode inside his head and that was all he ever felt. (36)

What effect is achieved in such a long sentence?

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"I'm through now," he said. "I was a little angry. I'd begun to like your husband."
"Oh, please stop it," she said. "Please, please stop it."
"That's better," Wilson said. "Please is much better. Now I'll stop." (37)