FULL SCORE

FYTTON ARMSTRONG

RICH & COWAN

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Twenty-five Stories
by

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RHYS DAVIES
CHARLES DUFF
CARADOC EVANS
WILFRID EWART
JOHN GAWSWORTH
LOUIS GOLDING
STEPHEN GRAHAM
LAFCADIO HEARN
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SHANE LESLIE
JOHN LINDSEY
ARTHUR MACHEN
FRANCIS MARSDEN
R. L. MÉGROZ
HERBERT PALMER
L. A. PAVEY
T. F. POWYS
M. P. SHIEL
ARNOLD WAREHAM
MALACHI WHITAKER

Selected by
FYTTON ARMSTRONG

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For
JOAN VYVYAN WAKEHAM

Accepting a smile,
but—
Declining a pedestal!

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AHA

A dream I had one night during my first winter in Moscow. I wrote it out next day.

By Stephen Graham

At the private asylum in the town of Verkoturie, ward eleven, chained to his wooden bed walks the dangerous criminal and lunatic Aha. The visitor to that remote Ural town may for a shilling, that will not insure him against disease, see all the inmates in an hour; he may see Polin the Jew, who wants to steal his own clothes and chains, or the angelic Cikorex, who calls himself the devil. You may see Aha walking round his bed, springing absurdly from toe to toe. The warder Vaska will show you round. Vaska is one of the sane—a poetical soul, too, as you will soon guess, but the monotony of life has taken it out of him. He is here always; he might have a half-day off in the month, but doesn't take it, and it is now years since he has stepped out of the asylum. His duty it is to carry out the prescriptions of the doctor and to serve the meals. It's dull work; even thrashing gets dull, and yesterday he thrashed the Jew. Go in with Vaska, he will tell you. Yesterday the Jew Polin was discovered in a new theft, a subtly offensive act: the secret extraction and hoarding from his soup of the cockroaches—for all beetles are called cockroaches when they are served up in cabbage soup. And Polin had a hoard of some months' standing, and they could no longer be hidden; indeed, he used them to kill time and had them all arranged in battle array. In front a detachment of that cockroach

species known as devil's coach-horses—most effective light horse they looked—then companies of red soldier beetles commanded by fat dors and cockroaches, little shy " rove " beetles, artillery beetles and, as a triumph of recruiting, a veritable stag—commander-in-chief. And Polin had been manœuvring them on his bed, not succeeding very well because of an unfortunate proclivity to keep stealing the commander-in-chief, and Vaska had pounced down like the angel of death on the army of Sennacherib. Polin answered no questions, but ever presented a cunning grin to the questioner, and on this occasion grinned queerly through the wisp of his lost moustache and very artfully closed his long fingers over two battalions of his beetle regiment. And Vaska beat him there on the bed with his stick, and the Jew had squirmed and whined and grinned. No, it was pure duty that made Vaska transgress the rules and beat the Jew, there was no pleasure in it. But, who knows?—perhaps it was from force of habit, for once one gets in the way of beating, instead of talking, one gets too lazy to exert the brain. And Vaska's had been a poetical soul.

I am interested in Aha, the giant. But Vaska has little to say of him; he insists on explaining that Polin made himself bald by stealing his own hair and that Cikorex lies under his bed and believes that God is on top. Vaska was God to Cikorex. Vaska thumps the bed with his stick. " Come out, beast! "—God speaks in the thunder to Cikorex.

Aha is six feet seven, and very thin, and his black hair is very long and greasy. A long face of fearful pallor, at the sight of which one trembles, his cheeks and nose and chin stand well forward, but the forehead

and eyes lie strangely back; it appears as if the upper part of his face had been built on the lower, and that there had not been enough material to finish the work. The eyes, which are wide open, look always upward, so that one does not observe their expression or hue. And the man, seeming to make tremendous efforts, trips round his bed in little jaunty steps, balancing himself on his toes. He raves daily. All day he recites, from morn till night, and will scarcely stop to touch his daily cabbage soup. Vaska tells me he is an incendiary—he set fire to warehouses to warm his hands. His peculiar madness is a matter of vision. But listen to him. His words tell his secret. He raises his long, skinny, white hands and the fingers twitch.

"I see all the stars collected together in a small bundle. Ah, God, crush them into a nut, crush them into an eyeball, crush them into my eye and let them burst again! Ah, God, for thy fire to light the dark skies that I may see, 'twas I that lit the world. I lit a match—a little gleam for warmth and sight. Fire up thy seas of oil and let me see into thy dark skies, for all the stars are together in a shilling piece in my sight and the emptiness that is about them is an oppression to my soul; burst them in my eyes, oh God! Ah, to think that once 'twas not as now, that in those days the least thing filled my eyes and there was no emptiness; then saw I fields and cities, sunsets and seas, and they stretched for ever in my sight, and I knew not that all the stars and all lay hidden beneath them, and then a blow and a burst and a tree shrivelled up to a twig and a city to a patch of mould and a whole forest became a tree, and one night I saw all the stars as a tree, and all grew straight and fearful, and I dared not

move for stepping into abysses, and the sun became a sharp needle-point."

"Shut it, scabby! Here's your soup," says Vaska. "The old beast! It's all lies. He got married and pretended he couldn't see his wife; he kept jumping over his bed and said he couldn't see it. It all came out in the doctor's evidence."

And Vaska reaches the tall lunatic a crack on the head with his staff of office. Aha gets thrashed, chiefly for not seeing Vaska, but often for not seeing his soup, or for being unable to use his spoon, and the other day for a strange event—the pouring of the soup on his hair.

"Ah, God, I see the king and queen! How small they were!—like mice; and the procession, like a toy procession. And my feet stood on the earth; with my shoulder I leaned on Mars, and my head above the topmost heaven looked down from the darkness, and I saw the little king and queen come by in little shell carriages driven by rats, and thousands of little doll people flocked about. Ah, God, people the darkness, the emptiness; let me know the colour of the wild wind that blows through my hair; fire the worlds, the universe. Ah, I see the day of fire and the little earth going out in a puff of smoke, and its dirty cinders falling into the depth—tell me, thou great one, will Man, the prisoner of the earth, live on in the smoke or in the cinders? I see the red cinders on the wind lighting up the darkness. . . ."

"Old liar!" says Vaska, and gives him another crack on the head; "they're no cinders in the soup to-day. Sit down, or I'll pay you out."

Aha pauses in his bed-dance and oration; the chain

stops jingling; he snatches the basin in both hands, opens his mouth far too wide, and pours the soup down. It falls anywhere, and he puts the basin down and continues his dance and speech; the wild wind blows the flames. The picture is enlarged.

" Ah, God, the emptiness is gone, the flames are from end to end, and it is a light that hides the depth. Better light than darkness, though even the light hides. Ah, God, the hills and fields and cities come back again into the light and fill up my eyes and hide the stars. I ask no more. And now the little sun falls flickering down like a bit of charred coal, but oh to see it again flash across half the sky in wild sunset! And my little bride again. I shall see and I shall fall back into myself, or we shall all fall out of ourselves into the new. Ah, Satan, with thy broom sweeping up the dark floor, and sweeping the stars into bonfire heaps; Satan, thou high angel . . ."

Cikorex at ward eleven grins feebly, but Polin's face is full of mystery. He squints carefully at his moustache and the lips of his face; he forms a plan to steal his Hebrew nose from himself.

But Vaska wants to have his afternoon sleep—Aha has no interest for him, and perhaps we have seen enough; let us be going.

" Satan, thou high angel, pray God for the lighted torch and . . ."

THE IRREVERENCE OF GOD

AN APOCALYPTIC SATIRE

By Shane Leslie

The sudden trump of Michael the Vancourier of the Armies of God rang like a call-bell through the wings of Space and the corridors of Time, incidentally rousing the dead world which had fallen asleep over its own spectacle. One apocalyptic spark percolated the welkin, and the dead rose from the dead.

And all the camera-men rose with the dead like a host of flies off the corpse of the world, clicking as they went. Nothing had survived from human civilisation except the Press. The Reporters passed eagerly to their last great Interview, quite oblivious that an interview with God might be a little one-sided. Editors were writing leaders on the World's Obituary or opening their Agony Columns to the suppressed emotions of the dead. Papers like the *Heavenly Home Journal* and the *Eternal News* showed that the newspaper had survived. There was even talk of bringing out *Town Topics* as *Celestial Chat* on the front, with a column of *Infernal Inferences* on the back.

There could be no doubt that the Great Day had come, and even those who had been the most sceptical on earth were interested watching Michael, the aforesaid Vancourier and Archangel, looming like a Colossus in gold tissue at the top of the enormous, moving, blue staircase. He resembled the hero Perseus with his rosy-webbed wings, aureo-sandalled feet and silver-tinctured sword, whose point stood poised on the dead Dragon,

which Reporters soon discovered was only a stuffed one. "Stuffed with what?" queried the Editors. "Stuffed with lies!" volunteered a sagacious correspondent.

The sky scenery was very impressive, and the Archangel performed his part with a galvanised grace that none could withstand. At his side stood Gabriel the Salutatorian, clad in a silky warp and silver-shredded web of samite. The absence of the third Archangel was noticeable, but it was understood that he was gone on a mission to negotiate with the Egyptian Government for permission to unwrap Tutankhamen, who, on hearing of the arrival of the newspaper men, had, alone of the Pharaohs, declined to leave his resting-place.

However, the Last Trump had not pealed in vain. The graves of mankind were turned out clean and the tombstones went down like rows of Mah-Jong tiles. Graveyards resembled innumerable open sardine-boxes, while at a distance the shrouded dead looked like sardines feebly wagging in their oil.

Cook's Spiritual Agents were sorting humanity on the moving staircase into Sheep and Goats. There were little mistakes. The President of the Atheist Society caused confusion by looking sheepish early in the day, and there were many ecclesiastical types looking goatish. The directors of the Rationalist Press were much chaffed by their orthodox friends. Humour, being recognised as the supreme mark of the Deity, became the order of the day. Goats to the left and Sheep to the right! It was like the solid, moving, excited crowd on Boat-Race day. Oxford or Cambridge! Sheep or Goats! Like all crowds, every member seemed only concerned to be on the side of the winner. How the Cherubs cheered when the stuffing came out of the old Dragon, and laughed

when kind old Archdeacons tickled them under the chin!

The buzz of deferred conversation seemed to fill the Universe. Everybody was making up for past time, quite forgetful that Time itself had been completely lost. Nobody showed nerves or annoyance, though there was a slightly irritated feeling among the clever that the orthodox were going to score. The relief of mind shown by Church dignitaries was not always dignified. An Anglican Bishop ran about without his shroud shouting delightedly, " I told you so—I always suspected the Dissenters would be saved." The Dissenters murmured that the vestments of the Archangels were too Popish. The Roman Catholics were handing round spare Indulgences to all their Protestant friends, who were only too happy to have them. It was a nice day all round.

Nobody seemed the least upset by being tumbled out of their secular sleep except some Americans, who wished to sue their undertakers for burying them in rotten, stained-deal coffins and charging them for caskets of Cedar of Lebanon. Most people were too glad to be decoffined to care whether they had been boxed in mahogany or paper-pulp.

The most interesting little scenes were occurring. People were being introduced to their ancestors or descendants, according as their family had risen or fallen after their decease. The Cherubs acted as Cicerones and Chaperones. A number of fathers and sons met for the first time under their true names. The truths of genealogy were adjusted without a social hitch, but the Recording Angel left Burke's Peerage lined and scored with corrections like a school-boy's faulty Greek

Prose. Psychology was over, fortunately, or there would have been startling scenes. Only a rarified and impartial interest remained in the Past because the Present was abolished. Only Future remained.

A number of historical secrets were being whispered on the stairs. Mary Queen of Scots was given a clean sheet. Bothwell, it was understood, had blown himself up while practising an early experiment upon the Atom. The works of Bacon were confessedly shown to have been concocted by a clever temporary secretary named Shakespeare. The Man in the Iron Mask turned out to be an adventurous young lady in a velvet domino, who had been indiscreet enough to whisper that the French King snored. There was a certain simplicity about the puzzles of the Past.

But for the generation which had lived between 1900 and 1930 the great and unknowable secret to be known was the identity of the various Unknown Warriors, who had been enshrined to personify impersonally the cult of the first but unhappily not the last of the World-Wars. Extraordinary scenes naturally accompanied their identification.

The British Unknown Warrior was solemnly helped from under his sepulchre by the last Dean of Westminster and King Edward the Confessor. Atheists and other freethinkers buried in the Abbey had been requested by the Vergers to leave. The Nonconformists were represented by General Booth, and, as the Unknown was quite unsectarian, the Synagogue was represented by Sir Philip Sassoon. The Unknown was helped to a convenient Y.M.C.A. shelter at the Paradisal Gates, where he was induced to make a statement to the Press. Bewildered as he seemed, his British listeners

became more bewildered still, when he told his simple tale:

"I was a bank clerk in Manchester, of German descent but British citizenship. My father and my grandmother, who were still alive when the War broke out, were both born in Germany. Germany we considered our fairy home across the seas. Neighbours always said that good German Protestant blood was something to be proud of, and Grandma used to teach us German by reading to us aloud a passage from Luther's Bible every day. My German helped me in my firm, and I saved up money to revisit the family home in the Fatherland. Grandma was so pleased, and I promised I would one day write to her from the very village where she was born. Poor dear Grandma! she afterwards died of grief a year after the war began, with the picture of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort in her arms.

"In July 1914—that was the very date—I went for my first holiday abroad to Germany, and found all the people in the streets talking like Grandma. The firm gave me a month's leave with an extension over the August Bank Holiday. I was on my journey back, travelling from Cologne to Belgium, which I thought I might see while I was about it, when they stopped the train in the middle of the night and we were kept on a siding till the morning while troop-trains hurried past. We thought it was the Kaiser's manœuvres. In the morning we were taken out and cross-examined. Then I learnt that dear old Germany was at war with that old bully France, and that Belgium had joined France to be on the stronger side. As I could talk German, I pretended to be a real German, but I was too clever, for I was arrested and sent back to be conscripted in Grand-

ma's home village. The joke was on me. But I saw several tourists shot as spies, and I felt so frightened that I picked up courage to escape from the returning train the next night. Then my little adventures began. I kept walking on in the direction of England, and whenever I was challenged in the dark I shouted back in German. Somehow they did not seem to understand, for I could hear their bullets whistling back overhead. But I was determined to reach Manchester at all costs.

" For Grandma's sake I should like to have stayed and joined the Germans, if I hadn't seen them shoot the spies they took off the train. It gave me an ugly feeling against soldiers. Yet our family had always been glad that the Germans won the War of Seventy. I hoped they would win again. I had a silly feeling because they were Protestant and the French Catholics. But I found out that didn't matter so much after death, after all. My only thought was somehow to reach Manchester. It was a little difficult, as I could only move at night, and had to sleep in the daytime wherever I chanced to find a hayrick. The railways had stopped, and on every side was the sound of rushing armies. For ten days I was completely lost, and dared not ask my way, as I became as much afraid of the Germans as of the French. Then a queer thing happened. One evening I ran into scattered troops among the trees. I was surrounded and lay down in the bushes to overhear the language they talked. I could hardly believe it when I heard good old English!

" I rushed out to make myself at home and meet pals. Would you believe it? They were far more nervous than I was, and they lifted their rifles at me. I was arrested. Then I learnt that old England was at war

with old Germany. Whatever next? I asked. They said the British Army was retreating and they were being dogged by spies. At first they thought I was one, but I swore that I was British, and luckily there was my Cook's return ticket to Manchester in my waistcoat pocket. Luckily, the corporal in charge came from Manchester himself, and there was hardly a bye-street we didn't know between us. So I was set free, but I stayed with them as the safest and quickest way to get home. And all the time I was trying to realise that the British had come into the war. It was such a shock to hear that the Kaiser had turned against England after all that England had done for him in the past. I felt sort of sorry for Grandma's sake. But all was topsy-turvy. The absurd English were abusing the Germans instead of the Irish, and singing an Irish rebel song about Tipperary.

" My clothes were muddied and torn beyond ribbons, but they dressed me up as a soldier in the uniform of a poor fellow who was sniped one evening. They said if I didn't put on the khaki, the Germans would shoot me as a spy in my Bank Holiday suit. However, it didn't make any difference, for next day the Germans surrounded us and I was shot down as a soldier—and here I am ! "

A plain, unvarnished tale it was. Well, there was nothing to be done but to make the best of it and march him aloft to the dismal strains connected with a British triumph, though it looked as though it was his devotion to old Germany which had brought him where he was. They played the old tunes right up to the Golden Gates, including " It's a long, long way to Tipperary," which won them a rousing welcome from the Irish Saints who were clustered there a hundred deep like golden-headed bats. And by way of a last joke, when the procession

caught sight of the smoky chimneys of Hell, they struck up: "Keep the home fires burning!" So came a most renowned but unknown soul to Paradise.

Meantime, very grandiose scenes were played in Rome, where a formal deputation, consisting of Signor Mussolini, Signor Caruso, Signor Dante Alighieri, Garibaldi and Galileo, with Miss Christina Rossetti representing the Italian Colony in London, were slowly advancing to the Titan's wedding cake known as the Victor Emmanuel Memorial. The centuries watched meekly from below. Thousands in red shirts, millions in black saluted, while a shy cadaverous youth arose from his marble tomb and bowed.

Entreated to give some personal account of himself, he stood as shamefaced as though he were appearing before a court-martial. His first admission was that he was an Austrian subject, though he had generally lived in Italy, and rather than return for service at the outbreak of the war he had offered to remain in Italy as a spy. On Italy's entrance into the war he had been drafted into the Italian ranks. Whenever he had found it possible, he had corresponded with the Austrian enemy. He had managed to cross the lines several times in spite of the difficulty of wearing an Italian uniform. He had contributed some information before the Battle of Caporetto. On his return journey he had the misfortune to lose his way between the lines, and after wandering miserably for some days he had been shot in the back by an Austrian patrol. He was naturally surprised at finding himself in his present position, and was only anxious to yield his place to a more suitable occupant.

Under these perplexing circumstances there was

nothing to be done, but fortunately Gabriele d'Annunzio was flying about on the tip of a Seraph's wing, dropping celestial sonnets to himself upon the crowd below. When he came to earth he offered to take the unknown warrior's place, and was accepted amid a delirium of cheering.

In the United States Americans had turned their concentrated attention to the great military cemetery at Arlington, where lay not only those who had died to keep America united, but now the warrior who symbolised those who had died to keep European States disunited. Similar scenes were being enacted. A very choice Committee of distinguished citizens approached the grave of the Unknown American. It was called the Deputation of the Four Hundred, and was believed to contain the Four Hundred Americans who had left most mark on the history of the world. It included Mr. Singer, Mr. Barnum, Mr. Monroe, Mr. Christopher Columbus (though he still complained of his treatment on landing at Ellis Island), Mr. Walt Whitman (who had prepared an ode beginning, " I chant the world's stale cadavers "), Mr. Ford (whose Peace Ship was allowed the same privilege granted to the *Mayflower* and the *Ark* to moor at the celestial landing-stage), Mr. George Washington, Mr. Booker Washington, Mr. Brigham Young—and others.

At the touch of an electric button the American hero rose to his feet with a cheerful grin. The grin was transferred to those of the deputation who enjoyed a sense of humour, for there could be no doubt that he was coal-black, and that he had acquired his colour previously and not subsequently to burial. Well, and if he was only a nigger he drew himself up, and thus

addressed the great and distinguished citizens around his grave:

"Say, I'm real glad you are all here. I enjoyed that war something wonderful, seeing Europe for nothing, though I was called home in the middle. I went out with the first draft of coloured folks out of Virginny, and I was shipped over to France with a heap of others. We were treated fine, just as though we were white folks. I took quite natural to walking round and chaffing with the white girls. Should have seen me in the bully-yards of Paris! Why, down South they would pump lead into a nigger for being seen like that. Then we were shifted into billets near the front, and the girls there were nervous, and one night, when I passed the time of day, a girl shrieked and was taken hysterical, and it was no use making apologies. She had never seen a nigger before, and went on shrieking till our officers thought they would make an example of me. I was tried and sentenced to be shot the next morning—but that night the Germans attacked and we were all fighting like wolves for our lives. Our officers were killed, so my story was never reported. It didn't make much difference to me, anyhow, for I was shot in the middle of that night, which kind of altered arrangements for shooting me the next morning. Well, that's all. But I was much more surprised to find myself brought back to the States and given such a grand funeral. Why, Booker Washington, I'm proud to meet you, after all you've been and done for us coloured folks. I suppose none of you others would consider it right to shake me by the hand. Guess I got pitched into the wrong box somehow. I seem to feel I have been mixed up underground in place of Abe Lincoln, I do. Well?"

At the same time, a group of deceased French Presidents looking like undertakers, with red instead of black scarves, for they all wore the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, moved solemnly down the Champs Elysées towards the Arc de Triomphe. Behind them rode a choice company of Marshals of France, all who had marshalled her armies from the Middle Ages until the last years of human history. At their head, mounted upon a white horse specially brought from the stables of the Apocalypse, rode the Bruiser of Kings and Broiler of Nations—Napoleon. Early on Doomsday the great billowy sarcophagus of porphyry under the gilt dome of the Invalides had cracked open like a hard cheese concealing a hibernating dormouse, and the Conqueror had shared in the general conquest of Death. A special correspondent had awaited the moment, and the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, now issued as the Paradise edition, had printed the headline NAPOLEON NAPS NO MORE!

On one side of Napoleon rode General Boulanger, and on the other Marshal Bazaine. The Sardonic Angels of Destiny had arranged the places in the procession. As they approached the Ark that towered upon its four elephantine corners above the ruins of Paris, a phantom Ford car passed the procession. In it were seated Lafayette, Captain Dreyfus, Monsieur Eiffel and Monsieur de Lesseps. Sarah Bernhardt dressed as l'Aiglon was chauffeur. The car stopped, and as the divine Sarah stepped forward and recited the "Marseillaise," the Angelic Choirs answered her. The slab upon the grave of the Unknown French soldier was displaced like a tiny brick out of the paving. Stiffly the great Unidentified rose to attention and saluted. As

might have been expected from his long-cramped position, his hair and moustaches bristled, but quite unexpected was his manner of speech—" Nach Paris ! " he gasped as he contemplated his situation. And then " Hoch," quoth he, and " Hoch " again, but a sense of apocalyptic disproportion fortunately prevented him from finishing his cheers for the Kaiser.

The Presidents and Marshals of France swung sadly round and began their slow return down the Champs Elyseés. At their head rode Napoleon, with an expression in his eyes that inspired a correspondent to approach him on the subject of his retreat from Russia.

These little unsatisfying ceremonies concluded, the armies of the just and the unjust, together with the greater company of those who were just so and no more, passed towards the blue, moving staircase which rises into the Presence of God.

Suddenly a mighty peal burst over the Heavens, and many nervous souls instinctively made the vain gesture of umbrella-opening. It was a ponderous and pungent peal, pulsating and pulverising. It was the divine laughter ! A loud and lingering laugh that split the Universe on its hinges into ashes and rolled up Space like old sackcloth. It was a grand and a glorious laugh, and it did all merry souls good to hear. It was God laughing His souls in, but even when people are dead they don't like to be laughed at, and there were many complaints among the theologians and the Right Reverend that God had not shown as much of His Wrath as might have been expected.

But the Mystics murmured that He had cause to make mockery of all nations concerning the graves of their

Unknown Warriors. Had not the nations of Christendom denied His Grave all these centuries? Had they not forgotten the Holy Sepulchre and worshipped only themselves at these tombs of the Unknown Warriors as though they were Unknown Gods?

And it came to pass that all the last things lay with God, the Last Judgment and the Last Laugh. And no wonder He had laughed, for He, who laughs last, laughs best, and everything concerning God is for the best. But fussy souls were upset, and talked stuffily about the Irreverence of God.

Paris, 1926.

LUIGI OF CATANZARO

By Louis Golding

I

When the news came through from the Vatican last summer that the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro was not, after all, going to be canonised, the disappointment was acute not only in Catanzaro, whither the miracles performed in his name had drawn a countless succession of pilgrims for centuries, but generally throughout the province of Calabria and the whole of Southern Italy. "*Il nostro mezzogiorno dimenticato!*" was the bitter complaint of cleric and layman alike. "Another instance of North Italian contempt for our wretched forgotten South!" But in point of fact, the faithful everywhere in the peninsula were chagrined at the news, and it was received with displeasure in Catholic communities so remote as Andalusia and Bohemia. In Bavaria they said that the Jews were at the bottom of it. It was, of course, a purely automatic reaction on the part of the Bavarian gentleman who promulgated the idea. Did it rain? The Jews were at the bottom of it. Did it not rain? The Jews were at the bottom of it. And yet monstrously, marvellously, the fellow had divined the truth this time, though he is still ignorant of the amazing felicity of his imputation. The Jews *were* at the bottom of it, though not strictly in the sense he implied. That is my story—and Cardinal Bambara's.

You see, not only was there no reason in the world why Luigi should not be canonised; there was, on the contrary, every reason in the world why he should. There were no records of his birth and early upbringing in Calabria,

an absence which lent considerable colour to the fearful local conviction that there was something supernatural about his birth. Suckled by a goat in the fastnesses of Aspromonte, the tradition continued, he lived a life of complete isolation among those monstrous caves and forests till his thirtieth year, meditating the doctrine of the Trinity. Then, in recognition of his peculiar merit, Christ himself appeared at the opening of the cave and bade him pick up his oaken staff and his pelt of wolf-skins and make his way to the seashore, even to Catanzaro; for the plague was raging there at the time, and the priests for leagues around the city were either dead in the administration of the holy offices, or had fled the neighbourhood. Luigi made his appearance a decade or two before the end of the fifteenth century; the precise date cannot now be ascertained. But whereas all his history before this time is wrapped in darkness, the whole of his subsequent career, or much of it, is illuminated by a body of consistent tradition, a wealth of references in local ecclesiastical history and a number of documents solemnly attested by high religious and civil officials both immediately after his death and on a large number of occasions subsequently. In a word, there cannot often have been a more complete *dossier* presented to the *Sacra Congregazione dei Riti*, the Council of Cardinals, prelates and secretaries in the Vatican, whose sole and especial duty it is to deliberate upon beatifications and canonisations, and to present their judgment, if favourable, to the final ratification of the Holy Father.

Everything was in order. Of the sanctity of his life there was no question. All that part of the business had been decided at the time of his beatification. He had performed numerous miracles succinctly described by

eye-witnesses who came to quibble and remained to take the vows as speedily as it could be managed. The plague fell back in rout before him. He healed leprosy, scrofula and all maladies of the digestive organs. He raised a little girl from the dead, and at the earnest solicitation of her pious uncle, who could not bear to see her spotless soul exposed to the iniquities of Catanzaro and the temptations of her own wealth (which he had himself inherited and had determined to devote to the foundation of a monastery), Luigi consigned her to the grave again. When he died, his body (I need hardly insist) took the elementary precaution of smelling odorous as a rose-garden for so many days after his demise as he was left unburied, to strengthen the faithful and confute the sceptic.

His posthumous miracles were at least as noteworthy. The major part of his relics were preserved with the greatest solemnity in the church of San Stefano, pending such time as his own canonisation made it possible to house them in a church devoted to his own sanctity. But several of his toes, one or two of his finger-joints and an eyeball managed to find their way into other cities, and their potency was everywhere remarkable. Even shreds of his garments were discovered to be more efficacious than many a thigh-bone abstracted from the skeletons of holy men more egregiously advertised than Luigi. The introduction of his sternum into the threshold of a burning house had on several well-authenticated occasions imposed a summary check upon the damage. The bountiful fertility of several successive harvests was achieved by a hebdomadal procession that carried Luigi's cranium with pomp and incense round the fields; and although temporary embarrassment was caused when the

same relic was introduced into the chamber of a woman in labour (for she incontinently gave birth to three children and never afterwards could be induced to think kindly of the departed saint), no graver crime could be imputed to Luigi's remains than excess of zeal.

But more than this is required, and rightly, to convince the *Sacra Congregazione* that a given saint is worthy of those ultimate honours they have in their keeping. Not only must a saint's carnal residue be potent upon earth; his spiritual essence must be potent in heaven. Succinct and laborious proof must be given that his intercession before the Celestial Seat has almost invariably insured the efficacy of human prayer. (Invariable success is not exacted, for it is obvious that even the most pious cannot upon occasion forbear making demands of an excessive or indiscreet nature.) The *Sacra Congregazione* had bounteously established the exceptional potency of the Blessed Luigi's intercession. He had interceded on behalf of a Benedictine abbot who had prayed in Luigi's name for a winning number in the State lottery, in order that he might add a new wing to his monastery. A gentleman from Cotrone had prayed for the unostentatious removal of his first wife, a barren and unprepossessing lady, that he might found with the assistance of his housekeeper, a charming creature from Piacenza, a numerous and legitimate family to the undying honour of Holy Church. The first wife had slipped on a piece of pomegranate peel and broken her neck. Need I multiply these instances? It remains for me to add one fact, and not the least important. It seems likely that the increase of Luigi's status from Beatific to Saint might have been achieved a century ago, if nothing more than the merits of the case had been consulted. But it must

be realised that sacred processes at the Vatican cost money. Cardinals must live. So must sub-sub-secretaries. And on the day of canonisation St. Peter's must be decorated with such splendour that several dukes' ransoms would hardly cover the expenses. Calabria is a poor country.

The financial difficulties in the way of Luigi's promotion had at last, by the grace of God, been overcome. The obols of the peasantry had accumulated for centuries, and had made no great show. But a carter's hunchback son from a back street in Catanzaro emigrated to the States and made a colossal fortune out of tinned tomatoes. He attributed the whole of his success to Luigi, who had presided over every stage of his career, and had advised him so shrewdly on Wall Street that he soon had the tinned-tomato world at his feet. He left his fortune without reserve to the cause of promoting Luigi's canonisation. No stone was left unturned at the Vatican by his executors. The *Sacra Congregazione* felt more acutely than ever before the beauty and sanctity of Luigi's life. There was not a dissident voice in the council; so overwhelming was their enthusiasm that it was impossible to doubt the issue. They presented the Holy Father with as energetic a recommendation of Luigi's claim as ever passed from the lips and pens of that august body. The matter was not in doubt. For it was well remembered that while still a cardinal, the Holy Father had discussed, upon a certain occasion with certain friends from Calabria, the title of Luigi and expressed himself whole-heartedly in its favour.

Then the bomb burst. At the very last moment, it seemed, some overwhelming impulse had taken possession of the Father of Christendom. Lugubriously among the

mountains of Calabria rumbled the papal " No ! " There were tears ; there were, I grieve to report, maledictions even. The news, as I have said, was received with displeasure in Catholic communities so remote as Andalusia and Bohemia. As for Bavaria, " The Jews," said they. " The Jews were at the bottom of it ! "

They were.

I received the information I am about to convey from Cardinal Bambara himself, the young gentleman whose meteoric career at the Vatican brings our minds back at once to the glorious days of the Renaissance, when exalted office in the Church was awarded not so much for intrinsic virtue (though this sometimes was not overlooked) as for good manners, an elegant appearance or high social distinction. Students of the English peerage will at once recognise below the red hat of Cardinal Bambara the coronet of Lord Laxingworthy. Nor will they have forgotten what august partners were suggested for his hand, in the days when he was one of the first Protestant peers of the United Kingdom. Then one morning the polite world was amazed to learn that young Laxingworthy and his millions had converted to the Church of Rome, and that he was already on his way to undertake intimate personal service in the household of His Holiness.

If I may be permitted to say so, I foresaw it all along. I mean Laxingworthy's conversion to the Apostolic and Undivided Church. Ten years ago, he had taken a flattering interest in me during my first, and his own last, term at Oxford ; an interest which, I am proud to record, he has never remitted, though our paths have led us into such opposed countries of mind and spirit. He wore ink-black shirts and collars in those days and burned

black candles before an altar dedicated to Beelzebub. He was your complete undergraduate diabolist, and kept a goat in a suburban garden for the eventual purpose of sacrificing it at a great culminant Black Mass. He took it all with an engaging seriousness which would have touched the heart of any but the most implacable enemy of Beelzebub. I was perhaps his only friend who knew that a vision—for he is subject to visions and visitations—had won him over to Black Magic; and I am certain he told none but me how another vision had turned his wandering spirit in the direction of Scottish Presbyterianism. That was but a short chapter in his soul's pilgrimage, for he disliked whisky, and Glasgow he could not for a moment tolerate. Rome succeeded Glasgow by way of Boston, Mass., and Hyderabad, and a vision in each case had vouchsafed him the region whither he must next turn his heart. There was evidently a quality of climax in the vision which sent him ecstatic into the bosom of Rome, and thereafter it seemed that Providence needed no longer to visit him with this clairvoyance and clairaudience. His soul had attained harbour after perilous seas. It was destined that the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro should slip his soul from its moorings and send it, tiny and attentive, into vaster oceans than Lord Laxingworthy had ever traversed before.

It was that solemn moment before His Holiness pronounced his decision. In a dot of time which was spacious as all time, Cardinal Bambara, standing in Heaven among the saints of God, saw, heard, understood. Whereas a decision favourable to Luigi was so much a foregone conclusion among his brethren in the *Sacra Congregazione* that, before His Holiness had actually given utterance to the fateful monosyllable, they were

turning towards each other in easy and affable conversation, Bambara alone heard the austere negation volleying down from the empyrean; Bambara alone saw it perch like a bird on the Pope's lips; Bambara alone understood how none was more astonished at his own utterance in all that assembly than His Holiness himself.

* * * * * *

Here is the tale that Cardinal Bambara told me. I cannot but feel that Andalusia and Bohemia will receive no little pleasure from hearing the true story of the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro, why he was not canonised. As for Bavaria—Bavaria may do as it pleases.

There has always, I confess it (said the young cardinal to me), been an element of the melodramatic in my previous visions—noises of instruments, unrolling of vapours, swoonings, awakenings. But you cannot conceive how effortlessly upon this occasion I slid from this state of lesser consciousness to that other awareness, from flesh to spirit. At one moment I was sitting at the great table in the council-chamber in the Vatican, stretching my legs. At the next . . . perhaps I ought to admit that I may have nodded a moment. You see, old Cardinal Pasqualini had just concluded his long and virtuous dissertation upon the nature of Intercession—a little academic, some of us thought. He had started the discourse the previous forenoon, and it was felt that he had some time ago exhausted the relevance of his theme to the subject in hand, Luigi's canonisation. There is no doubt that even Cardinal Cervone, the *postulator* of the case, had fallen asleep. I may have nodded a moment or I may not. At all events, it was without any sensation of surprise that I opened my eyes to find myself in a magnificent institution of which I can

only convey an idea to you if I say it resembled the Athenæum in Piccadilly. Infinitely more spacious, of course, but much more like any of the better London clubs than the somewhat crude conception of Dionysius the Areopagite and Dante, or that regrettable heresiarch, John Milton.

What is that? Where *was* I? My dear fellow, I was in Heaven! Didn't you gather that? I hoped not to have to underline the points of my story. In Heaven, precisely! The House of Commons has been stated to be the most comfortable club in the world. It can't compare with Heaven, I assure you—not that the Vatican itself cannot give the House of Commons a point or two. You never saw such roomy armchairs. Pleasant little inlaid coffee-tables dotted the thick-pile carpet and jolly rugs lay about everywhere. There was a litter of the world's periodicals up and down the place. My eye casually fell upon the *Pester Lloyd*, the *Giornale di Palermo*, and the *Buffalo Saturday Night*; St. Appollonia —you remember, the poor girl who had all her teeth extracted in Alexandria—St. Appollonia was deeply immersed in the advertisement columns of the *Dental Surgeons' Gazette*. St. Christopher, who can't read, was poring over the pictures in *La Vie Sportive*. He came from Canaan, you know, where they were never strong on popular education. That was the point. Not even at that first moment was I not aware I was in Heaven, surrounded by the company of the saints. God the Father was sitting in a sort of window-seat behind a dais at the other end of the hall. He tends more and more to keep himself to himself, I gathered. Perhaps, to put it more accurately, he's not quite so interested in the planet Earth and the solar system generally as he once was.

There were lots of saints I caught sight of and recognised. Christ himself I didn't see till rather late in the proceedings. Beside him most of the others looked rather garish. He was the only martyr who didn't drag about with him the symbol of his martyrdom. The rest would simply not be separated from their racks, pincers, boilers, and so on. Take poor old St. Lawrence, for instance. He had the grid over which he was roasted tied to his belt. Of course, it dragged after him wherever he went and made a frightful mess of the carpet. St. Barbara's tower also was just a little cumbrous, and St. Bartholomew carrying his own flayed skin did not seem in the very best taste.

They were all surprisingly like their painted and sculptured images in the Uffizi and the Prado, and elsewhere. I mean how could a fellow possibly mistake where he was and who these people were? Talk about nature imitating art. Here was St. Sebastian trying so desperately to look like Sodoma's picture of him in the Accademia, that he had positively succeeded by now. It had meant rather more readjustment in some cases than others, and St. George, for instance, must have found it a distinct strain to adapt his swarthy Cappadocian features to the pretty and gallant rendering of him by Carpaccio in Venice. You know the one I mean, a series rather, in the School of the Schiavoni? I got the impression that one or two saints had never quite made up their minds whose rendering, as between two particularly beautiful ones, they were going to adopt. St. Luke, for instance. Was it to be Van Dyck or Raphael? It had resulted in a curious lack of definition in the evangelist's features which made him hard to recognise at first. The Holy Ghost? Yes, the Holy Ghost was busy flying round and about the place.

The noise of his cooing was the only noise I heard on my entrance. He was perched on the crozier that belongs to Nicholas, Bishop and Saint.

Something was engaging the mind of St. Appollonia and St. Christopher, despite all their show of being immersed in the *Dental Surgeons' Gazette* and *La Vie Sportive*. And St. Zeno, St. Florian, St. Roch, St. Jerome (whose lion was behaving disgracefully), St. Panteleon, St. Ignatius Loyola, St. Chad, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. James the Less. You know how sensitive I am to atmospheres. I scented it almost at once. All was not well in Heaven. There was friction somewhere, and pretty serious friction.

No, you couldn't possibly guess. The Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro! Surprised? A mere beatific, and there are so many thousands upon thousands of them? No mere beatific could have caused such a state of tension among the ranks of the saints in Heaven? Ah, my dear fellow, hold on a moment.

Of course I wasn't told so all at once. Nobody came rushing up to me to enlighten me. Everybody was feeling too raw to take any notice of a little snippety cardinal. I mightn't have existed for all they cared. As I say, I just sensed this distressing atmosphere of strain and trouble. Just the Holy Ghost cooing from St. Nicholas's crozier and a few saints here and there turning over the newspapers with just a little more abruptness—it seems in retrospect—than was strictly necessary. In a sort of special ladies' alcove, several female saints were knitting socks, the usual crowd—St. Agnes, St. Ursula, St. Lucy, and those people. Then of a sudden the air snapped. You never heard anything like it. The whole club was in an uproar and I sidled up as unostentatiously as I

could. What was it all about? It was difficult to gather anything straight off, because they talked in the Latin of the Vulgate with a rather perplexing local accent. To intensify the confusion, they made the most frantic noise with their saintly symbols. Palms whistled, books slapped, swords clattered, St. Cecilia made her organ screech with temper to drown the noise of St. Ursula's eleven thousand virgins. (St. Ursula never moved a step without them.)

And then I disengaged and pieced together the words: Catanzaro, Luigi of Catanzaro, the canonisation of the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro—yes, no, yes, no, yes, no, yes, no!

And gradually the whole business became clear to me. The matter which was so urgently preoccupying the saints of Heaven was precisely the matter which the *Sacra Congregazione* had been debating on earth. From several indications I realised that until quite recently everything had all been plain sailing in the particular issue of Luigi. But what was more important, in the general issue of canonisation, one thing became increasingly evident to me: that the Council of the Vatican, so far from deciding these questions off its own bat, so to speak, acts in precise and unconscious correspondence with the decisions arrived at by the congress of saints in Heaven. So that, in point of fact, no beatific is dispatched into their assembly without having been carefully examined and passed by them in advance. Beatifications are conducted without their saintly interference, as being of less moment.

And, after all, is not some such thing to be expected? Does any decent club in New York or London admit a new member without the closest scrutiny? Is it not quite reasonable that the saints should require to know

whether a projected member is quite the sort of person they care to know?

Luigi of Catanzaro, at all events, had seemed unimpeachable. All his miracles had been in the best taste, and none of them was so preposterously successful as to win over a serious number of their adherents from the established favourites. Expelling the plague, raising the dead, quickening the womb of the barren or the loins of the impotent—they were all miracles after the best models. The whole business was going through as complacently in Heaven as it was down in the Vatican.

Then some nasty anonymous little angel appeared on the scene and upset everything. The archangels, seraphim, princelings and the winged powers generally have a club all to themselves. They don't like the architecture of the saints' institution and it cramps their freedom of movement. But the rank-and-file angels are not particularly welcome anywhere. Always carrying tales of what the archangels said about the saints and the saints about the archangels, and telling tales about both to God the Father. They brought about a dreadful coolness, apparently, between St. Anthony of Padua and the Archangel Michael. It lasted about four hundred years, till Christ got them to shake hands during the festivities that took place on the acceptance of Joan of Arc into the club. Yes, these angels would have been trodden on ages ago if God the Father hadn't a very soft spot in his heart for them.

Everything was going brilliantly, as I've said, for Luigi, when in rushed one of these offensive young creatures.

"News about Luigi," he cried. "News about Luigi of Catanzaro!"

Everybody crowded round. They didn't like to encourage the fellow, but they all liked Luigi genuinely, so much as they knew of him, and they were interested.

"What's it all about, my fine fellow?" rumbled St. Christopher.

"Yes, indeed?" inquired Saints Cosmo and Damian, in their educated medical voices.

"I've found out who he was!" said the angel.

"But we all know who he was!" said St. Paul, stroking his silky beard. "We've known for five centuries!"

"Yes, but does any of you know who his father was, and where he was born?"

"It never occurred to us to ask!" said St. Genarro severely.

"Who was he anyhow?" somebody else interrupted, not very curiously. The sooner the young fellow delivered his titbit and made off, the better.

"Yes, who was he?" added another voice—a Jesuit saint it was, one gathered from the clipped, cultured syllables. After all, it would do no harm to find out just who Luigi and his people were. One had to live at close quarters with one's fellow-members and it did no harm to know these things in advance. Quite a number of people suddenly recalled the mists of obscurity which shrouded the birth of Luigi.

"Yes, who was he?"

The little fellow paused, his eyes sparkling with a malicious triumph. He looked round upon the serried masses of saints, breathless one and all. A strange unease had communicated itself to them.

"Who was Luigi of Catanzaro? Who was he? And you were just going to let them canonise him? You were just discussing the details of the *festa* you were

going to organise in his honour when he made his appearance. Weren't you ? "

And they had been.

They were really going to let themselves go. St. Luke had volunteered to paint a magnificent fresco on a triumphal arch to be erected outside the entrance-hall by St. Thomas, patron of architects. Luigi was to approach the arch under a gable of crossed palms, and St. Ursula's virgins (room had always to be found for St. Ursula's eleven thousand virgins) were to pelt him with special spineless roses provided by St. Francis of Assisi. During the course of the afternoon the principal martyrs had agreed to give their celebrated show, which they performed only on very special occasions. For they enfiladed before the eyes of the assembled, and highly appreciative, company, subjecting themselves to those same tortures which had won them undying glory. St. Catherine getting herself decapitated and St. Lawrence being slowly roasted were always exceptionally successful items.

In the evening the Initiation Proper was to take place. Would, in fact, take place. Why should it not ?

Then clear and shrill the angel piped across Heaven :

" Luigi of Catanzaro ? A common Jew, that's what he was. A Jewish refugee from Saragossa. His father was a low-born little rabbi burned at the stake by the Holy Inquisition. Now you know ! "

A cry of dismay resounded across the club.

" A Jew ! "

" A Jewish refugee ! "

" A common Jew ! "

" Prove it ! " exclaimed St. Thomas Aquinas peremptorily.

" Prove it ? " shrilled the angel. " That won't take me long ! " He fumbled about under his left wing and produced a sheaf of papers bound up in blue ribbon. He thrust them under the nose of St. Thomas Aquinas.

" Everything in order ? " he inquired offensively.

St. Thomas impassively examined the documents. His father's and mother's marriage lines, his own birth-certificate, a final notice from the Inquisition authorities that unless Rabbi Nahum (that was the name of Luigi's father) recanted by the second Lord's day from this day, such and such tortures should be imposed, and should these not be successful in winning him from the stubborn abomination, he, and his wife, and his son Aryeh (which is the Hebrew equivalent of Luigi), should be burned at the stake *ad majorem Dei gloriam in saecula saeculorum*. How Aryeh had escaped was in these papers made plain : how he had spent the first thirty years of his life as a carpenter ; who had converted him to the Faith. . . .

St. Thomas Aquinas turned round to the assembled saints.

" Everything," said he, thin-lipped, " everything is in order ! Luigi of Catanzaro was by birth and race a Jew, by early profession a carpenter. His father was a Jewish rabbi burned at the stake for his contumacy. His own subsequent history you are yourselves acquainted with ! "

" At all events," said St. Anthony of Padua, " they've beatified him. That can't be undone ! "

" So long," said St. Francis Xavier, " as this idea of canonisation is dropped. A Jew, that is to say, a Jew ! "

" A Jew ! A Jew ! " This whisper rippled like quickening rivulets.

Boomed like a cataract the voice of the giant from Canaan, colossal Christopher:

"And what's that got to do with it? Canonised he was going to be, and canonised he will be! Jew or no Jew, Turk or Brahmin, you all know the life he lived, the miracles he performed, or don't you? Have you forgotten? A better man than three or four I could mention here. Let there be no nonsense about it, say I! Oo-oo!" He brought his club down on the floor with a terrific impact.

"A Jew!" said St. Peter crossly. "Out of the question, completely out of the question!"

All the apostles echoed his words. "A Jew! O completely out of the question!"

Then a voice chimed like a low, sweet bell. It was St. Francis of Assisi.

"Comrades, comrades. Is it indeed you that speak with so little charity? These are not your voices. Shall not a saint in all ways so lovable, so worthy of our own most lovely sisters and brothers, shall he not be accepted among us with singing, with praises unto the Lord? Comrades, let us continue the discussion of our plans, who shall be deputed to meet him, who to conduct him, who to present him to the Eternal One. The hour grows late. . . ."

"Our younger brothers," said St. Paul to St. Peter, "must not allow themselves to be misled by sentiment. In an issue of a purely philosophical nature . . ."

"Philosophy or no philosophy," interrupted St. Denis, "he's a common Jew, and that settles it."

"Indeed it does!" said St. Ursula primly.

"Indeed it does!" twittered all her eleven thousand virgins.

" Nothing of the sort ! " rapped out St. Cecilia.

The dispute became fast and furious. Then it got worse. It became polite and awkward. Then it subsided into a pained silence. That, as you may by now have forgotten, was the moment of my own appearance.

And then it started again. They threshed it out all over from the beginning, twice, three times, four times. That is how I've been able to reconstruct for my own benefit and yours the story up to the point. Of what happened subsequently I was myself a direct witness.

The argument might have gone on indefinitely, and His Holiness might even at this moment have been racking his wits to decide the matter one way or the other, had not the idea occurred to St. Bernard of Clairvaux that the only thing to do under the circumstances was to vote on it. You see, the situation was unprecedented. In the past the general feeling against or for a particular candidate had been promptly recognisable and speedily acted on, for although the assembly themselves took no part in the process of beatification, it gave them the opportunity of learning all they needed regarding a potential member. They had taken only the most languid interest in the two statutory miracles demanded from Luigi between the times of his beatification and canonisation, for his earlier performances had been so numerous and so convincing that his two new miracles had been felt to be more or less perfunctory. It was true that in earlier ages, most especially in the time of the martyrs, the net had been so large that any number of questionable fish had slipped through. What was done could not be undone and they'd all shaken down very comfortably together. But ever since Urban the Eighth in the seventeenth century had defined the

whole business by those two laborious decrees of his, everything had been plain sailing. One thing was certain. This Jew question had never arisen before.

"Vote on it!" said St. Bernard of Clairvaux brilliantly.

"Vote on it!" caught up a hundred voices with delight.

How was it nobody had thought of it before? Really they had all hated upsetting the jolly friendly atmosphere of the club. You might have thought it a pack of angels squabbling, the way everybody had been carrying on.

St. Bernard took the count.

It was distressing. It was dreadfully distressing. The voting was absolutely equal. Such consternation on the faces of St. Peter of Castlenau, St. Gregory, St. Clara, St. Zenobia, St. Romualdo, St. Celsus, St. Alban, as you can't possibly conceive. The situation was rather more desperate than before. Everybody looked helplessly towards St. Bernard. St. Bernard set his lips. St. Bernard puckered his brow. Silence.

Then St. Bernard raised his head and flung his arm out with a gesture of exaggerated ease.

"Nothing," said he, "nothing simpler in the world. Christ shall give his casting vote. We, and Luigi of Catanzaro, and His Holiness, and the *Sacra Congregazione*, shall abide by it. And Calabria, and Andalusia, and Bohemia, and Bavaria. The Faith shall abide by it. Or has any lady or gentleman any other idea to suggest?"

"No!" burst from a thousand throats. "No, no, no! Good for you, St. Bernard of Clairvaux! Bully for St. Bernard! But Christ? Where *is* Christ, by the way? Has anybody seen Christ anywhere?"

Nobody had seen him lately.

"I rather think," said St. Mary Magdalene, "there

was some talk of an old widow dying somewhere in Basilicata. She kept on calling for San Luigi Gonzaga; and then for any San Luigi who might care to come along. She insisted on the Luigi, because her husband was Luigi, and so was her first-born. Then the boy died, and she called her second baby Luigi. And the new Luigi died on the same day as the old one, the father. And this morning, she herself lay dying, but, of course, all the San Luigis have been too busy on this question of a possible addition to their number.

"So Jesus went!"

And at that moment a tired voice whispered—it might have been a flower speaking: "*Eccomi.* Here is Christ!" And Christ came in rather footsore after his long journey to and from Basilicata, and sat down on an armchair, and Mary Magdalene soothed his feet with her tresses.

"Won't you let him recover his breath for a few moments?" whispered St. Mary Magdalene. His mother bent over the back of his chair and stroked his brow.

But the matter was too important to wait, for the peace of mind of the whole club was involved. St. Bernard lost no time explaining how the land lay. Christ had gathered something of the situation upon his journey through the middle air. But the latest developments had eluded him, or his mind had been full of the dying widow's last words. St. Bernard clearly explained what was required from him.

"Give me," whispered Christ, "give me half an hour."

He sank his head upon his hands. The saints broke into small groups and paced unquietly up and down the hall. Ten and twenty minutes passed and Christ

remained motionless as the chair he sat on. The Magdalene placed her cool cheek against his feet. St. Francis of Assisi looked timidly upon him and besought the others to keep away when they ventured too close.

Christ rose. He moved slowly between the tables towards the inner end of the hall to the dais there, where the lectures and entertainments are held. He lifted his head and spoke.

" Sisters and brothers," he said, " I cannot but regret that this duty, which hitherto you have yourselves so well performed, should now fall upon my shoulders, too little worthy to support it. For the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro, the object of these present discussions, I have much personal esteem. I might call it affection. I might call it reverence. Those among you who desire to elect him to your company would elect no mean minister, no feeble intercessor, out of his intermediate to these final glories.

" But how shall I place myself in opposition to those others, no less my dear councillors and lovers, who would exclude him? What are the grounds upon which he would be excluded? There are none others, I am right in concluding, than that he is a Jew? Sisters and brothers, I cannot but confess that the reason embarrasses me a little. It is true I find that my own beloved apostles are among the most vocal of his rejectors. That the greater part of their company are Jews is not perhaps relevant . . ."

" That it is! " rumbled St. Christopher.

" Jews! " murmured another. " But of course they're Jews! How can we have lost sight of the fact? "

" There's no need," grumbled St. Peter, who looked hot and uncomfortable, " to rake up these old scandals! "

" Isn't there just! " said the Seven Maccabeans in concert. They had maintained a strict silence hitherto. Being the only pre-Christian saints in the club, they had been feeling their position distinctly uncomfortable all along. " We don't see what being a Jew has got to do with it! " said the elder Maccabean boldly.

" Indeed we don't! " exclaimed his six brothers.

" The whole objection is ridiculous! " blustered St. Moses of Venice, the converted brigand, who still hoped against hope that somebody would take him for his more illustrious namesake in the Old Testament.

" *Autres siècles, autres procès !* " said St. Paul pointedly.

" Beloved sisters and brothers! " Christ resumed. " But that is not the sole reason why I find my position so particularly invidious. It will not have been forgotten that I too am a Jew! "

" I'm not at all certain," murmured St. Athanasius, " that the theology is quite sound there! "

" What does theology matter? " said the Magdalene, turning towards him. " Didn't he die on the Cross? "

" What about my grid? " said St. Lawrence.

" Children, children! The knot is too tangled for my fingers to unravel it! " exclaimed Christ piteously. " May I be permitted to submit the issue to the Ancient of Days? He is wiser than his son, than any or all of us. Will you permit it? "

There was a movement amongst the four Latin Fathers.

" It tastes of Arianism," said one.

" The inferiority of the Second Person! " expanded another.

They were talked down. If people got on that tack the matter would never be settled this side of doomsday. It was getting late and chilly.

"Ask him!" the cry came. "Ask him!"

Christ walked over to his father and talked to him for a few minutes. Everybody waited. Christ looked up to the old man, gently, fearfully.

"Say it again!" said God. "You know I'm rather deaf!"

Christ began to repeat all he had said in a slightly louder voice. God hollowed his hand about his ear, but this time he did not allow his son to finish. There was a sudden impatient movement of both his arms.

"I won't be bothered! I tell you I won't be bothered! Do you think this is the only religion I've got to attend to? I've got my hands full at the present with this new religion they've started at Boston. And I must keep my eye on Fontainebleau. Settle it between yourselves, can't you? Tell them I said so!"

Christ resumed his place upon the dais. "You have seen, ladies and gentlemen; you have heard. What is to be done?"

Not a sound was heard in the hall. Everyone looked impotently at everyone else. No one could allow himself to be such a ruffian as to drive Christ to a decision. He looked so tired, he always looked so tired these days. The whole business was lamentable in the extreme.

And at that moment the Holy Ghost cooed long and loud from his perch on the crozier of St. Nicholas.

"The Holy Ghost!" said the Saints.

"The Holy Ghost!" whispered Christ. "Here is an arbitration you cannot gainsay?"

"Never! Never! Never!"

Christ clapped his hands. There was a flutter of white wings across the air.

" Tell me," murmured Christ. " Tell me ! "

The saints lowered their eyes or turned awfully away. The pink feet had come to rest upon Christ's shoulder. He inclined his ear towards the ineffable beak. There was no sound. But the Word had passed between them, too august for utterance, the Word which was in the beginning.

" Beloved sisters and brothers," said Christ. The saints turned and lifted their eyes. " *The Jew, Aryeh, the Blessed Luigi of Catanzaro, will not be canonised.* As it was in the beginning . . ."

" Is now," took up the saints humbly.

" And ever shall be," they continued.

" World without end ! " proclaimed the assembly.

The Holy Ghost cooed contentedly from his perch on the crozier of St. Nicholas.

* * * * * *

" You might make them understand in Calabria," said Cardinal Bambara, " just how it was, won't you ? The Holy Father has taken to heart rather seriously these imputations of a bias against Calabria and the *mezzogiorno*. You see how unfair they are."

" They were rather upset," I added, " even in Bohemia and Andalusia."

" Let them know," said the Cardinal. " Let them know ! "

" And Bavaria ? "

" Why not Bavaria ? " said the Cardinal, mopping his brow wearily. " By all means let them know in Bavaria ! "

Which I herewith do.

DARK LOT OF ONE SAUL

By M. P. Shiel

[The following is from a document found in a Cowling Library chest of records, written in a very odd hand on fifteen strips of a material resembling papyrus, yet hardly papyrus, and on two squares of parchment, which Prof. Stannistreet recognises as " trunkfish " skin; the seventeen pages being gummed together atop by a material like tar or pitch. A Note at the end in a different hand and ink, signed " E. G.," says that the document was got out of a portugal (a large variety of cask) by the Spanish galleass *Capitana* between the Bermudas and the island of St. Thomas; and our knowledge that at this point a valley in the sea-bottom goes down to a depth of four thousand fathoms affords, as will be noticed, a rather startling confirmation of the statements made in the document. The narrator, one Saul, was born sixteen to twenty years before the accession of Queen Elizabeth, and wrote about 1601, at the age of sixty, or so; and the correspondence of his statements with our modern knowledge is the more arresting since, of course, a sailor of that period could only know anything of submarine facts by actual experience. I modify a few of his archaic expressions, and the spelling, guessing at some words where his ink ran.]

This pressing paucity of air hath brought me to the writing of that which befel, to the end that I may send forth the writing from the cave in the portugal for the eye of who may find it, my pen being a splinter broken from the elephant's bones, mine ink pitch from the lake,

and my paper the bulrush-pith. Beginning therefore with my birth, I say that my name in the world was James Dowdy Saul, I being the third child of Percy Dowdy Saul, and of Martha, his wife, born at Upland Mead, a farm in the freehold of my father, near the borough of Bideford, in Devon: in what year born I know not, knowing only this, that I was a well-grown stripling upon the coming of Her Grace to the throne.

I was early sent to be schooled by Dominie John Fisher in the borough, and had made good progress in the Latin Grammar (for my father would have me to be a clerk), when, at the age of fifteen, as I conjecture, I ran away, upon a fight with Martin Lutter that was my eldest brother, to the end that I might adopt the sea as my calling. Thereupon for two years I was with the shipmaster, Edwin Occhines, in the balinger *Dane*, trading with Channel ports; and at his demise took ship at Penzance with the notorious Master Thomas Stukely, who, like many another Devon gentleman, went a-pirating 'twixt Scilly and the Irish creeks. He set up a powerful intimacy with the Ulster gallant, Master Shan O'Neil, who many a time has patted me upon my back; but, after getting at loggerheads with Her Grace, he turned Papist, and set out with Don Sebastian of Portugal upon an African expedition, from the which I felt constrained to withdrew myself.

Thereupon for a year, perhaps two, I was plying lawful traffic in the hoy *Harry Mondroit*, 'twixt the Thames' mouth and Antwerp; till, on a day, I fell in at " The Bell " in Greenwich with Master Francis Drake, a youth of twenty-five years, who was then gathering together mariners to go on his brigantine, the *Judith*, his purpose

being to take part in Master John Hawkins' third expedition to the settlements in Espaniola.

Master Hawkins sailed from Plymouth in the *Jesus*, with four consorts, in October of the year 1567. After being mauled by an equinox storm in Biscay Bay, we refitted at the Canaries, and, having taken four hundred blacks on the Guinea coast, sailed for the West Indies, where we gained no little gold by our business. We then proceeded to Cartagena and Rio de la Hacha; but it should now be very well known how the *Jesus* lost her rudder, how, the ships' bottoms being fouled, we had perforce to run for San Juan de Ulloa in the Gulf of Mexico; and how, thirteen Spanish galleons and frigates having surprised us there, the Admiral de Baçan made with us a treaty, the which he treacherously broke at high noon-day, putting upon us the loss of three ships and our treasure, the *Minion* and the *Judith* alone escaping: this I need not particularly relate.

The *Judith*, being of fifty tons portage only, and the *Minion* of less than one hundred, both were now crowded, with but little water aboard, and the store-chests empty. After lying three days outside the sand-ridge, we set sail on Saturday, the 25th September, having heard tell of a certain place on the east reaches of the Gulf where provisions might be got. This we reached on the 8th October, only to meet there little or nothing to our purpose; whereupon a council was called before Master Hawkins in the *Minion*, where one hundred of us proffered ourselves to land, to the intent that so the rest might make their way again to England on short rations.

The haps of us who landed I will not particularise, though they were various, God wot, remaining in my head as a grievous dream, but a vague one, blotted out,

alas, by that great thing which Almighty God hath ordained for a poor man like me. We wandered within the forests, anon shot at by Indians, our food being roots and berries, and within three weeks reached a Spanish station, whence we were sent captives into Mexico. There we were Christianly behaved to, fed, clothed, and then distributed among the plantations—a thing amazing to us, who were not ignorant of the pains put upon English sailors in Spain; but in those days no Holy Office was in Mexico, and on this count were we spared, some of us being bound over to be overseers, some to be handicraftsmen in the towns, etc. As for me, after an absence from it of seven months, I once more found myself in the township of San Juan de Ulloa, where, having ever a handy knack in carpentry, I had soon set myself up for a wright.

No one asked me aught as to my faith; I came and went as I thought good; nor was it long but I had got some knowledge of the Spanish tongue, stablished myself in the place, and taken to wife Lina, a wench of good liking, daughter of Señora Gomez of the *confiteria*, or sweetmeat-store; and out of her were born unto me Morales and Salvadora, two of the goodliest babes that ever I have beheld.

I abode in San Juan de Ulloa two years and eleven months: and these be the two years of quietness and happiness that I have had in this my life.

On the 13th afternoon of the month of February in the year 1571 I was wending homeward over the *prado* that separated my carpentry from the *confiteria* of my mother-in-law, when I saw four men approaching me, as to whom I straightway understood that men of San Juan they were not: one was a Black Friar, so hooded

and cowled, that of his countenance nothing was discovered, save the light of his eyes; another was bearded —of the Order of Jesus; another wore the broad chapeau of a notary, and the fourth had the aspect of an alguazil, grasping a bâton in his hand. And, on seeing them, I seemed to give up heart and hope together: for a frigate hulk had cast anchor that morning beyond the sand-ridge, and I conjectured that these men were of her, were ministers of the Holy Office, and had heard of me while I was awork.

I have mentioned that no Inquisition was in Mexico afore 1571: but within the last months it had been bruited in San Juan that King Phillip, being timorous of English meddling in the gold-trade, and of the spread of English heresy, was pondering the setting up of the Holy Office over Espaniola. And so said, so done, in *my* case at any rate,[1] who, being the sole heretic in that place, was waylaid on the *prado* in the afternoon's gloaming, and heard from the alguazil that word of the familiars: "Follow on"; to be then led down the little *callejon* that runneth down from the *prado* to the coast, where a cockboat lay in waiting.

To the moment when they pushed me into the boat, I had not so much as implored one more embrace of my poor mate and babes, so dumb was I at the sudden woe: but in the boat I tumbled prone, although too tongue-tied to utter prayer, whereupon an oarsman put paw upon me, with what I took to be a consoling movement:

[1] It is well known that not one of Saul's ninety-nine companions, who landed from the *Judith* and *Minion*, escaped, but all were hunted, cast into dungeons, tortured, lashed naked through streets, some burned in the *auto de fé*, and some handed over to the Office in Seville to be sentenced to the galleys.

a gesture which set me belching forth into lamenting. But with no long dallying they put out, having me by my arms; and beyond the sand-ridge I was took up the poop's ladder into the frigate, led away to the far end of the forecastle's vault, and there left with a rosca loaf, four onions, and a stoup of water in the sprit room, a very strait place cumbered by the bulk of the bow-sprit's end, and by the ends of a couple of culverins.

I know not yet whither it was the will of my captors to carry me, whether to Europe, or to some port of the Spanish Main; but this I know, that the next noon when I was led apoop, no land was visible, and the sea had that hard aspect of the mid-sea.

Our ship, the which was called the *San Matteo*, was a hulk of some four hundred tons portage, high afore, and high stuck up apoop, her fore-castle having two tiers, and her poop's castle three, with culverins in their ports. Her topsides were so tumbled home, that her breadth at the water may have been double her breadth at her wales, and she had not the newfangled fore-and-abafts of Master Fletcher, such as the *Judith* wore to sail on a wind. But she was costly built, her squaresails being everyone of the seven of heavy florence, broidered in the belly, and her fifty guns of good brass fabric. She was at this time driving free afore the wind under full spread, but with a rolling so restless as to be jeopardous, I judged. In fact, I took her for a crank pot, with such a tophamper and mass of upper-works, that she could scarce fail to dip her tier of falcons, if the sea should lash.

I was brought up to the master's room, the which was being used as an audience-chamber, and there at a table beheld five men in file. He in the centre, who

proved to be both my accuser and judge, presently gave me to know that the evidence against me had been laid before the Qualifiers of the Office—which Qualifiers I understood to be none other than themselves there present—and been approved by the said Qualifiers; and when I had given replies to a catalogue of interrogatories as to my way of life in San Juan, I was then straightway put to the question. My breast, God wot, was rent with terrors, but my bearing, I trust, was distinguished by Christian courage. The interview was but brief: I demurred to kiss the cross; whereupon the President addressed me—he being the Dominic that I saw on the *prado*, a man whose mass of wrinkles, although he was yet young, and his wry smile within a nest of wrinkles, I carry still in my mind. My rudeness, he said, would prove to be but puny: for that during the day I should be put to a second audience in order to move me to a confession, and after to the screws.

For that second audience I waited, but it came not: for, huddled up in a corner 'twixt the sprit's end and a culverin's end, I became more and more aware that the *San Matteo* was labouring in the sea, and by evening mine ears were crowded with the sound of winds, so that I could no more hear the little sounds of the cook's house, the which was not in the hold, as with English vessels, but in a part of the fore-castle abaft my cell. No food was brought me all that day, and I understood that all had enough to trouble them other than my unblest self.

I fell into a deep sleep, nor, I believe, awaked until near the next noon, though between noon and midnight was but little difference in my prison. I now anew knew, as before, of a tumult of winds, and understood

by the ship's motion that she was now fleeing afore the gale, with a swinging downhill gait. Toward night, being anhungered, I got to thumping in desperate wise upon my prison, but no signal was given me that any heard me, and doubtless I was unheard in that turmoil of sounds.

And again I fell into forgetfulness, and again about midday, as I conjecture, bounded awake, being now roused by a shout of wind pouncing in upon me through the door, the which a stripling had just opened. He tumbled toward me with a bowl of tumtum and pork, and, having shot it upon my lap, put mouth to mine ear with the shout: "Eat, Englishman! Thou art doomed for the ship!"

He then fell out, leaving me in a maze. But I think that I had not ended the meal when the meaning of his words was but little uncertain to me, who was versed in the manners of the sea, and of Spanish seamen in especial; and I said within myself: "The *San Matteo* is now doubtless near her end; the sun hath gone out of the sky; the course peradventure lost: and I, the heretic, am condemned to be thrown away, as Jonah, to assuage the tempest."

The rest of that day, therefore, I lay upon my face, recommending my spirit, my wife, and my children to my Creator, until, toward night, three sailors came in, laid hands on me, and hauled me forth; and I was hardly hauled to the castle's portal, when my old samite coif leapt off my head, and was swept away.

Surely never mortal wretch had bleaker last look at the scheme of being than I that night. There remained some sort of disastrous glimmering in the air, but it was a glimmer that was itself but a mood of gloom. A

rust on the nigh horizon that was the sun was swinging on high above the working of the billows, then hurling itself below, with an alternate circular working, as it were a dissolute or sea-sick thing. The skies were, as it were, tinted with inks, and appeared to be no higher beyond the sea than the mizzen-top, where sea and sky were mixed. I saw that the poop's mast was gone, and the *San Matteo* under two sails only, the mizzen-top sail and the spritsail: yet with these she was careering in desperate wise like a capon in a scare from the face of the tempest, taking-in water with an alternate process over her port and starboard wales, and whirled to her top-castles in sprays: so that she was as much within the sea as on it. Our trip from my prison to the poop's castle must have occupied, with his halts, no less than twenty minutes of time, so swung were our feet between deep and high: and in that time a multitude of sounds the most drear and forlorn seemed borne from out the bowels of the darkness to mine ears, as screams of craziness, a ding-dong of sea-bells, or cadences of sirens crying, or one sole toll of a funeral-knell. I was as one adream with awe: for I understood that into all that war of waters I was about to go down, alone.

Lashed to the starboard turret of the poop's castle by a cord within the ring at its paunch was a portugal, such as be employed to store pork on big voyages; and, sprawling on the deck, with his paws clutched within a window-sill of the turret, was the Jesuit, his robes all blown into disarray, with him being the ship's master, having a hammer's handle sticking out of his pouch, and four others, the particulars of whose persons mine eyes, as though I had scores of eyes that night, observed of their own act.

As I staggered near in the lax keeping of my guardians, the portugal was cast aslant in his lashing, and I could then descry within it one of those 30-inch masses of iron ballast, such as be named drados; by the which I understood that I should not be tossed forth coffinless, as Jonah, but in the portugal: inasmuch as the corpse of many a Jonah hath been known to "chase i' the wake," as mariners relate, to the disaster of them in the ship; and the coffining of such in ballasted casks has long been a plan of the Spanish in especial.

On my coming to the turret, he whom I took to be the master put hand upon me, uttering somewhat which the hurricane drowned in his mouth, though I guessed that he egged me to go into the portugal: and indeed I was speedily heeled up and hustled in. Resistance would have been but little difficult to me, had I willed, but could have resulted only in the rolling overboard of others with me: nor had I a spirit of resistance, nay, probably lost my consciousness upon entering, for nothing can I remember more, till the top was covered in, save only one segment of it, through which I on my face glimpsed three struggling shapes, and understood that the Jesuit, now upheld 'twixt two of the shipmen, was shouting over me some litany or committal. In the next moment I lay choked in blackness, and had in my consciousness a hammer's banging.

Whether awake or adream, I seemed to recognise the moment when the portugal's mass splashed the ocean; I was aware of the drado's bulk tumbling about the sides, and of a double bump of the iron, the one upon my breast, the other upon my right thigh.

Now, this was hardly owing to the water's roughness, for my last glance abroad before going into the portugal

had shown me a singular condition of the sea: the ship appeared to have driven into a piece of water comparatively calm, and pallid, a basin perhaps half-a-mile in breadth, on a level rather below the rest of the ocean that darkly rolled round its edge; and the whole seemed to me to move with a slow wheeling: for I had noted it well, with that ten-eyed unwittingness wherewith I noted everything that night, as the mariners' apparel, or the four-square cap of the Jesuit crushed over his nose, or the porky stench of the portugal. . . .

Down, swiftly down, and still profounder down, I ripped toward the foundry of things, to where the mountains and downs of the mid-sea drowse. I had soon lost all sense of motion: still, I divined—I knew—with what a swiftness I slid, profoundly drowned, mile on mile, and still down, from the home of life, and hope, and light, and time. I was standing on the drado, no less steadily than if on land, for the drado's weight held the portugal straight on end, the portugal's top being perhaps one inch above my head—for my hands touched it, paddling for some moments as though I was actually adrown, like the paddling pattes of a hound in his drowning. But I stood with no gasping for a good span, the portugal was so roomy, and it proved as good-made as roomy, though soon enough some ominous creakings gave me to know that the sea's weight was crushing upon his every square inch with a pressure of tons; moreover, both my palms being pressed forth against the portugal's side, all at once the right palm was pierced to the quick by some nail, driven inward by the squeezing of the sea's weight; and quickly thereupon I felt a drop of water fall upon my top, and presently a drop, and a drop, bringing upon me a deliberate drip, drip: and I

understood that the sea, having forced a crack, was oozing through atop.

No shock, no stir was there: yet all my heart was conscious of the hurry of my dropping from the world. I understood—I knew—when I had fared quite out of hue and shape, measure and relation, down among the dregs of creation, where no ray may roam, nor a hope grow up; and within my head were going on giddy divinations of my descent from depth to depth of deader nothingness, and dark after dark.

Groan could I not, nor sigh, nor cry to my God, but stood petrified by the greatness of my perishing, for I felt myself banished from His hand and from the scope of His compassion, and ranging every moment to a more strange remoteness from the territories of His reign.

Yet, as my sense was toward whirling unto death, certain words were on a sudden with me, that for many a month, I think, had never visited my head: for it was as if I was now aware of a chorus of sound quiring in some outermost remoteness of the heaven of heavens, whence the shout of ten thousand times ten thousand mouths reached to me as a dream of mine ear: and this was their shout and the passion of their chanting: "If I ascend up into Heaven, He is there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, He is there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall His hand lead me, His right hand shall hold me."

But the lack of air, that in some minutes had become the main fact of my predicament, by this time was such, that I had come to be nothing but a skull and throat crowded with blood that would bound from me, but

could not; yet I think that in the very crux of my death-struggle a curiosity as to the grave, and the nature of death—a curiosity as frivolous as the frolics of a trickster—delayed my failing; for I seemed to desire to see myself die.

Still upon my top, with a quickening drip, drip, dropped the leak, and this in my extremest smart I ceased not to mark.

But there came a moment when all my sentience was swallowed in an amazing consciousness of motion. First I was urgently jerked against the portugal, the which was tugged sidewards by some might: some moments more, and the portugal bumped upon something. By a happy instinct, I had stiffened myself, my feet on the drado, my head pressed against the top piece; and immediately I was aware of precipitous rage, haste the most rash, for a quick succession of shocks, upon rocks, as I imagine, quick as you may say one, two, three, knocked me breathless who was already breathless, racking the cask's frame, and battering me back, so to say, out of my death into sense. And or ever I could lend half a thought to this mystery of motion-on-the-horizontal down by the ocean's bottom, I was hounded on to a mystery still more astounding—a sound in the realm of muteness—a roar—that very soon grew to a most great and grave tumult. During which growth of tumult I got the consciousness of being rushed through some tunnel, for the concussions of the cask on every side came fast and more frightfully faster; and I now made out, how I cannot tell, that the direction of my race was half horizontal, and half downward, toward the source of that sounding. How long the trip lasted my spirit, spinning in that thundering dark, could hardly

sum up: it might have been a minute or five, a mile or twenty: but there came a moment when I felt the portugal lifted up, and tossed; it was spinning through space; and it dropped upon rock with a crash which ravished me from my consciousness.

So intemperate was this mauling, that upon returning to myself after what may have been many hours, I had no doubt but that I was dead; and within myself I breathed the words: "The soul is an ear; and Eternity is a roar."

For I appeared at present to be a creature created with but one single sense, since, on placing my fingers an inch afore my face, in vain I strained my vision to trace them; my body, in so far as I was any longer cognizant thereof, was, as it were, lost to me, and blotted out; so that I seemed to be naught but an ear, formed to hear unceasingly that tumult that seemed the universe: and anew and anew I mused indolently within me: "Well, the soul is an ear; and Eternity is a roar."

Thus many minutes I lay, histing with interest to the tone of the roar, the which hath with it a shell's echoing that calleth, making a chaunting vastly far in the void, like an angel's voice far noising. What proved to me that I was disembodied was the apparent fact that I was no longer in the portugal, since I at present breathed free; nevertheless, upon becoming conscious in the course of time of a stench of sea-brine, and presently of the mingling therewith of the portugal's stink of pork, I straightway felt myself to be living flesh; and, on reaching out my fingers, felt the sufficient reason of my breathing, to wit, that the portugal's bottom had been breached in, and a hoop there started by his fall, for the staves' ends at that part at present

spread all asprawl. I was prostrate upon my back, and the drado and broken portugal's bottom lay over my legs, so that the portugal must have toppled over on his side after striking on his end.

The next circumstance that I now observed was a trembling of the ground on which I lay, the which trembled greatly, as with a very grave ague.

I set myself then to talk with myself, recalling, not without an effort of my memory, the certain facts of my predicament: to wit, firstly, that I had been cast in a cask from a bark called the *San Matteo*, not less than a century agone, I thought; I had then beyond doubt gone down toward the bottom of the sea; here some sea-river had undoubtedly seized and reeled me through some tunnel beneath the sea's base: and the under-tow of this sea-river's suction it was which must have occasioned that basin-like appearance of the sea's surface with a circular working, observed by me some moments before my going in the portugal. This salt torrent, having caught my cask, must have hurtled me through the tunnel to a hollow hall or vault in the bowels of the earth at the tunnel's mouth, and had then hurled the portugal from the tunnel's mouth down upon some rock in the grotto, and so broken the portugal's bottom. The cave must contain the air which it had shut in in the age of the convulsion of nature which had made it a cave, peradventure ere the sea was there, thus permitting me to breathe. And the roar that was roaring should be the thundering of the ocean tumbling down the walls of the hall from out the tunnel's mouth, the preponderousness of which thundering's dropping down occasioned that ague of the ground which was shaking me.

So much I could well sum up; also, from that echo's

humming, whose vast psalmodying haunts the waterfall's thunder, I judged that the hollowness of the hall must be large beyond thought. More than this I understood not; but, this being understood, I covered my face, and gave myself to lamenting: for, ever and again, together with the thunder and his echo, worked certain burstings and crashes of the cataract, brief belchings breaching on a sudden, troubling the echo with yet huger rumours, madding sad to hearken to; and my hand could I not descry, stared I never so crazily nigh; and the ague of the ground was, as it were, a shivering at the shout of God-Omnipotent's mouth: so that sobs gobbled forth of my bosom, when I understood the pathos of this place.

On throwing my hands over my eyes to cry, I felt on them a slime crass with granules,[1] perhaps splashed upon me through the open end of the portugal on his tumble, the which when I had brushed away, with much anguish I got my head round to where my feet had been. No doubt had I but I should of necessity perish of thirst and the dearth of food; but that I might come to my doom at liberty, I crept forth of my prison, as a chick from the rupture of his shell.

A tinder-box was in my pouch, but in the swound of my comprehension I did not then remember it, but moved in darkness over a slime with my arms outstretched, drenched ever with a drizzle, the source of which I did not know. Slow I moved, for I discovered my right thigh to be crushed, and all my body much mauled; and, or ever I had moved ten steps, my shoe stepped into emptiness, and down with a shout I sped, spinning, to the depth.

[1] In MS. "grains": Globigerina ooze.

My falling was stopped by a splash into a water that was warm, into which I sank far; and I rose through it bearing up with me some putrid brute that drew the rheum of his mucus over my face. I then struck out to swim back to the island from whose cliff I had tumbled: for I saw that the cavern's bottom was occupied by a sea, or salt pond, and that upon some island in this sea the cask must have been cast. But my effort to get again to the island availed not, for a current which seized me carried me still quicker, increasing at the last to such a careering that I could no more keep me up over the waves; whereupon an abandonment of myself came upon me, and I began now to drown, yet ever grasping out, as the drowning do; and afore I swooned I was thrown against a shore, where, having clutched something like a gracile trunk, I dragged my frame up on a shore covered over with that same grainy slush, and tumbled to a slumber which dured, I dare say, two days.

I started awake with those waters in mine ear whose immortal harmony, I question it not, I will for ever hear in my heart; and I sat still, listing, afeared to budge, lest I should afresh blunder into trouble, while mine eyeballs, bereft of light, braved the raylessness with their staring. My feet lay at a sea's edge, for I could feel the upwashing of the waves, the which wash obliquely upon the shore, being driven by a current: but near as they were, I could hear ne'er a splash, nor anything could hear, except the cataract's crashing, joined with the voice of his own echoing, whose music tuneth with the thundering a euphony like that of lute-strings with drum ahumming, and anon the racket of those added crashings, when masses more ponderous

of the cataract drop; and I did ever find myself histing with mine ear reached sideward, drawn to the darksome chaunting, forgetting my hunger, and the coming of death: histing I wot not how long, perhaps hours, perhaps night-longs: for here in this hall is no Time, but all is blotted out but the siren's sorrow that haunts it; and a hundred years is as one hour, and one hour as a hundred years.

I remarked, however, immediately, that the waves which washed my feet were not warm like that part of the water where I had fallen into the lake; so that I understood that the lake is a cauldron of different temperatures at different parts, the waters which roll in from the ocean being cold, but the lake warmed by flames beneath the cave: indeed, each region of the cave, so far as my feet ever reached in it, is always warm to the hand, and the atmosphere warm, though thick, and sick with stinks of the sea.

After a long while I found the tinder-box within my pouch, wherein also I found a chisel which I was bringing to my house to sharpen on the night of my capture, and also a small gar or gimlet. So I struck a flash that cut mine eyes like a gash, and I kindled a rag, the which glowed a rich gore-colour upon an agitated water rushing past the shore; and although only a small region of the dark was lit up, I could see sufficient of the shore's sweep to understand that I was standing on a mainland made of granite, but not altogether without marl on the ground, nigh behind me being a grove of well-formed growths resembling elms, all gnarled and venerable, yet no taller than my belly, although some do come to my neck. Their leaves be milk-white, and even of a quite round shape, and they do for ever shake

themselves with the ground that shakes, and produce a globose fruit, the which is blanched, too, and their boles pallid. I saw long afterwards another dwarf of just the same shape, only his fruit oozeth a juice like soap's water, that maketh a lather.[1] On the lake also I have lately seen by the torch's light near the island a weed with leaves over two yards long, the which be caused to float on the water by small bladders attached to it;[2] and also in the marshy spot by the promontory is the forest of bulrushes, that show a tuft, or plume, at their summit, and they do shake themselves, their stem being about three feet high, and they shoot out a single root that groweth visible over the ground seven feet or more in his length;[3] besides which, I observed none other shrubs, save a pale purple fungus, well-nigh white, growing on these rocks where I write, and in the corridor which is on this side of the pond of pitch.

But in that minute's glimmering, while my rag's light was dancing on the waves, I knew what superabundance of food lay for me in this place, to be had by only putting forth of my hand: for in that paltry area of the water I saw pale creatures like snakes seven or eight feet long, tangled together in a knot, and some more alone, and four globose white beings, so that I could see that the lake is alive with life; and they lay there quite unaware of the light that pried on their whiteness, so that I decided that they be wights deprived of eyes. A very long time later on, probably many years, I came upon the stream to the lake's left, by the promontory, the which is thronged with oysters, with many

[1] Agave?
[2] Some sort of Macrocystis.
[3] Some dwarf papyrus, or papyrus-like sedge.

sorts of pearl, and conch shells: but at the first I saw it not.

To have the creatures of the lake, I take stand to my knees in the water's margin (for farther I may not enter for the strength of the current), lean forward with the torch, and abide the coming of the creature of my liking, the which resembles the creature called a trunkfish in the tropics, being of triangular form, with freckles. The species of the creatures of the lake be few, though their number is great; and, as all the plants be very pigmy, so all the animals be of great bigness, save one thing resembling a lizard, a finger in his length, that I have seen on the reefs, and his tail is formed in the shape of a leaf, and engorgeth itself grossly, and it gazeth through great globose eyeballs that glare lidless,[1] but they be blind eyeballs; and one only wight of the lake hath eyes, but they do hang by a twine out of his eye-sockets, and dangle about his countenance, and be blind. As to their catching, this I managed at starting without so much as a torch, but by the touch alone; nor do their sluggish natures struggle against my grabbing, but by their motions I understand the wonder that they have what creature he might be who removeth them from their secret home. The flesh of one and all is soft and watery, yet cruel tough, and crude to the tongue. My repasts at starting were ate raw; but afterwards I made fires with the tree-trunks, the which being dry-timbered, I could chop down with the chisel and a rock for my hammer. Later on, when I did find out the rock-hall, I laid my fire there: but almost all the rags of my garments, except my jerkin, had been burned up for tinder, before I unearthed the marsh of bulrushes, whose pith

[1] Gecko?

served me from thenceforth both for tinder and food, and at present also for parchment: for, boiled in the hot rivulet in the rock-hall, the pith and fish together giveth an excellent good food, when, being voided of moisture, and pounded, they become a powder or flour; so that when I had once come at the bulrushes, where, too, are the oysters, being put upon the plan of boiling, I no more roasted my food as before.

For what appeared a long period, as it were long weeks, I mollified my thirst by soaking my body on the shore's verge, where the waves break: but thirst became a rage in my throat, like that lust of light in mine eyes, so that sometimes, pronouncing a shout, I did desperately drench my bowels, drinking my fill of the bitterness, the which, I am convinced, is more bitter than the bitterness of the outer sea. By this time I had roamed exploring far around that part of the shore on which I was cast up, and had found about me a boundless house of caves, chambers, corridors, with dwarf forests, and stretches of sponges of stone, boulders, and tracts of basalt columns, a fantastic mass to me of rock and darkness, all racked, and like the aspen dancing, to the farthest point of my wandering, all inhabited by the noise of the waters' voice, and stinking of the sea with so raw a breath, that in several spots the nostrils scarce can bear it. There be shells of many shapes and dimensions upon the land, many enamelled with gems and pearl, sea-urchins also, star-fish, sea-cucumbers, and other sea-beasts with spines, mussels nigh to the promontory on the lake's left, corals, and many kinds of sponges, many monstrous huge and having a putrid stench, some, as it were, sponges of stone, others soft, and others of lucid glass, painted gallant with hues of the rainbow,

and very gracious shaped, as hand-baskets, or ropes of glass, but crude of odour. Till I had set up my hearth in the rock-hall, I rambled about without any torch, for the cause that I knew not yet well the inflammable mood of the wood, nor had yet tumbled upon the sulphur, nor the pitch, with which to lard the torches; and, walking dark, with just a flash anon, I did often count my footsteps, it might be to a thousand, or two, till tired out. But spite of my ramblings, my body had knobs like leprosy, and was lacerated with my scratching, and racked with the rushing through me of the salt draughts which I drank, afore ever I chanced upon fresh water. That day I descended by three great steps that are made as by men's hands, and that lie peradventure half a mile from the lake, into a basalt hall, vastly capacious, so that forty chariots could race abreast therein; and the walls be as straight as the walls of masons, the roof low, only some twenty foot aloft, flat and smooth and black, and at the remote end of it a forest of basalt columns stands. There I marked that the air was even warmer than the warm air near the lake, and it was not long ere I had advanced into a hot steaming, with a sulphur stench, the which I had no sooner perceived than I fell upon my hands over a heap which proved, when I had struck a flash, to be slushy sulphur. I also saw a canal cut through the floor across the rock-hall's breadth, as regular as if graved there, this being two feet deep, as I discovered, and two feet across, through which canal babbled a black brook, bubbling hot, the floor on each bank of the canal being heaped with sulphur. I had soon scooped up some of the fluid with the tinder-box, and upon his cooling somewhat, I discovered it to be fresh, though sulphurous, and also tarry, in his taste;

and thenceforth I had it always cooling in rows of conch shells by the rock-hall's left wall.

And during all the years of my tarrying in this tomb, the rock-hall hath become, in some manner, my home. There, in a corner nigh the three steps, I made up a fire; I put round it stones, and over the stones a slab, and plaiting my beard into my hair behind me, I there broiled my meat, until the time when I took to boiling the mixed trunkfish and bulrush in the canal's boiling brook; and for a long while I kept the fire ever fed with wood from the tiny forests: for that I loved his light.

But, as to light, I have nineteen times beheld it in this dark from other causes than mine own fires, seventeen times the light being lightning: for lightning I must call it, the land lightning like the sky: and this I understand not at all.[1] But I was standing by the water's margin, bent upon catching my white blindlings, when the cavern became far and wide as it were an eye that wildly opened, winked five million to the minute, and as suddenly closed; and after a minute of thick darkness as afore, it opened once more, quick quivered, and closed. And there all ghast I stayed, in my heart's heart the ghast thought: "Thou, God, Seest Me." But though mine eyes staggered at the glare, I fancy that in fact it was but faint, and the ghost only of a glare, for of the cave's secrets little was thereby revealed unto me: and sixteen times in like wise his wings have quivered, and the wildness of his eye hath stared at me like the visitations of an archangel: and twice, besides, I have beheld the cave lighted by the volcano.

But it was long before ever the volcano came that I fell in with the mescal: for it was no long time after

[1] Electric earth-storms.

that surprise of lightning that, in pacing once to the shore to take up some trunkfish which I had thrown in the slush there—I think eight or twelve years may then have gone over me—I happened to bruise in my fingers one of the pigmy globose fruit, and there oozed out of it a milk that I put to my lips. It was bitter, but I did swallow some drops unawares, the result whereof was wondrous: for even ere I reached the beach, an apathy enwrapped my being; I let myself drop down by the breakers' brim; my brow and body collapsed in a lassitude; and my lips let out the whisper: "Pour on: but as for me, I will know rest." I was thereupon lapped in trances the most halcyon and happy: the roaring rolled for me into such oratorios as my mouth may not pronounce, though I appeared, so to speak, to *see*, more than to hear, that music; and in the mean time mine eyes, fast closed, had afore them a universe of hues in slow movement and communion, hues glowing, and hues ghostly and gnomelike, some of them new hues to me, so that I knew not at all how to call them, with cataracts of pomegranate grains pattering, waves of parrot green, wheels of raspberry reeling, dapplings of apple and pansy, pallid eyeballs of bile and daffodil, pellucid tulips, brooks of rubies, auroras, roses, all awork in a world earnester than Earth, that it were empty to attempt to tell of.

I had heard tell at San Juan of the shrub which they do name "the mescal button," chewed by the Mexicans to produce upon them such revelations of hues; and I have concluded that this shrub of the cave must be of nature akin.[1] But though the gift of it transfigured

[1] The mode of occurrence of mescal (above ground) is rather different from Saul's plant, though the effects are identical.

that stink-pit beneath the sea into a region of the genii for me, I was aware that to munch thereof was presumptuous, for the troubles that his rancour bringeth upon the body of man were quickly obvious upon me. But I made never an attempt to abandon his happiness, for it wheeleth through the brain to so sweet a strain, and talketh such gossip to the organs of the consciousness, as I do not suppose to be true of the very lotus, nor of that pleasant root that is known as nepenthe.

I have spent years on years, nay, as it seems to me, eras on eras, in one dreaming by the sea's rim, while my soul, so to speak, passed into the cataract's inmost roar, and became as one therewith. I lay there naked, for at first I had preserved my jerkin and shirt to serve for tinder, until I tumbled upon the discovery of the bulrush-pith, whereupon I employed the jerkin and shirt to contain the pith and fish for their boiling; so after the last of my trouse's rags had shredded from round my legs, and my shoes, too, from my feet, through great periods of time I have lain there naked, though enveloped to my belly in my hair and beard, idly dreaming, finding it too dreary a trial to seethe my food, and often eating raw, having long agone let the fire in the rock-hall go out. In the end I have shirked even the burden of bending in the sea's surf, or of journeying to the mussel stream, to get at my grub, and will spend considerable periods with never a bit other drink or meat than that bitter-sweet milk of the mescal.

From this life of sloth twice only have I been disturbed by fright, the first time when the volcano came, the second time when I observed the increasing dearth of air to breathe; and on each occasion I was spurred to take torch and search further afield than e'er before

what the vault holds—in both searches meeting with what turned out serviceable to my needs: for in the first search I butted on the bulrush bush, which I believe I butted on years ere I observed this increasing dearth of air; and it was the increasing dearth of air which sent me peering further a second time, and then I saw the pond of pitch. This latter is beyond the forest of basalt columns at the far end of the rock-hall; and it was in passing to it through those columns that I saw the beast's bones, that be bigger, I believe, than several elephants together, although the beast resembles an elephant, having straight tusks, exceeding long; and his jaw hath six huge teeth, very strange, every several tooth being made of littler ones, the which cling about it like nipples; and there among those pillars his ribs may have rested for many a century, some of them being now brittle and embrowned; and beyond the pillars is a passage, perfectly curved, having a purplish fungus growing upon his rock; and beyond the passage is a cavern than whose threshold I could no farther advance, for the bed thereof is a bitumen sea, which is half-warm and thick at the brink, but, I think, liquid hot in the middle; and all over his face broods a universe of rainbows, dingy and fat, which be from the fat vapours of the pitch bringing forth rainbows, not rainbows of heaven, but, so to say, fallen angels, grown gross and sluggish. But years ere this, I think, I had seen the bulrushes: for, soon after the volcano came, in roaming over the left shore of the cataract's sea—the which left shore is flat and widespread, and hath no high walls like the right side—I walked upon a freshet of fresh warm water, and after following it upward, saw all round a marsh's swamp, and the bush of bulrushes. This is

where the oysters be so crass, and they be pearl oysters, for all that soil be crass with nacreous matter of every sort, with barrok pearls, mother-of-pearl, and in most of the oysters which I opened pearls, with a lot of conch shells that have within them pink pearls, and there be also the black pearl, such as they have in Mexico and the West Indies, with the yellow and likewise the white, which last be shaped like the pear, and large, and his pallor hath a blank brightness, very priceless, and, so to say, bridal. As to the bulrush, his trunk is triangular (like the trunkfish), some five inches wide at the bottom, and giveth a white pith good for food. I came, moreover, upon the discovery after a long time that, since this pith lieth in layers, these, being steeped in water, and afterwards dried, do shrink to a parchment, quite white and soft, but tending to be yellow and brittle in time.

But for these two adventures, first to the bulrushes, and then to the pond or sea of pitch, I cannot remember that that long trance I had by the shore was broken by any excursion. But I had a rough enough rousing in that hour when, upon opening mine eyes, I beheld, not the old darkness, but all the hall disclosed in scarlet, and felt the cavern in movement, not with that proper trembling that I knew, due to the preponderousness of the cataract's mass over the earth's fabric, but racked with an earthquake's racking: and when mine eyes, now shyer than the night-bird's, recovered their courage, I observed the sea's whole surface heaved up like sand-heaps, dandled up with the earthquake's dancing. Now also for the first time I saw aloft to my right the tunnel's monstrous mouth, out of which the cataract's mass tumbleth down, the mouth's top rim being rounded, like the top lip of a

man's mouth crying aloud. I saw also the cataract rolling hoary across his whole breast's breadth, woolly with flocks and beards of froth, as it were Moses' beard, except at the centre, where it gallops glassy smooth and more massy, for there the sea cometh out from the tunnel's inwards to stretch itself out in that mouth that shouteth aloud. I saw also the roof like a rufous sky of rock, and right before mine eyes lay an island, long and narrow, upon the which I had been cast at the first, for there yet lay the portugal on the right end of the island, that right end lying quite nigh the cataract, and the island's left end some twenty yards from the lake's left end. And I saw the lake in his entirety by spying over the island's centre, where the land lies low, the lake having an egg's form, perhaps two miles in his length, I being at the egg's small end. I saw also that the cave's right side, where the wall rises sheer, is washed directly by the lake's wheeling career; and since the cataract there crashes down, along that right side I cannot advance; nor along the cave's left side can I advance so much as a mile, for there a headland juts out into the lake, dividing that side of the cave into two great rooms. I saw also nigh the far shore of the lake four more small islands of rock, and I was shown, from the lake's ocean-like aspect, that his waters be vastly profound, his bottom being doubtless housed far down in the planet's bowels. All was lit up. And some distance beyond the lake's far boundaries I saw the mouth of some cave, through which came up a haze of radiance sparkling, and vaulting stones, and therewith some tongues of flame, which now showed, and now withdrew their rouge.

I gathered that some volcanic action was going on under the cavern, and as I there stayed, agape at it, I saw arise

out of the lake in the remote distance, and come toward me, a thing, with the which I so long had lived, and known it not. His body lay soft in curves on the billows nigh a furlong behind his uplifted head, and I could not fly, nor turn mine eyes from the pitifulness of his appearing in the light. His head and face be of the dimension of a cottage, having a shameful likeness to a death's-head, being bony, shiny, and very tight-skinned, and of a mucky white colour, with freckles. It hath a forehead and nose-ridge, but, where eyes should be, stands blank skin only; and it drew nigh me with the toothless house of his mouth wide open in a scream of fear, distrusting Him that made it: for the air was waxing still hotter, and it may have had an instinct of calamity, peradventure from some experience of the volcano's fierceness a century since. It travelled nigh under the island's right end through the cataract's foam, and then close under me, nor could see me look at his discovered nudity, nor could my rooted foot flee from it; and on it journeyed, circling the lake's surface with the dirge of his lamentation. Immediately after, I lost my reason through the fierceness of the heat, and reeled; and when I came back to myself the cave was as black as ever. And once again, long afterwards, I saw flames flutter in the cave beyond the lake, a grey dust rained over the lake's face, the great creature arose, and a grove of the trees at this end were seared with heat; since then the event has never been seen.

But it was soon subsequent to this second convulsion that I made an observation: to wit, that unless I was well under the rule of the mescal fruit—when I do scarce seem to breathe—I became aware of an oppression of the chest. And this grew with me; so that I began to commune within me, saying: "Though the cavern be vast, the air

that it containeth must be of limited volume, and I have inhaled it long: for whereas when I hither came I was a young thing, I am now old. My lungs have day by day consumed the wholesome air; and the day approacheth when I must surely perish."

At the commencement it was only when I lay me to rest that the trouble oppressed me, but, sat I up, it passed; then after, if I sat, it oppressed me; but stood I up, it passed: so that I understood it to be so that a lake of noxious vapour lay at the bottom of the air of this place, a lake due to my breathing, that each year grew in depth and noxiousness, the longer I breathed: this vapour having a sleepy effect, not happy like the mescal's, but highly unhappy, making me nightmares and aches of my body. In the beginning I got relief by going to live in other regions than in the rock-hall and on the beach: but in every direction my way hath now been blocked, for I have now inhabited in turn every cranny of the cavern whereto I am able to penetrate, and the vapour is in all, troubling also the shrubs of all sorts, the which let fall their heads, and shed their health. There remain some coigns among the rockeries, wherein, when I toil aloft to them, I may yet breathe with some freedom; but that my days are numbered I know. My God! my God! why hast Thou created me?

But soon after understanding the manner of my undoing, I began to argue in myself as regards the cavern and his architecture as never formerly, arguing that whereas so great volumes of water come in, and the vault is not filled, there must needs be some outlet for an equal volume to flow out. I was led to conjecture that the tunnel which admits the sea into the cavern is at some sea-mountain's summit; that the cavern must be in the

mountain's bowels; and that the outflow out of the cavern must be down another much longer tunnel, leading down to the mountain's bottom into the sea.[1] I therefore conceived the notion that, if I could reach the portugal, get it repaired, and, in it, introduce myself into the tunnel of outflow (the which I knew to be beyond the headland on the lake's left, where the lake's two wheeling currents meet), then I should be carried down and out into the bottom of the sea, should thereupon rise to the sea's surface—for the unweighted portugal would certainly float with me—and there I might bore a hole or two in the portugal's upper belly for air, and be picked up by a ship before my stores were done, and before my death from hunger or suffocation, I being well drugged with the mescal, and so but little breathing or eating. As to introducing myself into the tunnel of outflow, nothing more was necessary than to get the portugal to the headland's end, get myself into it, and roll myself in the portugal from the headland's end into the lake: where the currents would not fail to bear me toward the place of outflow, and I should be sucked down into the tunnel.

I meditated that the stupendousness of the attempt in no fashion lessened my chance: for that laws will act exactly on the immense scale as on the small. The portugal I could get to by going into the lake at the egg's-point of the lake, whence the current would carry me away along the left shore toward the island, the left end whereof I might catch by continually swimming strong

[1] This is shrewd: the two tunnels and lake thus acting as a syphon, and the compressed air acting as what in hydrostatics we call a "pocket." This, in fact, is the only hypothesis—except the hypothesis that the tunnel of outflow emerges upon dry land, there forming a salt lake or river, like the Sardinian *salines*.

to the right; and lest I should be dashed to fragments in my grand journey through the tunnel, I determined to pad the portugal's inside with the bulrush pith; and moreover I devised a sliding-door in the portugal's side, the which when I should reach the sea's surface would be furnishing me with breathing: in the making whereof I did not doubt but that my former craft in carpentry would help me out. That I might be struck blind by the moon's brightness, and surely by the sun's, upon opening mine eyes up there above I reflected: but I price eyes as of but paltry value to a man, and should estimate it no hardship to dispense with mine, such as they are. On the whole, I had no fear; and the reason of my fearlessness, as I at present perceive, lay in this: that in my heart I never at all intended to attempt the venture. It was a fond thought: for, granting that I got out, how could I live without the cataract? I should surely die. And what good were life to me there in the glare of day, without the mescal's joys, and without the secret presence of the voice, and the thing which it secretly shouteth? In such separation from the power of my life I should pass frailly away as a spectre at day-break: for by the power of the voice is my frail life sustained, and thereon I hang, and therein I have my being. And this in my soul I must have known: but in the futile mood that possessed me, I made three several attempts to gain the portugal, terrified the while at mine own temerity; and twice I failed to make the left end of the island, for the current carried me beyond—toward the tunnel of outflow, I doubted not; yet were my terrors not of that horror mainly, but of the monster in the lake's depth, the which stayeth there pale and pensive, meditating his meditations: for I knew that if my foot or hand just touched his skin,

I must assuredly reel and sink, shrieking mad, since I swam dark, but having an unlighted torch in my hand, the tinder-box being tied within my beard; and the first twice I was hurled to land upon the headland, but the third time upon the island's left end, the rock of which I clambered up with my hands lacerated by shells. And after lighting the torch, I wrought my steps toward the island's right end; and there lay the portugal even as I had left it twenty, forty, years ago, the slime on his side yet wet from the waterfall's aura that haunts the island. And in that spot I saw, not the portugal alone, but moreover a sword's hilt, a human skull, and a clock's racket, thither tossed by the cataract. The portugal was still good, for the pitch which is on it: and having cast out the drado by an effort of all my strength, I struck out four of the nails from the three bottom pieces that had been sprung, nailed the three pieces, and the broken hoop of wood, too, to the side of the portugal, and so consigned the portugal to the waters, the which, I was assured, would bear it to the small end of the lake's egg-shape, as they had borne me upon mine ancient fall from the island.

But I had myself no sooner been spued again upon the mainland, more dead than alive, and there found the portugal stranded, than I knew myself for a futile dreamer, wearying myself without sincere motive: for that I should really abandon the cavern was a thing not within the capability of nature. And there by the shore's edge I left the portugal lying a good while, abiding for the most part upon the crags of these rocks that be like gradients on the right side of the hall, until that day when it was suggested to my spirit how strangely had been given me both ink and paper in this place, the knowledge moreover how to get the portugal forth of the grot with a

history of that thing which my God in song hath murmured unto me, having furtively hid me with His hand, though a seraph's pen could never express it; nor could I long resist the pressure of that suggestion to write, and send forth the writing in the portugal.

For the portugal's mending I had the gimlet, the chisel, mescal-timber, and some of the nails from the sprung bottom, which could be spared; nor was the job hard, since the one started hoop could be nicely spliced. I rolled and got the portugal up to this level ground in the rocks, surrounding myself, as I wrought, with tarred torches, which I stuck in the rocks' cracks: for down below it is reluctantly if a fire will now burn; and at this height also the torches do burn with shy fires.

Or ever the portugal was repaired, I had got ready the pages for writing, having divided fifteen of the bulrush piths into strips, then wetted, and dried them; but there be spongy spots in them where the lampblack that I have manufactured out of the pitch runneth rather abroad under the splint of fish-bone that serves for my pen, hurting the fairness of my writing. That I could write at all I rather doubted, on the count that I have not for so long handled pen nor spoken, and on the count moreover of the trembling: for not only the pen trembleth by reason of mine age, but the parchment trembleth by reason of the vault's trembling; and between these two tremblements, in a sick sheen which flickers ever, these sheets have, letter by letter, been writ. The fifteen sheets of pith, moreover, have proved too little, and I am writing now on the second of two sheets that are sections of a fish's skin.

But now it is finished: and I send it out, if so be a fellow in the regions above may read it, and know. My

name, if I have not yet writ it down, was James Dowdy Saul; and I was born not far from the borough of Bideford in the county of Devon.

My God! my God! why hast Thou created me?

I ask it: for the question ariseth of itself to my mind because of the crass facts of my predicament; yet my heart knoweth it, Lord God, to be the grumble of an ingrate: for a hidden thing is, that is winninger than wife, or child, or the shining of any light, and is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man findeth, he selleth all, and buyeth that field; and I thank, I do thank Thee, for Thy voice, and for my lot, and that it was Thy will to ravish me: for the charm of Thy secret is more than the rose, exceeding utterance.

THE CHEMISE OF MARGARITA PAREJA

By Lafcadio Hearn

It is not improbable that some of my readers may have often heard the old women of Lima exclaim, when complaining of the high price of an article:

"What?—why, that is dearer than the chemise of Margarita Pareja!"

I should have sought hard to find out who this Margarita Pareja was, whose chemise is so famous, had I not stumbled across an article written by Don Ildefonso Antonio Bermejo, author of a famous work on Paraguay, who, although he touches but very lightly upon the subject of the girl and her chemise, nevertheless has enabled me to solve the riddle, and to bring to light the facts of the story you are going to read.

Margarita Pareja lived in 1776 or thereabouts; and was the most beloved and petted daughter of Don Raimundo Pareja, gentleman of Santiago, and collector-general of Callao.

The girl belonged to that class of Lima beauties whose charms would captivate the very devil himself, and make him cross himself and even drive him to distraction.

About that time there arrived from Spain a gallant youth named Don Luis de Alcazar. He had a rich bachelor uncle in Lima, an old-fashioned Aragonese, exceedingly haughty, and unspeakably proud of his ancestry.

It is reasonable to suppose that while awaiting the chance to inherit from his uncle, Luis lived as poorly

as a church mouse, and was continually haunted by melancholy. When I say that his smallest requirements were obtained upon credit, to be paid for as soon as he could mend his fortune, I believe that I state his condition with sufficient truthfulness.

On the occasion of the procession of Santa Rosa, Alcazar first saw the beautiful Margarita. The girl caught his eye and ensnared his heart. He presented her with a bunch of flowers: and although she responded neither by a direct yes nor no, she allowed it to be inferred by her smiles and other artifices of the feminine arsenal that the lad was by no means displeasing to her. The truth, as I should confess it, is that they fell over head and ears in love with each other.

As the lovers forgot there was such a thing as arithmetic, Don Luis never dreamed that his present poverty could be any obstacle to the success of his love affair. He called upon Margarita's father, and without any preamble whatever boldly demanded the hand of his daughter.

Don Raimundo did not entertain the petition favourably; and dismissed the postulant with many elaborate courtesies, observing that Margarita was still too much of a child to think of marriage, and that in spite of her eighteen summers she was still attached to her dolls.

But that was not the true cause of the refusal. The fact was that Don Raimundo did not care to become the father-in-law of a *pobreton* (poor devil); and he said as much in confidence to one of his friends, who went directly with the tale to Don Honorato, as the proud Aragonese uncle was named. The latter, who was haughtier than the Cid himself, bounded with rage at

the news, and cried: "What! Insult my nephew! Many would be only too happy to have a chance of an alliance with that boy; than whom there is not a finer lad in all Lima. The insolence of the low-born clown alone betrays itself in such a fashion as this. But, after all, what has this miserable, pitiful *collectorcillo* to do with me?"

Margarita, who was born a century before her time, suddenly became as hysterical as a maiden of our own era; she sobbed and pulled out her hair and fainted; and if she did not threaten to poison herself, it was because matches had not yet been invented.

Margarita lost her rosiness, and grew visibly thinner and weaker day by day; talked about becoming a nun, and absolutely refused to listen to reason. She would cry "*O de Luis o de Dios!*" (either Luis or God) every time the hysterics came on, which was very often. The Santiago *caballero* became finally much alarmed, and called in doctors and nurses—all of whom swore that the girl was going into consumption, and that the only medicine which could save her was not sold in apothecaries' shops.

"Either marry her to the lad she loves or make her coffin ready!" Such was the doctor's ultimatum.

So Don Raimundo, remembering only that he was a father, rushed without hat or cloak to the residence of Don Honorato and said to him:

"I have come to beg your consent to the marriage of your nephew with Margarita to-morrow morning; for otherwise the girl will die."

"Oh, utterly impossible! utterly, utterly impossible!!" ironically responded the uncle. "My nephew is only a poor devil, and the man you must seek for your

daughter's husband is a rich man, a man of money, a man of large resources!"

The dialogue was a stormy one. The more Don Raimundo supplicated, the more Don Honorato seemed to harden his heart; and both were about to retire from the scene, when Don Luis ventured to break in upon the discussion, saying:

"But, uncle, it is not Christian-like to kill those who have done no wrong."

"Indeed! Am I to understand that you wish to sacrifice yourself for that girl's sake?"

"With all my heart and soul, Uncle y Señor."

"Very well, boy; I consent, since it seems to give you pleasure; but only upon one condition, and that is this: Don Raimundo must swear to me upon the Sacred Host that he will not present his daughter with one single *ochavo*, nor bequeath her in his will even so much as a *real*."

This renewed the quarrel in a new form.

"But, man," cried Don Raimundo, "my daughter has a dowry of twenty thousand *duros*!"

"We renounce the dowry. The girl must come to the house of her husband with nothing but her shift on."

"At least permit me to marry her with some little formality—her trousseau and furniture and——"

"No, sir—not so much as a pin. If you do not like my terms, renounce them, and let the little one die!"

"But, Don Honorato, try to be reasonable. My daughter must at least have a chemise, in the way of wedding apparel."

"Well, I will yield this point, lest you might think me obstinate. I consent that you give her a bridal chemise; and now let us end the discussion."

Don Raimundo and Don Honorato rode to San Francisco at daybreak next morning; and while kneeling at Mass during the elevation of the Host, the former swore according to the compact:

"I swear not to give my daughter anything except the bridal chemise. May God judge me if I perjure myself."

And Don Raimundo Pareja kept his oath to the letter; for neither during his life nor at his death did he ever afterward give his daughter anything worth a *maravedi*.

The Flemish laces which adorned the bridal chemise cost two thousand seven hundred *duros*, according to Bermejo, who seems to have copied the statement from the Relaciones Secretas of Ulloa and Don Jorge Juan.

Item, the string which confined the chemise at the neck was a chain of brilliants valued at thirty thousand *morlascoes*.

Assuredly, Margarita Parejo's chemise deserved its fame.

THE SECRET LAND

By Wilfrid Ewart

Nicholas Peni and all his family, consisting of a wife, two young daughters, a son, and a male friend, stood outside their mud farm, smiling and exclaiming "*Á Dios!*"

Which was not the first chapter—or the last. For already two of the horses had bolted, and had covered six of the miles towards home at a gallop. This happened soon after daybreak, when the horses were taken down to water. They were captured by horse strategy, brought back, and saddled immediately, which did not alter the fact that the start was thereby two hours late.

But the eternal sunshine of that far western land saved the situation. How could one be annoyed on a morning so bright, so fresh, so clear and uplifting? The air itself was full of vigour. Here the creek loses its dried-up appearance, contains water, and assumes the potentialities of fertilising a pleasant little valley. A grassy meadow fringed on three sides by yellowing cottonwoods and browsed by cows is the most unusual thing. A company of *burros*, or black donkeys, running loose in a paddock, is usual, but characteristic and picturesque. A big villa with lead-roofed pointed turrets, traces of red-brick French windows, and a white American verandah reminds one that not so far away real estate agents are offering "desirable modern residences" for sale or lease. A great buzzard poised on still wings far up above the plain, on a level, as it seems, with the mountain peaks, negatives that. . . .

The mountains—how contemptuously, how immov-

ably, they watch the progress of a traveller! Baldy, with his white apron, his pine-covered head at one always with the blue sky, stands where he did yesterday. A day's journey has made no difference. The starting-point is no farther away. Man and mountain—and the worlds between!

La Cienega is a long village. It is as if the sparse houses, strung out like tired pack-horses, had sat down by the wayside—indefinitely. They are square and squat, with wooden poles projecting about three feet from the wall; they are built of mud, which is hard and neat as concrete, warm in winter and cool in summer, and as durable. Singly they are not picturesque, but collectively—yes. Sunshine, fading leaves of cottonwood and aspen, sand, mud houses—Wilde's "Symphony in Yellow." . . . And streaks of beetroot-red. Every little house has a verandah; beside the front door of every little house hangs at least one wreath of *chili*, fruit of the pepper-plant, loved of every Mexican.

Cries! Outside Real's store it is hot like midsummer—nay, languorous as a Southern spring. It is noon, and the children stream from school, chattering, the boys chasing each other like chickens, and rolling over in the dust; the girls sucking things, arms linked, heads together, four abreast. It is useless to pretend they are good-looking, these children: they are sallow, black-eyed, mischievous-looking, the boys, grown Mexicans in miniature, with broad black felt hats and blue overalls braced over the shoulders. The pack tumbles noisily into Real's, presumably for candy. . . . A slate-blue bird with the legs and motion of a plover and the flowing crest of a phalarope darts back and forth in the neighbouring meadows. Crickets chirp. A lizard runs between rock

and rock on the hillside. Here to the valley not a breath of wind finds its way. Yes, it is summer. . . .

Following the water-course of the creek is easier than following the trail along its bank. There is never more than a trickle of water, though there is much mud. The gorge narrows and broadens, though it is never less than three hundred yards across. Blue and black rock-walls rise to battlements that are never frowningly high. Sometimes the rock-walls are plain, but sometimes scored into symmetrical architecture of pillars, façades, cornices, arches, greyish-white and elaborate as the west front of a French cathedral. Sometimes, where the banks are low, cows troop down to drink, and sometimes in shelving meadows Mexicans in broad-brimmed hats are seen loading alfalfa into waggons. Once the horns and bones of a dead cow are passed, and once a shanty under the rock, with rough benches and a fire outside, and the remains of a meal on a rough-hewn table, as if three or four had sat down to it. Mexicans, no doubt, are doing some work of construction or irrigation near by. It is not a grand or a terrible gorge. Afternoon sunlight confers upon it a placidity that is almost phlegmatic, a calm that is of the seclusion in which nothing ever happens.

Coffee and crackers in that sunlight, and then a journey across a plain. There comes into view the mountain called Sandia, which means the water-melon, and which is a landmark to a hundred miles of country. There are mountains all round. The Jemez frown. Baldy is temporarily hidden. An eagle with brown back and white breast, gleaming and curved beak, rises from his vantage-point on a knoll and wings away into the sunset.

And the trail leads into the sunset, grass and sand

and piñon and distances bounded by range upon range of mountains, a sun sinking not beyond the Norman church-tower, the sheepfold, the ridge of plough or stubble, but beyond the deserts of Arizona, the rocks and rivers of Colorado and California, the romance and civilisation of San Francisco, the rim of the great Pacific itself.

The valley of the Rio Grande lies dimly outspread at the feet. There are groves of trees; there are glimpses of water. History rises with the evening mist—and romance: romance of the first Spaniards who set foot upon this soil four hundred years ago, who toiled up this river, now broadening, now swampy, now dry; of generations of Franciscan Fathers who, attacked and often massacred by Red Indians, founded twenty-five miles away that Royal City of the Holy Faith of St. Francis which grows in prosperity at this day; history and a deepening sense of the mystery of this land, which, veiled as yet from the eyes of the world, combines the world's progress and its crudeness with that which is of the past—far past. Spaniard and Indian live side by side; Spanish superstition vies with Indian superstition until at last they are one: superadded comes the idol of America, which, be it of gold or clay, shall overwhelm them both. But the Rio Grande flows on, and the mountains do not change, nor the perennial snows, nor the desert whose secret peeps out at a man in the bright noonday, but overnight shall perish with it. . . .

Lights shine apart, Cochiti across the river, Peña Blanca hither. The Garcias' house is dark, which is natural, for young Garcia is to marry to-morrow, and father and son are probably up at the bride's. However, a clean room, two coloured pictures of the Virgin

holding the Christ-Child, faded waxen flowers under glass, an enlarged photograph of the elder Garcia, moonlight austere in purity as a sinner's conception of the Roman Catholic Church, a cat on the window-sill, hot coffee, a white counterpane, a horse's hoofs muffled by the sandy street, . . . bed!

* * * * * *

In its dawning the sun projects rays into unsuspected mountain-tops, refracting therefrom a confusion of rose-tinted snow and cloud that resembles nothing so much as the froth upon an ice-cream soda. It is cold, too. The occasional water carries ice. The world is like an ice-cream soda.

Long shadows steal like finger-marks across the valley, across fields of alfalfa and maize, in among the golden flakes of cottonwood and aspen, in among the sandy glades. A flock of birds like rooks, and like rooks strung out, wends across dark snow-clouds piled up westward; eastward an indigo-black ridge stands sharply against the sunrise, and, as if prepared for the painter, a great black cross stands enhaloed by a pale golden sky.

"What is that up there?"—pointing—"the cross?"

But the Indian in blue, with a red handkerchief round his head, does not understand. A Mexican, also in blue, with a black sombrero, does understand. He pulls up his broad yoke of horses, for he is driving a waggon containing a load of alfalfa.

"*Allá?* A religious sect of the Mexicans."

One more is added to the secrets hidden in the heart of this land. Nor shall its significance be revealed here. Out of the faith and blood of the people of the Middle Ages, out of the womb of dimmest Christianity, out of

the womb of old Europe, and of time itself, this thing has sprung. Passion Week hides it; Lent covers it up with cloak of night-stormy wandering; the weals and the scars are hidden beneath habiliments of everyday life —until Good Friday morning.

But the mystery grows—the mystery of a land so silent that the rare chirrup of a pipit causes a man to rein in his horse and look around for the author of it, so utterly devoid of life that a glimpse of cottontail or of hare is an event to be chronicled in the diary—or is it that winter's quiet has already descended here?—so ordered that low cedar and stunted pine spot the landscape as trimly and as regularly as oak-trees in any English parkland, and even the rocks seem to hold to their appointed place, so sandy that even the horses' hoof-steps are but thuds, so arid that for thirty-five miles not a drop of water is found, so devoid of vegetation that the yellowish, dried-up *chimesa* and the ash-coloured, nourishing gramma-grass offer almost a relief to the eye. What shall it yield of personality, of intimacy, of the spiritual or the actual? Answer: Nothing, nothing. For the trail winds up and down—and it is always easy, and it is always clear—and beyond this ridge is another just like it, and beyond that another with an occasional broad, flat water-course in which the horses' hoofs sink deep. It is like riding through a sandy, undulating park.

A bitter wind rises. Snow flurries drift-like eddies of smoke across the higher mountain slopes. Just as the coffee boils on a fire of stalks and sticks that are brittle as tinder come a rustle and the snort of a horse. Six Pueblo Indians have drawn rein. One, a leader, rides a dapple-grey pony; the others ride bay ponies. They

sit still as statues, but the dank, parchment-like faces, the eyes in which smoulders primeval wisdom unchanged, a knowledge of centuries untold—these smile. They drink coffee and accept cigarettes. They joke and laugh among themselves. "*Poco frio! Mucho frio! Nevar!*" We ride on. With heels and raw-hide thong they urge their ponies into a canter, and so proceed, two abreast, like a gay party going hunting or like a troop of cavalry. Soon they leave us behind, but for a quarter of an hour we keep in sight, thrown over their shoulders, their blankets of many colours, striped patterned, cross-woven, the vivid red and yellow handkerchiefs, knotted at the back, with which the coarse black hair is bound, and the bobbing up and down of equestrian figures which would look meretricious in their fidelity to romance if they did not belong to the dim landscape as natively and historically as the grey-black rocks themselves.

The snowstorm hides them. Snowflakes eddy playfully from an opaque sky, but sunlight glints on distant peaks. Soon the secret land shall be cloaked in a new deception—a dazzling purity that seems to smile. We halt to tighten girths in a little ravine, for saddles slip back during a long ascent. A sound of wheels. A two-horse waggon passes, driven by an Indian muffled in a green-and-yellow blanket, beside him a fat squaw with a baby concealed in the folds of a pink-and-black blanket. The snow ceases. Parties of three and four Indians canter up silently behind, urge their ponies to a gallop, and pass with a greeting or draw in to ask whither we are bound and whence have come. All are on their way from the Rio Grande valley to a remote *pueblo* in the mountains where on the following day there is to be a festival. Once a cowboy passes, in slouch hat and

coloured neckerchief and leather " chaps," looking as if the cinema had returned him, borrowed but not damaged, to the world he belongs to.

" How do ? " says he ; " kind o' cold ! " But, he adds, he is not bound for the festival ; his mission is to fetch over a " bunch o' stock," and he has to make his destination, twenty miles away, before dark.

Fires blaze up close to the trail. Parties of Indians pull up their ponies abruptly and dismount, gather into a heap within a few seconds a pile of sticks and weeds, and stand, a lurid circle, around the blaze warming their hands. The bonfire dies down as quickly as it is kindled ; they mount, and with a whoop and a yell continue on their way.

A solitary Indian rides up and enters into conversation. He wears a kind of yellow shirt and handkerchief round his head, long turquoise earrings, blue trousers and brown moccasins. His bridle is of horsehair cunningly plaited. Announcing that his name is Lorenzo, and that he is from San Felipe, a *pueblo* on the Rio Grande, he offers to show a short cut through the bush to the way we wish to go. Knowing that as guides Indians are infallible, and that in their own part of the country they will find their way blindfold, we follow, although the trail seems to wander aimlessly through the sand amid low bushes of piñon and cedar. Our guide trots far ahead, but waits on successive ridges, calls " Coo-ee," and beckons the direction with his arm, or, awaiting us on some knoll, his wild and savage figure silhouetted against a stormy sunset, his long hair and that of his horse blown recklessly by the wind, he looks like some Moorish chieftain on outpost in expectation of the approach of an enemy. His wild cry, carried back

to us on the wings of the harsh west wind, reinforces this impression.

Stopping on one such ridge, he lets us come up with him. And there is unfolded to view such a panorama—one cannot call it a landscape—as moves one strangely with an awe of Nature. The travels of Paul Fountain in Arizona, Colorado and New Mexico were read by English boys a quarter of a century ago and later; and the descriptions given therein so far tally with what now lies before us that it is as if the page lay open and had just been read. A valley lies beneath with—strange sight!—gleams of water in it; that is, no doubt, the valley of the river Jemez. North-eastward a snow-clad peak rises in lonely majesty to the sky; it is Baldy: south-westward Sandia rises alone, marking the course of the Rio Grande. Between these two points and looking westward as far as the eye can see—which is at least fifty miles—is a succession of gorges and canyons, of rock-strewn precipices, of dried-up river-courses, of rocks that jut up singly in strange shapes and at queer angles, of twisted streams of yellowish lava, and of here and there in a general monotone of bluish-grey scarlet seams in rock or precipice, and wherever sand predominates of the piñon spotting it with the regularity of roses on chintz window-curtains. The naturally wild and sombre character of this outlook is enhanced by the wild and sombre character of the evening; fretted bars of red against the cold grey of piled-up snow-clouds intimate where the sun is sinking on his nightly journey to the Pacific. Clouds cling about the mountain-peaks or float before their snowy slopes in such a way that they appear super-humanly remote and aloof. If grandeur and gloom are words that can of themselves describe any great mani-

festation of Nature, then are they applicable here. But they are not enough. For a soul and spirit dwell in conjunction of cloud and mountain and distance as they dwell also in conjunction of mind and matter; and somewhere there dwells or, as would seem more probable, roves, in canyon and chasm and along precipices, the soul and the spirit of this secret land. At rest? No. Capturable, attainable, tamable? No. The spirit of the ages, perhaps, which is said to wander down an eternal declivity—the ages which have formed this sculpture of rock and fissure, which have carved it, which have preserved it and left it naked and elemental to our gaze as it was in the beginning. . . .

The horses pick a way down the sheer precipice. What so sure-footed as an Indian or mountain-reared pony? The wise rider, however apparently perilous the descent, will leave its negotiation entirely to his mount. And it is at such moments that the communion between horse and man becomes very real. By the time we are at the bottom it is almost dark. Only a few autumnal embers remain in the western sky. The sand gleams white. The trail, however, broadens into a waggon-road. The piñon bushes on either side take on their character of watchers who guard a secret.

Lights appear. Dogs bark. Horses whinny. There is shouting. There are sounds of barbaric music. . . .

* * * * * *

The high, bright morning, the clear sunlight, the keen air, dispel all secrets. The mystery of the secret land, if there is one, recedes; there remains only a bitter little wind, snow glistening on mountain peaks, a broad, mild valley with an attenuated river, Jemez, wandering through it and amid groves of cottonwood and sparse

fields of corn, the mud village San Ysidro. Albeit there are two or three American wooden houses with verandahs to be found in it. But this is the mystery of the secret land: that when its *ego* or its personality, call it as you will, becomes intense, almost palpable, almost terrible, it eludes one's grasp; it disappears as the substance of a dream or of a nightmare does at dawn of day.

Such people one knows. In a journey through life one meets countless people whose character, whose A to Z, as it were, whose beginning and end, are declared in their faces, by their manners and their speech. One meets other people whom long knowledge and patient study reveal at the last—sometimes an unmasking! And one meets a third sort of people, a rare and unhappy sort, whose soul hides and eludes, who until the very end hold to their secret—not always because they have one, not always because they would not unburden themselves of it if they could—but whether they have not or have a secret soul, and whether their personal mystery happens to be akin to the supernatural or to the material or to both—that the world never knows.

Nature may be kindly, smiling and happy; or she may be austere and terrible; or bafflingly in one expression, in one entity, she may be both. . . .

Such thoughts, it is true, do not occur to one in the warm sunlight that induces a sense of passive indifference, of noon. And the trading-station, however remote, is a scene of life and colour. An incessant coming and going of Indians, vivid oscillations of yellows, greens and reds, a neighing of horses and a barking of dogs, the occasional fussy jargon of a motor-car, waggon-wheels muffled by the sand, a calling to one another of men in terms of

Spanish, Indian and English, the regular clank-clank of a near-by water-wheel—this is the place. A little way down the road some Mexican cowboys are having a "rag," three of them, with whoops and yells of laughter, trying to pull a fourth off a half-broken broncho. In the big store, which contains everything from Parisian scent to leathern waistcoats and cowboy hats, there is a crowd. It is perhaps the busiest day in the year. At long counters the Indians offer rugs and blankets woven into patterns and combinations of colour, and crude turquoise and turquoise matrix, and silver bracelets, and cunningly wrought silver ornaments in exchange for bags of flour, bottles of scent, cigars and cigarettes, pocket-knives, matches, print dresses, and all those incidental articles which they, like us, have come to consider articles of necessity.

Nor are they for the most part the same sort of Indians who came our way yesterday. They do not speak the same language, neither do they look the same. Apaches and Navajos, they are the traditional enemies of the Pueblos, which means town-dwellers. This tall man standing before the door wrapped in a yellow-and-pink blanket, a brown, broad-brimmed hat with a long feather in it shading fierce eyes, and a countenance at once swarthy, moustached and proud, is an Apache—the most warlike of the tribes. So picturesque is his attitude, so statuesque his pose, so typically stands he for the war-chief of romance, that, you think, he must be aware of the fact. Should you venture to address him, the reply will probably be a surly grunt. That woman in voluminous skirts wearing whole strings of native turquoise and of silver ornaments, which must be worth hundreds of dollars, but which she would probably refuse to sell at

any price, is a Navajo, despite her flaxen hair. For flaxen hair, as do albinos, occasionally appears among the purest Indians, thus showing an outcross in some previous generation. Despite her long skirts, she mounts and bestrides a horse easily. A stocky, square-set man in a black-and-mustard striped blanket and a tousled, dark-eyed boy in trousers and a broad hat, romantic-looking as a young Italian, now join her, and all three trot off together. Doubtless they are bound back to their reservation, nearly a hundred miles away. The Navajos, too, are a warlike tribe, and have the reputation of being the most treacherous and most vindictive of the Indians. A century and more ago they made unceasing war upon Mexicans and village Indians alike, so that the former were driven to seek refuge in the *pueblos* of the latter, a state of affairs which has resulted in the present trouble over what is known as the Bursum Bill—a measure passed, but recalled by the Senate, which potentially deprived the Indians of a portion of their lands in behalf of those who were originally their guests. The Navajos, however, who alone among the Indians are said to be increasing in numbers, have never dwelt in *pueblos*. They are wanderers and shepherds, like gipsies; they know no resting-place but trail's end and camp-fire; they are prime makers of blankets and ornaments, but yet, coming out of the wild, they go back to it and, it may be, share its secret. They know no community with white men.

In the evening, in the long evening, the half-dozen or so tired men who constitute the trading-station of San Ysidro gather round a log-fire. There has been a supper of pork-and-beans, and waffles, and coffee. The low, oblong room whose mud-coloured walls are sparsely decorated with pictures cut from the Sunday supplement

of the *New York Times*, and whose ceiling is supported by beams of pine, is filled with tobacco smoke. On a kind of settle a novel, a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post*. A Winchester repeater leans up against the fireplace, a box of cartridges on the shelf above it. And the conversation? There are excursions into world politics and controversial subjects like Prohibition, but it for the most part consists of the coming hunting season, which lasts only ten days, of the likelihood of turkey and deer being found low on the mountain, of the best place and the best plan to obtain good sport; it goes back, too, as such conversations usually do, to former hunting seasons, and to comparisons among the hunters of bear encountered, brown, black and silver-tip (grizzly), of lynx and mountain lion and wild cat successfully or otherwise dealt with.

An elderly, bearded face, the young, beardless face of an Easterner, a face nervously alive and twitching with a hundred per cent. American energy, the face of one who has known only manual toil, and rough toil at that, the face of one who takes the world as his arena, and as his subject-matter all human life.

The fire burns low. One by one the traders disappear to bed. With every opening and shutting of the door a bitter little wind enters. Outside it is very cold. Moonlight plays upon fields upon fields of snow thirteen thousand feet high, fifty miles away. A coyote howls across the river. . . .

* * * * * *

As we sat on the hill above Zia it came and peeped out at us. The hour was noon. A more placid and kindly day could not be imagined. The keen edge of the wind was taken off by sunshine, warm and contemplative;

an Italian sky was flecked with high white clouds that drifted across it like ships in full sail. All morning we had followed rather lazily the sandy course of the Jemez River, passing only a Mexican cowboy who was looking for strayed stock and an Indian herding a flock of goats. We had entered the little church that stands on the hill-top at Zia; and perhaps the decay, the forlorn neglect and abandonment, of the place had turned the mind into a certain groove. For there is always something eerie, something uncanny almost, about neglect in a church; like a neglected child, it appeals to you as something that before all else ought to be cared for and cherished, so that where you find plaster peeling, and dust and cob-webs, and the mason's work half done, you seem to have found the negation of human, because a denial of Divine, love.

Piles of boards lay on the earthy floor. The altar of faded painted wood, bereft of all embellishment, and the altar-rails alone reminded you of the character of the place. The wind whispered through and around it. But behind the altar, secret and, as it were, ashamed, lurked what might or should have been a beautiful thing. Torn, rotten and crinkled with damp, so that the canvas hung in tatters against the woodwork, so far gone in age and decay that three-quarters of the picture was a mere brownish blur of dried-up paint, one face yet appeared, and it was the face of the Virgin. Judging by the poise of the head, she must have been holding and looking down at the Christ-child. On either side had been frescoes painted on woodwork, but they were practically blotted out. The face of the Virgin alone remained distinct, not particularly beautiful, it is true, though said to be the work of a famous Spaniard of olden time,

but protesting and forsaken as a voice crying in the wilderness.

It was a relief to go outside into the bright noonday. But it was haunting, too, as if in that dark, forgotten corner behind the altar one had come upon something not to be known of men. And all the rest of that day was peculiarly haunting. As we sat with our coffee and biscuits on the hill-top, an Indian squaw with white buckskin putties beneath a blue dress, and a mummy-like face, as if parchment had been drawn over the features of a skull, came out of the roof of her mud hut and watched us. And in the mud village that lay beneath us she was the only sign of human life. A dog came and wagged its tail and begged for food. Two or three wading-birds were visible in the shallow river, which, through acres of mud, bounded by low, sandy banks, did not so much flow as crawl through that barren land. In the distance the mountains looked bluer and bluer as the afternoon advanced, taking on strange and yet stranger shapes as the eye dwelt upon them—a camel's back, a church steeple, a table, a tombstone, a cenotaph, standing by themselves. And never, though the sun shone undimmed, and the foot-hills northward protected us from the breeze, so that, keeping in to the river's bank, it was baskfully quiet—never had the secret spirit of the country so, as it were, come out at one, dogged one, stalked one, looked over one's shoulder at unexpected moments, flaunted its presence in front of and beside one; never had one been so conscious of it, nor so conscious of the orderliness of piñon and cedar when the trail led among them, of their gravity, demureness and silence, and of the clear interval of space and light, about half a dozen yards, which separated one from another. The horses' foot-

steps were muffled by sand; occasionally the animals would stop to nose among the yellow *chimesa* for the rarer gramma-grass which they devour. At such time the silence would become almost fearsome, so that one imagined oneself in a vast cemetery planted with cypress. . . .

In the evening about sunset we came to the small Indian village of Santa Ana, which groups around a square, mud-built church on a low cliff or knoll above the Jemez River. The mountain Sandia, ten thousand feet high, stands in full view to the south-east, marking the course of the Rio Grande, which we now once more approached; while westward the desert stretches to those far-distant mountains beyond which lies Arizona. A vast herd of steers was being driven by Mexicans across the river—a stage in their journey, for, as we afterwards learnt, they were strangers to the Indian *pueblo*. On the outskirts of the latter, as is customary in such places, were a number of stockades or horse-corrals built of upright poles bound together. Dogs at once appeared, together with one or two squaws and some children. The lack of interest of these people in white strangers is worth remarking. Only one male Indian appeared, but he spoke English, and his offer of a room in his house for the night was gladly accepted. The more so was this the case when it was learnt that the deserted appearance of the village was due to the fact that the majority of its inhabitants were away, farming, in the Rio Grande valley; that on the day previous we should have found the place entirely empty save for a few old men left as caretakers; and that our friend himself—whose name, by the way, was José Garcia—had only that day returned with his family from the township of Bernalillo. We were thus in luck's

way, and, mattresses having been spread, settled down to spend a hot, uncomfortable night upon the floor. This was in a room opening out of that of Garcia and his family, which latter appeared to consist of two squaws, a baby, and another youngish man. Upon the walls of the room were one or two devotional pictures of Roman Catholic origin, for the Pueblo Indians are, nominally at any rate, ministered to by the Franciscan Fathers whose predecessors entered this country with Coronado four centuries ago. Whether the Indian mentality is capable of absorbing Christianity, or whether through observance of its forms and dogma he persists in worship of his own time-consecrated—false—gods, is matter for speculation. Those best acquainted with him aver that the word which comes readiest to the lips of an Indian—doubtless because it is the easiest to pronounce—is " Yes." . . .

Our friend brings in a bundle of wood, lights the stove and a lamp. When we produce our tinned sardines, our butter and bread, from the saddle-bags, he sets upon the table a sort of hot and savoury meat-and-potato hash. When we come to cigarettes he takes his seat at table, and one of the squaws, sidling in, takes her seat by the door, mutely and silently inquisitive. Periodically the baby squalls, but we, red and white, are so interested in each other that the conversation is not interrupted. Some time back he (Garcia) was elected twice in succession governor of the *pueblo;* that is to say, he carried a silver-headed staff of office and led in civil and communal affairs, which is not, however, to confuse him with the *cacique*, who directs the dances and leads in religious affairs. The *pueblo* system, it appears, is genuinely communal; *i.e.*, no individual Indian owns real estate, but upon his application to the village elders he is granted so many

acres to cultivate, and should he fail to cultivate them, they are taken away and given to another. They may not be sold outside the *pueblo* to American or Mexican, nor may any other property of the *pueblo* be sold, under both Indian and United States law. There is this difference between white man and red—a notable difference—in this twentieth century: the red man works to live, and the white man lives to work (under which heading, be it added, is not included the Mexican, who does no work at all if he can help it!). "Why should I work harder?" asked the cultivator of fifteen or twenty acres. "I have enough. My wife and children have enough. What more is there to work for?"

It is not the point of view of Chicago: that is true; and it is not the point of view Chicago—or Washington?—will ever understand. . . .

When a Navajo marries he joins the tribe of his wife. The wife is acknowledged ruler in the household; and should she desire a divorce, she simply puts her husband's property outside the tent.

In course of conversation our friend mentions that he received his English education at the Indian school at Albuquerque. "But," he deprecatingly adds, "my English is bad. I wish it was better. I would have stayed longer at school, only my dad, old-fashioned Indian, thought it was time for me to work." With some pride he mentions how several young Indians joined the United States Army during the war—the reverberations of which are distinctly felt even here—and were sent to guard the Mexican frontier.

Passing through the kitchen later that evening, the Indian and his family are seen crouching in a circle about their fire, the squaws sitting on the floor, one nursing the

baby, wearing their blankets as in Europe women wear shawls, the two men squatting, heels together, knees apart, their coarse black hair falling about their shoulders, their reddish, angular faces ruddily lit by the blaze, their contemplative eyes staring into it as though they read there memories of a past both far and free.

* * * * * *

It is a long climb up and over the *mesa*. A *mesa* is a flat-topped hill, but there are moments when the climber, leading his horse, has his doubts about the top. For there is no trail, but a way has to be picked around boulders, along shelves of rock, and over loose stones which threaten momentarily to roll and crash down into the abyss.

But the summit is reached at last, and the landscape disclosed to view is such another as has already been described, the dark green piñon and sand cedar spotting a sandy expanse in which bunches of the yellow *chimesa* and an occasional land-crop or cairn of grey stones do not relieve so much as emphasise the monotony. Once—or twice—there occur deep and unexpected fissures with old sandy water-courses running like sunken roadways at the bottom of them and steep, rocky sides, which have to be descended and again climbed. It is a long and painful business, but a waggon trail leading due east must end in a declivity to the broad valley of the Rio Grande. And it does. For from a sort of embrasure of rocky cliff there opens out immediately beneath as complete an Indian village as could be seen in cardboard at Earl's Court. High up on the stony plateau a gale of cold east wind has arisen, and it blows up the dust so that two or three whirling columns rise like water-spouts from the valley to low, dark clouds which have suddenly overspread

the sky. The big *pueblo* is as one imagines a North African village to be—sandy streets, houses the colour of sand, an adobe church in the centre of the village, with a frontispiece of pine logs. Here a sort of midday sleepiness seems to reign: there are few people about, there are many dogs. One does not feel the wind, and in the store kept by an elderly Indian, where a stove burns, it is positively stuffy.

But when, an hour later, we start again, what a change has come over the face of the afternoon! Black clouds pile up eastward; the wind bends cottonwood, aspen and willow nearly double, actually stirs the sluggish waters of the Rio Grande to a ripple, actually blackens the face of the country as upon a winter's afternoon in England.

Suddenly it is November.

Autumn comes differently to every place, but her message is the same. In the forest of Fontainebleau, oak, and beech, and chestnut stand in serried aisles, and through an autumnal twilight of naked trunks and branches, of faded and of fallen leaves, there stalk shades of those who, dust long since, symbolise human decay: of monarchs, of marshals, of pro-consuls, of ambassadors and statesmen who have long since crumbled to dust in mausoleums and beneath tombs of marble and stone; yet they delight to walk together a little once or twice a year towards the close of a November afternoon. It is the same in Windsor Forest, only here browsing deer in groups and couples lend a new dignity to the landscape as the blue dusk filters between the trees. And in rural districts of England at this time an aged peasant in bound corduroys and low hat may be seen gathering faggots against a background of black, and red, and yellow—a picture which

symbolises the husbandry of centuries past and the habit and the effort of centuries.

Here on the Rio Grande autumn again has a different hand. Undoubtedly the scene would please the painter Corot were he alive, or maybe Daubigny. Knife-like sunbeams, piercing the bleak snow-clouds, gild the pale tops of aspen and cottonwood, crumpled by the wind, which, like a golden chain, follow the river's course. The same beams touch into a warmer life the red and white cattle which graze on patches of grey-green alfalfa amid groves of aspen and willow, light up the withered canes of maize and the feathery papyrus growing six feet tall, and settle in deep red patches, shading to purple and mauve, on the sides of the mountains, so that it is not surprising that those which catch the last rays of the setting sun are called in Mexican the " Mountains of the Blood of Christ." But the background is always sandy, and the predominant tint is yellow. It is a study in old gold.

Wintry shadows lengthen. An Indian trudges homeward, dog at heel, carrying a bundle over his shoulder. We pass through a bleak Indian village, where the dusk reveals a number of ponies running loose in corrals. The spirit of mountain and desert, its sorrow and majesty, its profound mystery and unhappiness, steals out again, as if, before the year should die or before we two should part for ever, it pleaded to be known, to be understood. . . .

And perhaps to-morrow—for we have come near to each other to-night—perhaps to-morrow we shall be friends; we shall understand one another; we shall probe each other's secret at the last.

* * * * * *

How quietly and innocently they fall, how quickly and completely cover roadway and landscape!

Twenty-seven miles to the Royal City of the Holy Faith! The horses slip on the icy surface; snowballs form in their hoofs and have to be cut out; icicles hang from hat and moustache.

But how quietly and innocently they fall, like a soft, warm blanket, like a shroud, like a white shroud! . . .

THE COFFIN

By Caradoc Evans

Captain Shacob owned *Rhondda*, the rowing-boat from which he fished and in which he took folk on the sea at Ferryside. A plump widow named Ann who had sailed in his boat for pleasure said to him: "My son, Little Ben, is a prentice to the carpenter; be you a father to him. My husband, Big Ben, is in the graveyard; be you my second husband." She also told him that she rented a house and ten acres of fertile land on the bank of Avon Towy.

Shacob sold his boat and married Ann, whose fields he trimmed at what time he was not repairing the ditches on the public roads. Now Ann fattened wondrously; her flesh almost choking her, she was wont in hot weather to throw up her hands and scream that she was dying. On arising on a July day, she went into a fit and fell back upon her bed. At mid-day she would not sup of the gingered and sugared bread and water which her husband offered her, nor again in the evening.

"Eat, woman fach," said Shacob.

"Let me perish on an empty belly," answered Ann.

Having milked his cow, tended his two pigs, and shooed his fowls to roost, Shacob walked to the workshop of Lloyd the carpenter. He stood at the threshold of the workshop, his hands, like the claws of a very old crow, grasping the top of the half door, his eyes wearing the solemn aspect of the man who is soon to revel in the mournful joy that Death brings to us Welsh people; his long underlip curling over his purple-stained chin like the petal of a rose, Shacob stood at the door as if he were the reporter of sacred messages in the chapel.

This is what he saw inside the workshop : the crutched figure of the carpenter, whose mouth, from the corners of which dribbled tiny streams of tobacco juice, was like the ungainly cut in a turnip lantern ; the hairy face of the cobbler, much of whose wooden leg was thrust into the earth through the shavings and sawdust with which the ground was strewn ; the bright countenance of the broken-out preacher, whose skin was of the freshness of that of a sucking pig ; the head of Little Ben, whose nose had been twisted at birth, bending over a bird-cage.

The preacher was declaring that Jonah was not swallowed by a fish, even though the fish was a whale ; whereat the cobbler, driving his leg farther into the earth, cried : " Atheist ! "

" Hoit ! " said Shacob.

None of the company heard him, so low was his voice.

Presently Little Ben looked up, and after his gaze had rested for a while upon his stepfather's hands he set to improve the perch-rod of his cage.

" Hoity-ho ! " Shacob sounded.

" Why do you stand there like a thirsty ox at the gate ? " asked the carpenter. " You have seen millions of whales at Ferryside. Sure, indeed, they can take in a man at a gulp."

" Hist-hist," said Shacob. " Ann is going for the sail."

" For two shillings—for one shilling and a morsel of butter," said the preacher, " I'll make a memorial song to the dead."

" Don't let him," cried the cobbler. " Be you warned by me." He struggled to free his leg. " Little Ben, pull her out."

" I am about the coffin," Shacob announced.

" How can I make the coffin," Lloyd replied, " when

I am haymaking all the week? Why didn't you come a month back? And Ann is so stout that it will be a longish job."

"Where else can I go?" Shacob wailed.

"That's it!" the carpenter growled. "Take your custom from me. Don't bring your breaks here any more if you talk like that. Go away with your wheelbarrow and spade and pickaxe and shovel."

"The perished—the stout and the thin—must be housed," the preacher proclaimed.

"Hay must be gathered and stacked and thatched before the corn harvest," Lloyd answered. "How are the animals to live in the winter? Tell me that."

"All the dead—tenors and basses, praying men and men who cry 'Amen,' old and young, big and little—must be housed." So sang the preacher in his pulpit manner.

The cobbler moved before he was freed and fell upon the floor, his wooden leg breaking in two.

"The Big Man's punishment for discussing the Beybile with you," he reproached the preacher. "The breath in your body is the smoke of hell fire."

"I have not the timber to make Ann a coffin," said Lloyd. "No; not for stout Ann."

"There are many trees," said Shacob.

"Great will be the cost of the coffin."

"I'll sell the cow," Shacob began.

"Hearken! if I make the coffin, you must pay the day after the funeral. You shall not make a debt of it."

The preacher blessed Lloyd: "You are behaving in a most religious spirit. Houses of stone-masons crumble, but the houses of carpenters will be placed in the lofts of the White Palace."

Husband, stepson and carpenter then passed through the village and the deeply-rutted, cart-wide lane to Shacob's house, which is in the midst of marshland.

As they three unlatched their clogs at the foot of the stairway, Shacob shouted: "Ann, here is Lloyd Carpenter. Are you perished?"

Ann made an answer, whereupon they went up to her. Lloyd drew back the bedclothes and bade the woman straighten her limbs; then he measured her length, her breadth, and her depth. "Write you down two inches extra every way for the swellings," he commanded Little Ben.

"We ought to write four," said the youth.

"Clap your head. Have I ever made a coffin too small?"

"If it only fits," said Ben, "how can the angel flap his wings when he comes to call mammo up? Mammo, you need the angel?"

"Why, iss, son bach," Ann replied. "Are you not ashamed, carpenter, to deprive me of the angel?"

"It is the large cost that is in my think," murmured Lloyd.

"Drat your think! I will not go into a coffin that will smother the angel. Have I not suffered enough?"

"It will be many shillings more. Maybe ten. Maybe fifteen. O iss, a pound."

"Be good," said Shacob. "It is well to obey the perished."

For three days Ben and Lloyd laboured, and as the coffin was carried on the shoulders of four men, the hay-makers who came to the hedges were amazed at its vastness.

By the side of the bed it was put. "For," said Lloyd,

" she will be a heavy corpse and easier to roll down than lift."

At the end of the year the carpenter said to Ann's husband: " Give me now the coffin money."

" On the day after the funeral," said Shacob.

" I will have the petty sessions on you, I will, drop dead and blind. I'll poison your well. And your cow. And your pigs. Is it my blame that Ann is alive ? "

" It shall be as you pledged. Broken-out preacher heard you."

" Tut-tut. He is a bad man. He disputes the Beybile. That is why he was broken out from the capel."

But Shacob was soon puzzle-headed. Ann fancied to see herself in the coffin, and holding a mirror she tried to enter it, but the breadth of it was too narrow. She made such a great dole that Shacob hurried to discover Lloyd's iniquity. " Little Ben," he shouted at the door of the workshop, " come forth from the workshop of the sinner. Bring your bird-cage and coat and tools. Have a care you bring nothing that is his."

The youth obeyed and remained like a sentry by his stepfather.

" There's glad I am I did not pay you," cried Shacob. " If I had, the law would find a thief."

" Be quiet, robber," Lloyd returned.

" Who made Ann's coffin too small ? Come out, neighbours bach, and listen. Who made Ann's coffin too small ? Who tried to cheat the perished dead ? "

Many people came to hear Shacob reviling Lloyd and were very sorry that the carpenter answered in this fashion: " Reit. 'Oreit. Little Ben, go you in and find the paper with the figures."

" And keep it tightly," Shacob counselled his stepson.

" Nothing new must be put in it. Don't you be tempted by Lloyd because he was your master. We are honest."

After Lloyd had measured Ann, and while he was measuring the coffin, Little Ben went under his mother's bed and wrote anew on another paper and in accordance with the fresh measurements.

" Carpenter," he said shyly, " you are wrong. Study the figures. I cannot work for a scampist master."

" Why do I want a useless coffin ? " Ann shrieked. " A mess I would be in if I perished now. And what would be said if I reached the Palace in a patched coffin ? Ach y fy ! "

That night Little Ben, who was unable to sleep for his mother's plight, stole into Lloyd's workshop and brought away screws and nails and a few planks of timber, and with these he enlarged the coffin.

In the ten years that followed the trouble between Lloyd and Shacob brewed into bitter hatred ; it attracted one to the other, when they fought as fiercely as poachers fight for the possession of a ferret. Shacob died, and there was peace for a little while, but in the after-season Lloyd did not subdue his rage. " Shacob is gone," he whined. " Cobbler Wooden Leg is gone and Broken-out Preacher. The next will be Ann. Oh, there will be a champion riot if I don't get my money." His spoken and unspoken prayer was that the Big Man would allow him to live longer than Ann. Every summer evening he watched the weather signs, and if they foretold heat, he said joyfully to himself : " Like a poof she'll go off to-morrow."

As Ann fattened so Ben enlarged the coffin with iron staples and leathern hinges. This he did many times. The fame of his skill became a byword and folk brought

to him clocks, sewing-machines, and whatsoever that wanted much cunning to be set in proper order.

He had married, and his four children were a delight to Ann, who often tumbled into her coffin and closing her eyes said to them: "Like this grandmammo will go to the Palace." The children pranced about with glee, and by and by they played hide and seek in it.

On a day when Ben said: "If I stretch the box any more your perished corpse will fall through the bottom, mammo; even now it will have to be well roped before you are lifted," before sunset a horrible thing happened: three children hid in the coffin and the fourth swooped down upon them, and the sides of it fell apart.

Ben viewed what had been done. "It won't repair," he told his tearful mother. "I'll make you another, mammo fach."

He laughed as he separated the pieces, for those that belonged to Lloyd he was returning to Lloyd.

NIKALDON

By L. A. Pavey

It is, of course, one thing to possess, like Nikaldon, the temperament of the imaginative brain-worker, and quite another to be a successful prose-writer. "Obviously," Nikaldon would have informed you, with a slow and supercilious stare. "Success—what is it? When you come to me and find that my ideals change, then you may talk to me of success. It means nothing to me. I will pursue my career; for the rest——" He would shrug his shoulders in a manner to let you see that he was a good European. Nikaldon travelled; how, it was almost impossible to say, but he certainly did know every capital and major town of post-war Europe that had any impressions to offer. He never had any money; would have been offended, as one suspected of marching on the road to commercial success, if you thought he had. None of his employments, which were usually picked up casually and followed patchily in the polyglot quarters of cosmopolitan seaports, ever brought him in more than a bare subsistence, unless he happened to strike a fool of an employer who could not see that Nikaldon was of no use to him. But this usually jumped to the eye in the first hour of the day; Nikaldon's own greatest concern was that everybody should recognise him as a lost genius, condescending to work rather than to sell his soul in the wrong literary market (and that, according to the Nikaldonian version, was any market). He was confident about Posterity's awe and acclamation; therefore he did not trouble whether the patrons of the cafés which in various cities he made his own, believed or

disbelieved him; whether they listened out of admiration, mere politeness or the indolence of the drinker too comfortable to move. Nikaldon was beyond the influence of any opinion whatsoever.

Through having followed scores of occupations for many different masters in almost inconceivably varying milieus, he had learned (though even this had cost him some rebuffs and a few bouts of semi-starvation) never, at first, to admit that he was merely an artist unappreciated by the world, and must get a little money somehow. But beyond this negative wisdom he seldom got, even to the first stage in the gaining of his employer's confidence. Each gesture of his, each word and intonation, and particularly his manner of approach to the smallest job of manual labour, was redolent of the condescension of one who was not as other men. His fellow-workers, according to their own several temperaments and opportunities, clouted his head, threw things at him, laughed uproariously at him; or they became so weak with misplaced affection that they lived with him or supplied him gratis with food and drink. They either watched him goggle-eyed and reported him with opprobrious epithets to zealous local governing bodies; or with terms of unqualified approval to the secretaries of world committees or presidents at Communist headquarters. It mattered nothing to him, all this. Simply he was Nikaldon, whom Posterity would know, but whom his own times conspired to prevent from giving immortal prose to the world. And whatever the way in which he impinged on their susceptibilities, he was indifferent. They were the audience to the vast stage he had set; and he had no feeling save that they might count themselves lucky. Some of them obviously did not. Cer-

tain employers bade him abrupt adieux with sharp-edged contumely; fellow-workers who had acquired skill at their tasks sometimes endeavoured to freeze him with contemptuous silence, broken at the last by a single comment or so intended to be blasting. He would laugh at them with an overwhelming incomprehension; and leave them, himself strengthened in his own conceits, bursting with astonishment or rage. He was thus aware of unusual ranges of invective in all European languages, in most patois, and in mixtures which you would have needed unlikely combinations of travel to have comprehended fully. And he regarded this awareness proudly, as his right, as one of the hall-marks of his life-long difference from these base-born whom an inscrutable fate had condemned him to help in their filthy commercial chafferings.

If Nikaldon could have recalled one word of praise, however mistakenly given, for any of his varied but equally abhorred labours there is no doubt that his pride would have suffered a severe shock. But his record, on his looking back anxiously, was unsullied by any such thing. The line of demarcation between his helpless and inapplicable artistry and the universal and everlasting efficiency of all those tradesmen was clear and unbroken. And he lumped them all in as tradesmen: for him there was the Artist of all the Ages, represented by himself—and Eclipse. Longings in others, aspirations, deviations towards his own temperament, even his own type of imagination, mixed with the dross of anything more worldly, carried no weight with him, placed their possessors at once among those in the Pit. Nor could good works save them. Even the circus proprietor, who, every night after his show, had dragged out his worn Shake-

speare, and was for ever staging, and entirely failing with, his own plays; even the frier of fish who could talk philosophy in three whole languages, four halves and two quarters, and who gave him absurdly extravagant wages for working a slicing-machine (this even though Nikaldon's incompetence was of the profound type that can spread from the man and at once palsy the action of the machine, causing it to stutter and jib); even that wonderful delicatessen merchant who would entirely suspend a roaring trade, by shutting up shop for a whole evening, solely in order to listen to Nikaldon. He did not except them, any of them. The last-named had begged him to stay without even the pretence of work. . . . But he could not admit any real difference in any one member of that Rabble if he was to be true to himself and to his own fate.

Many of them, dull as they were, he had forgotten. He remembered better certain places and moments; the places not, usually, having any pretensions to beauty, being old and poor streets in obscure quarters, full of the kind of life he liked best to watch. Voices came to him, speaking many tongues, gay, sad, melancholy, strident, breathing life into the memories of all those queerly-peopled places where for short times he had lived, usually in the meanest kind of shake-down (his hours almost invariably being long) provided by his employer of the moment. He remembered some of those streets, narrow and close-packed, from which he had looked up at great cathedrals on rocky bastions, almost as ancient as the hills, the sudden flare of gorgeous sunsets picking them out in inky relief; others so high and steep that he must climb them by handrails, toil up them with goods for customers, exert himself incredibly in achieving the

simplest errand. He puzzled himself, in retrospect, to know why people should live like flies on a wall; why he himself, having unlimited choice, should ever have joined them. Nevertheless, he hated the plains and their sameness, eternally grey.

To those folk whom he met at cafés he was an oddity, for the reason that his world did not seem to contain any women. He did not even appear to observe that the worlds of some of his intimates contained little else. The fact was that Nikaldon was entirely obsessed with his career as a writer, and this although nothing that was known to his acquaintances permitted them even to identify it as a career. Nikaldon's talk to them they thought astounding, because of its quantity, its variety, and its omissions alike; just as most of his employers had. His leisure, though not his money, seemed at times to be infinite.

It happened that a customer at a certain shop of very special toilet soaps, in which Nikaldon found himself employed (only, of course, through the colossal lack of judgment of the proprietor, which had been accentuated by a slight but distinct inebriation at the moment of the engagement), found more than usual interest in this peculiar assistant's variations on the theme of " neglected genius," repeated, had he but known, for the thousandth time.

Something unusual in the visitor himself made the man of genius uncomfortable. He eyed him so steadily—was it sardonically?—and spoke not at all, or only a word or two. And after the monologue he saw to it that the assistant, despite his preoccupations with his theme, served him reasonably efficiently (a diversion which Nikaldon naturally hated) and disappeared after one

steady last look at him which caused him positively to stutter. A temporary lapse only, but—to stutter! Nikaldon was furiously angry with himself, that his self-command should have been thus undermined. He was more incensed, for some queer reason, than he had been at all the seas of abuse that long-suffering employers had poured on his impenitent head. He had taken these as his right, tributes that marked him off from the usual run of commercial slave. He would have been annoyed had they been withheld. He still remembered how he had hurled a specimen tin of small fish, preserved in particularly messy oil, at the head of a bland and patronising employer whose tone when he told him—Nikaldon—that he was "getting on nicely—a little smarter and more attentive, and he'd soon make quite a grocer of him"—was altogether too much for the poise he had built for himself through so many bitter years. Mere insults he would have accepted with that maddening smile of his that had so often turned his adversaries perfectly white with rage. But to be encouraged by that stuffed and imbecile carcass! He had rushed out, after one yell of passion, far from the painful scene. . . .

That customer who had broken down Nikaldon's defences returned the next day to his shop. It was in the Rue de Rome in Marseilles, and crowds were surging past the door to and from the Cannebière. Some came inside to annoy Nikaldon by buying soaps. He got rid of them quickly, angrily, with anything. It didn't matter to him—and his proprietor was out guzzling at a café somewhere. The midday heat filled even the carefully screened shop, and in the middle of this and a little knot of customers, who all seemed to want things

the whereabouts of which Nikaldon had forgotten, that man who had reduced him to so much less than himself turned up again.

And he merely looked at Nikaldon, without even the polite pretence that he had come for soap, or scent, or oil, or pomade.

"I would like to talk to you," he said.

"Why?" asked Nikaldon, recovering his boldness.

"I want you to come with me on my boat."

"All right," said Nikaldon, casually, "I'll come now."

But this upstanding man gave him a look which annoyed him furiously, waved his hand lightly round the shop (in which were seven customers), and commanded him abruptly, "Finish off here. See your employer. And come to me at seven o'clock this evening—the yacht *Renée*, in the Vieux Port."

Again Nikaldon experienced that cold wave of helpless rage; again he stuttered. But he knew he would have to go. He flung all sorts of impossible things at indignant customers. Some forgot their indignation as Nikaldon waved them out, grandly, his thoughts far from such mundane matters as payment. His proud soul had to endure, that afternoon, the bibulous advances of M. Binet, the proprietor, who had spent too long at his café, but whose geniality waned as he grew less vinous. He even acquired a suspicion that the money in the till did not represent the value of all the missing goods. He made up his mind to check the takings that evening, not knowing that Nikaldon had already decided to leave this, the one hundred and sixteenth job he had held during the last ten years.

* * * * * *

It was true that, even after a fortnight spent at sea with

Monsieur Fenayrol, Nikaldon still could not understand his position, nor why his master had, so to speak, publicly abducted him. His duties were of the lightest; and often, he could not but see, merely invented. Strangely enough, this disturbed him, discouraged him, shook his audacious soul. He who had spent so many years in perfecting the technique of work-dodging was uneasy at being met more than half-way. He felt sadly that it interfered with all the rules of the game.

His employer watched him, too, in that way of his which had rendered him so uneasy, and which had, as a matter of fact, led him captive simply because he had promised himself that, at some critical moment, he would assert himself and astonish that man who seemed to see into him a little too deeply. But the moment did not come. Simple jobs performed with hopeless incompetence, with the sort of perverse, yet knowing, idiocy which had so often in the past driven employers to the very verge of frenzy, merely caused M. Fenayrol either to acquire a quiet, yet most discomforting smile; or sometimes, when he did not know that Nikaldon was aware of his presence, to sink into almost helpless laughter, quite unfeigned. To Nikaldon's limitless disgust, it even seemed that on these occasions he was affording his employer keen pleasure, of which he could not imagine the cause. Something subtle and psychological, something within himself, he felt uncomfortably, which had been a thousand miles beyond the perceptions of his café associates, but which seemed to afford easy discovery to this man of penetration. Nikaldon felt more and more convinced that he had been carried off, body and soul, into this Mediterranean cruise for some purpose which to him remained a mystery.

Now and again Monsieur Fenayrol (leaning over the polished handrail like an old friend of his) would engage him concerning his literary work, asking him quiet but persistent questions about those unpublished masterpieces which Nikaldon had, he said, packed away in a room of a house in Toulouse. Questions concerning their conception, the trials of the writer trailing over Europe, with only odd hours to give to their fashioning, the impossibility of securing publication of this work, specialised and tendential, yet aflame with genius that was cosmic, through a commercialised Press. . . . He probed and probed deeply, with sudden twists, with questions which led to regions his victim himself had hardly dared to explore. Yet, strangely, when one of these intimate revelations had been quietly terminated by his master, his exultation would suddenly leave him, and he would once more be left struggling desperately against the belief that M. Fenayrol held over him a power which had reduced him so that in his presence he was without compass or direction. His one glorious dream fell to the realisation of the dust and ashes of non-fulfilment.

Why, he asked himself in anger, should this rich loafer on a yacht, merely because he had leisure and money, be able to torment him? A man, so far as he knew, with no work of any sort to his credit, let alone creative work of the calibre of his own. It seemed to him the last and worst of his oppressions. With his commercial employers he could at least feel that they had no notion of what his real work meant. Occasionally, even, his reputation in his own circles had exacted from them the unwilling but flattering tributes of the half-educated. But before M. Fenayrol, who had, so far as he knew, not

the slightest authority to judge any kind of literature (even the stuff of the magazines on which the almost illiterate masses were fed), he felt as though his very soul lay bare. And not only that; as though it was continually shrinking in size. It was not even that his employer said anything derogatory. If he had, Nikaldon felt that he could have become fiercely and adequately expansive. No; he just asked questions, listened, pierced him with gimlet eyes, and said—almost nothing. Why? Why did he do this?

"That must," observed M. Fenayrol on one occasion, "be a large room in Toulouse in which you have housed your masterpieces. You have worked hard for many years."

"Oh! as for mere expanse. . . . It is of quality, not quantity, M'sieur, that you should speak."

"Ah! precisely. . . ."

And the intonation of that one word "precisely" set Nikaldon, the hired retainer, almost dancing with rage. It was all he could do to prevent himself from committing battery and assault upon the person of his master.

It was because he considered that the limit of endurance had been reached that he left the yacht at Constantinople, left without a word to anybody, and without any request for wages. He became immediately a warehouseman; and within a few weeks again of the expected happening (a violent severing of amicable relations with its foreman) an odd man in one of those strange mixed stores near the quays.

And so on, again. Within the next year he had once more wandered through half the towns of Southern Europe. And his self-respect was restored by the gradual obliteration of the bitter memories of that im-

possible M. Fenayrol, and his own increasing appreciation of his genius, fostered as it was by old friends and newly-made café acquaintances wherever he liked to turn. His tongue was undoubtedly of silver; his pen, he thought, of gold. Once more by virtue of his unique powers he bestrode his own domain, like a prince who has wandered and come back to his kingdom. His contempt for the material-minded world with which he was surrounded, and which his poor labours were supposed to serve, grew boundless. It seemed to him that it needed his mere touch to secure the complete destruction of all that it stood for. He lived on a minimum, it goes without saying—he truly never wanted more.

It is, of course, when one's fortune is inflated and rosy-hued that punctures, flattening disaster may be near. With the exception of the Fenayrol episode, it had seemed to Nikaldon that his genius had received no check. The material vicissitudes of his wandering life were all, of course, beneath his serious notice. They were but flashing facets of the peculiarly twirling and varied surface he showed to the world, hiding from it the profundities which it could never appreciate. And to him also there came the shock of the shaft aimed at the majesty and mystery of an inner life that meant more to him than all the world.

Arrived at Marseilles once more, a year after his departure on M. Fenayrol's yacht—a Nikaldon unchanged, more than ever inseparable from his individual manner of life, more than ever inalienably bound for that difficult goal of his, so obscure to the multitude—he found in the course of the satisfaction of his interest in current literature that M. Francqueville had written another book. He esteemed M. Francqueville. M.

Francqueville, in his opinion, was possessed, almost alone among modern novelists, of something of his own austere artistry. There were slight differences, of course. One was, of course, that he considered himself a supreme master—whereas M. Francqueville did the best that was in him. Another was that M. Francqueville published books regularly, one every eight or nine months; we already know of Nikaldon's record, and of his opinion of the printed word.

He read the book. He had acquaintances of the café who would have gone to the extreme length of buying a book had they thought that otherwise they would not have heard Nikaldon's scalding views on it. But on this occasion they did not hear them. Something unprecedented happened. For the short time that Nikaldon remained among them, he was bewildered, gloomy, and silent. He scarcely opened his mouth.

For Nikaldon, reading the book, had first been impressed by the magnificent rendering of the chief character, a literary upstart. Literary upstarts being his own pet theme, his delight was unbounded. There were traits he recognised at every turn. Furthermore, and strangely, he knew so many places that this man also knew. At last, together with a fellow-writer, this impostor took a long sea-voyage for his health. And from that point Nikaldon was reading an episode from his own biography; of those wretched weeks when M. Fenayrol had abducted him (he put it so now), and established his devastating ascendancy over him. And on that voyage a companion of the lost man cross-examined and excoriated him, turned him inside out. Here and there was a phrase that Nikaldon vividly remembered as one of the few that had fallen from the lips of M.

Fenayrol. Then came incidents that he remembered; and brilliant studies of phases of his own impotent disgust.

It was clear now, too clear. But he could not put the book down until he had read the last word of the last chapter; of the final burying of the upstart in his ignominy, his world shattered, his achievement written down in black and white as a wholly negative one. . . . And this man, said M. Francqueville unequivocally, had rooms in Toulouse where masterpieces were supposed to be kept; but which contained nothing but a little rubbish, none of it quite completed, and grandiose plans for world-shattering books to come.

He did not need to be shown M. Francqueville to identify his old master. But incredibly, it might seem, he had never known the truth about himself, until this terrific exposition taught him.

His world knew him no more. What they never would have believed, though their conjectures were many and wildly romantic, was that Nikaldon no longer wandered. He lived in one southern city thereafter, in the same house, in the same room. And under another name he kept the same situation, a faithful servant to a small shopkeeper, for the next and last twenty years of his life.

GOLD LIKE GLASS

By Frederick Carter

"I HAVE been a wanderer myself: one of the restless company who have beaten out the roads of the world. Some of us seem to be uneasy amongst familiar ordinary things; when the surroundings get too close and too well known we can't breathe freely. What it is we can hardly tell; perhaps the curse of industry and of day after day in regular work, the dull round—the sameness—has its horror. Is it the original curse of Adam we flee from? Who can say? But it drives us out, anyhow.

"Wanderers we are—wandering minds, seeking eyes, groping thoughts—vague like the wind and gusty, blowing this way and that: roamers who tread both city streets and far-off pathways in the wild: like the Wandering Jew. And what was he looking for? Why, it seems to me he must just go on because he had no choice. Like us all.

"Well, I once met somebody very like him; in fact the man himself seemed to think he was, too, not the original but a sort of successor. A queer notion—a queer fellow."

It was the painter who spoke, a tall man with a long and melancholic face, a meandering nose, a long upper lip drooping to a point. Self-contained, rigid, with straight, brushed hair, he sat bolt upright in his chair. Rolling his own cigarettes in his long fingers with neat precision, he held them with extreme care and nicety with the tip of thumb and forefinger as he smoked. Lean and swarthy, he was a man of uncertain age. The lines

in his cheeks told little: his close-shaven chin had a purplish bloom, like velvet.

Yet about him there was a sense of quixotic intensity and a directness in comment at times almost violent—something urgent, sudden and abrupt, in contradistinction to his normal surface of manner with its measured precision in speech and the neatness and meticulous tidiness of his worn clothes.

" In those days," he continued, " I was concerned with newspaper work as a correspondent: drawings were used then. I made sketches and comments in all sorts of odd places. Portraits of the famous and infamous. Often they were caught surreptitiously from corners of council chambers and courts of justice, comments taken from the life, records of rulers, outlaws—all kinds of people. Such jobs took me about everywhere and anywhere, often abroad. But I met this fellow at home here in London.

" At that time," he went on, " the north side of the Strand beside the island church of St. Mary was a waste of open foundations and fragments of cellar walls turning month by month into a garden of wind-sown weeds. It was roughly palisaded, and just beside the church, as I remember, were some steps roughly made of planks or baulks to form a way across the ruins of the old streets.

" My attention was caught as I walked by the looks of a man of middle age in peculiarly vigorous health. I say peculiarly, because in the ruddy colour of his skin and the brightness of his eyes was something more than normal. A reddish glow in his grizzled hair also helped the suggestion of a burning intensity in his life. Yet perhaps red gives the wrong suggestion, it was like that

light which comes from a Venetian picture, golden—not yellow—an aura, warm, rich, as of fire. I was so intent upon his unusual appearance that I tripped and stumbled against him. The planking of the pathway was slippery with rain, and falling, I clutched his sleeve. I felt him twitch his arm nervously to get free, but a grinding pang in my foot made me hang on, for I had sprained my ankle severely and could barely stand upright.

" I explained and apologised, asking him to give me his aid for a few yards to regain my rooms. After a wide stare of interrogation from his luminous eyes he agreed in a thick but pleasant voice. Perhaps his heavy beard deadened it just then, for later it seemed to me to be rounder in tone and more ringing. We reached my rooms without trouble, though very slowly, and there I bound up my ankle. He stood in the middle of the room watching me in a characteristic attitude, resting his two hands on his stick. A pose which I remarked in him often again.

" He wore a curiously long overcoat of rough home-spun or frieze. His round hat with a narrow brim, pulled well down, soft and high in the crown, was rather like an oddly shaped bowler. Beneath its brim stood out his thick, grizzled hair, cut off square at the level of mid-ear; his beard was clipped square across also.

" With a kind of vague, hardly formal, politeness he asked about my occupation and whether the injury to my ankle would interfere with my work. But I explained that for the time being the postman could well do my walking for me. As I went on to explain what my occupation was—for my studio and sleeping-place was a large room next to my living- and sitting-room—he became very different in his manner. His stiffness and

dubiety relaxed and from a hesitating attitude of taking leave he put off his constraint and spoke more freely.

" He mentioned that he was engaged on some work at the Record Office. So far as I could gather, it concerned American genealogies, and with that country he showed considerable familiarity. Staying on to talk, he, later in the day, gave me his aid to walk out and find a meal. As I had no materials for cooking in my rooms, I invited him to accompany me.

" We took our meal, I remember, at an *à-la-mode* beef shop, since gone like most of its kind with their shuffling old waiters. But when we had eaten he insisted on paying for his own food. From somewhere among his huddled garments—generally buttoned awry or not at all—hanging loose about him, layer on layer, he produced a gold piece.

" ' Always have a piece of gold in your pocket and you can go where you will,' he said, glancing sidelong with a nervous grimace as he spoke. I remember that he commonly paid with a gold coin—that is long ago.

" I found too, later, that he never discarded his long overcoat even in the height of summer. It appeared that this was his coverlet and bed furniture when (as he always did if it were humanly possible) he slept out of nights on the open heaths and commons about London. He gave as a reason for always carrying a gold coin: ' If you have money in your pocket you are a gentleman and the police don't disturb you. A monied man may sleep where he will.' Sometimes he stayed the night with me. It may be that the continuance of my acquaintance with him was secured by this, for the day of my mischance was a day of wild rain, growing worse with nightfall. Hearing the wild storm beating on the win-

dows, he asked at last if he might sleep on the hearthrug. Dressed as he was, overcoat and all, he lay down and rested his head on a folio volume from the bookshelf.

" He usually visited me in times of adverse weather, but at fairly long intervals of time, and then perhaps he would appear several days in succession. Occasionally we had chance encounters in the street, but out of doors he seemed nervous and anxiously fidgeted to get on his way should I stop to talk.

" Once he called to see me on a day of strange fog when at midday the whole city was sunk beneath a pallid cloud that hung over the streets as if stretched from housetop to housetop. All was sunk in darkness beneath —a queer, pale dark—and the drooping vapour made a low, dead sky. Every street-lamp was alight and the shop windows shone out in a ghostly simulation of the night. The fog remained suspended a few yards overhead, and save for some wisps of vapour and a faint sulphurous smell the streets were clear, but dark. Such was the day of his last visit.

" I met him unexpectedly at the door of my stair as I returned to my rooms, and when I opened the door for him he strode in with an unexpected firmness in his step. I felt a certain tension in his mood. Without speaking he groped in a pocket and produced a little box, glistening black; it looked like lacquer or a dark metal. This he opened with a sharp snap, jerkily turning out on the table, already encumbered with pens and papers, some object rolled up in a rich piece of figured silk. From a gleaming egg-shaped thing its wrapper fell away, and the object shone with a faint light of its own in the dusky room.

" ' Look at that,' said he breathlessly.

" I bent down and looked closely; it was silvery-white and seemed to be speckled as if with gold spots.

" ' What is it ? ' I asked.

" ' Look at it. Look at it,' he said urgently, and I regarded it more closely, taking it up in my hands.

" I could see him shudder as I touched it. I saw a wavering, gliding vapour as if something smoked within, and amongst the spirals that turned and flowed shone sparks of fire. In that dusk it seemed to shine and tremble as with an inward life. I laid it on the dark silk again and rested both hands on the table, watching to see if its curious flowing life still endured apart from my touch.

" He cried out, ' What do you see ? Look ! '

" ' I see only clouds and a few stars,' I said.

" ' Look deeper,' he cried again.

" ' The clouds move apart and the stars burn like fires and a great tree stands among them,' I replied, speaking as if the words were dictated to me.

" ' Deeper yet,' he urged, and I answered:

" ' I see seven great seals of gold on the hands and knees and the heart and head of a figure carven in dark wood—or is it the body of a man ? '

" Something had thrilled within the stone, a life was there, I felt.

" ' The figure is being lifted up,' said I.

" ' That is enough,' he cried, shaking me by the shoulder, and I tottered, surprised and half-drowsy from the intentness of my staring. His eyes were dilated.

" ' What is it ? ' I asked. ' Was it something I really saw ? Is that always there ? '

" ' Always ? Why,' he cried out, ' why, some see in it one thing, some another. It is the egg of the

philosophers in which the secret of creation is revealed.' He stared at me and I gaped back again. 'There are those who call it the secret of innocent blood,' he muttered in a curious whining tone.

"'What does that mean?' I said, amazed at the unexpected strangeness of the words he used.

"'Ah! Ah!' he wailed. 'Ah! Innocent blood! Innocent blood shed for me that I might live! . . .' He sat down heavily in a chair.

"'Eh! What? what?' I cried, almost terrified at this sudden turn, for that phrase might well signify bathos as tragedy. 'What's the matter?' I asked again, for he began to weep loudly without restraint, tears running down his cheeks and beard, clinging here and there on the hair in drops, to be shaken away as his sobs broke out in heavy gusts. His outburst died down slowly, whilst he gazed at me with round, humid eyes and resting his hands on his knees.

"When he could speak coherently I heard, not, as I feared, more wild, incomprehensible phrases—but a story told with some lucidity and with a deep, passionate emphasis. Yet as it went on this tale appeared no less strange, and full of things unreasonable; still, what could one say?—he told it with such apparent sincerity.

"Much of his story was interspersed with terms in Latin, but I understood that he had in his early years been an ardent experimenter in chemistry. A very strange chemistry—not a kind appreciated in general—was the object of his pursuit. At first, for many years, he had worked alone, and then he married and was aided by his wife. They had been absorbed both in this strange passion; it seemed to have had part in their mutual love.

" He believed that in metals was a soul or a life, and that that life naturally revealed itself most perfectly in gold, the purest one, king of their order. But the object of learning to transform all metals from their various places in the scale of their qualities to an increasing perfection and make them like gold was to solve the final secret and to know how to transmute gold itself into a final absolute wonder, the elixir of life. They had worked toward this, it would seem, insatiably and laboriously. For I gathered that they had been overtaken by the madness of gold—a terrible fascination, like the miser's, a passion for the thing itself, for its power, its purity, its glowing sufficiency. Yet even more obsessing was this thirst for the gold beyond common gold, for this alchemic gold, a living gold. Conceiving in it a living force, having learned how it grew in the veins of earth to be changed by long, slow ages, they believed themselves able to urge the huge process of Nature by their art. They boasted to have mastered the long, evolving procession of Time. Such was his account of their process, so far as I could grasp his argument.

" The method of the operation, it seems, the wife would descry in the glass which he had shown me.

" ' You saw,' he said, ' the first symbol of the seven seals upon the man in the circle of living ones.'

" ' But,' I protested, ' I remember no circle.'

" ' Still,' he went on, ' it was in that glass that my wife descried the secrets of the great mother earth and their reflection in the heavens above. And,' he broke out after a pause, ' the symbol of the stone horse—alas—that Assyrian beast which pursued me in my dream. I was not able to see that fearful warning.

" ' In that glass as the mirror of the world, my beloved

saw the seven doors of the underworld unlocked, the rain of fire and sulphur and the thunderstorm that cleansed after. The secret of the balance between the sword and the dragon at the new dawn, and the reaping and vintage. Though I knew the one thing needful, which is, as the most noble Raimundus said, the salt stone, yet I knew not its dire purport. No, no, though it is written—yes, it is written there in the book where all may read—for all to read. Ah,' he cried in a voice of torment, ' too truly we had set our lives to the work, though I knew it not as we laboured to perfect that last wondrous draught wherein, most marvellous, I saw a winged Lion of a red most perfect, even beyond Tyrian scarlet—yes, visibly to be seen—flying in the sparkling golden waters that stream from the skies—waters which no cup will hold for more than an instant—yet I saw not that my dear wife increasingly failed and grew more pale. So at the last was it made. The decoction of the very blood of the golden vine was ours, and, flushed in triumph, I stood beside her to drink the potent elixir. And then as we stood a loud knock came at the door.

" ' I looked at my beloved, who did not seem to have heard the loud and urgent rapping nor to hear it even when it was repeated louder, longer, and though the place shook with its insistent clamour.

" ' Come,' said I. ' Hasten. Drink ! ' and without faltering she drank calmly but—as suddenly I saw—pale, too pale. Burning with the excitement of the moment, I was confused by the clangour of the raps on the door, and stepped to draw the latch while yet looking back at her.

" ' She gazed at me through happy eyes, smiling with a look more and more languorous, pale and more pale.

Then she swayed, and I sprang back from the door to catch her as she fell stiffly like a smitten column. I held her in my arms and the door opened as a shining figure came in. It seemed as if I gazed in a mirror seeing myself, transfigured, glowing, holding the pale, silver-white figure of my wife in my arms. And the newcomer cried in a ringing voice, " I am the messenger you have called to appear in flame and light, and I am appointed to tell you the end of the mystery, which is that our death is your life."

" ' And then I knew that my arms were empty, and that this my fate would drive me around and about the world until I should be called to knock at another man's door and in the house of my semblable take away his heart's treasure, leaving him the gift of life and the power to make gold.'

" ' But,' I interrupted, ' who was this messenger? What was he? '

" ' He was the Wanderer, the Forerunner, bearer of the Revelation of the Golden City. There are foolish tales about him as the Wandering Jew.'

" Then, after a pause, he went on, ' Gold like glass,' and he cried out, lifting his arms, ' Ah! Ah! Upon me falls the burden, for I have discovered the secret. The glorious mystery that I found makes me the successor in that chain of life.'

" ' When was this, then; how long ago? ' said I, utterly confounded.

" ' I have seen a dozen generations, aye and more, pass since that day when I found the secret of long life and learned the price of it—wearing out my shoes on all the roads of the broad world.'

" He picked up his shining stone and wrapped it in

its silk cloth and closed the box on it. I looked at him as he turned to open the door, leaving me without more ado. He did not seem old, his step seemed more vigorous than ever. I heard him descend the stairs, and within a few days I myself went on a long trip and left those rooms.

" Some years later I saw him in Detroit in a street just off the lake-front. I was with an American reporter who had worked on the paper for which at that moment I was making some drawings.

" ' Do you know that man ? ' I asked, pointing him out.

" ' Sure I do, the old stiff ! and I thought he was news once,' he rapped out.

" ' Eh ! ' I said. ' Who is he, then ? '

" ' Why, an old cobbler, poor as a rat, who worked in a cellar lit from a grating in the street pavement : and what with watching thousands of feet pass over his window and mending boots and shoes all day long, well, he went loopy, and now he fancies he's the Wandering Jew.'

" ' Yes,' I said, ' but he told me——'

" ' And what then ? ' he broke in brutally. ' Do you think he's three hundred years old and can make gold, eh ? '

" I was silenced, and we walked on for a few minutes.

" Then I said, ' Well, I suppose not, but—I wonder —— ? '

" I still wonder," repeated the story-teller, musing, with his eyes still fixed, intent, gazing into the fire.

A WONDERFUL WOMAN

By Arthur Machen

On an isle of refuge, a Patmos mercifully set in the midst of an ever-roaring torrent of hansoms going from the north to the south of London and vice versa, two men, who had not seen each other for many years, met face to face one sultry afternoon in early autumn. They recognised each other simultaneously, and shook hands.

"My dear Villiers," said the elder of the two, a grizzled man of forty, "it must be seven or eight years since we have seen anything of each other. I am glad to meet you—extremely glad to meet you again."

"You are very kind, Richardson. As you say, we managed to lose sight of each other. One does in London, I think, almost without knowing it. And how are you getting on?"

"Thank you, moderately well, I am happy to say. As you know, I am in the India trade, and of late years I have managed to increase my connection to a great extent. At present we are doing, I think I may say, respectably. Have you entered any business?"

Villiers laughed; merrily, like a boy. "No, Richardson. I have no time for business; I have definitely chosen a great subject, the study of which will occupy me for the rest of my life."

"Indeed! A scientific subject, I presume?"

"Yes; the fact is I am a student of London; I survey mankind from Cricklewood to Tooting, from Turnham Green to the Isle of Dogs. Can you speak the French of Soho? Do you understand Shelta?"

"Certainly not. Mr. Jones, our corresponding clerk,

is a good linguist, but I do not remember his speaking of the dialects you mention. I am afraid, Villiers, you are still an idler; I had hoped that when your poor father died you would have entered the China trade."

"No, I sold my interest in the business. In one sense my interest in it was very small indeed, but from a practical point of view it yields me a good income. Have you still got your rooms at Clement's Inn?"

Mr. Richardson blushed. He was rather a grim-looking man, with a straight mouth and a forbidding whisker. He was thoroughly good-natured, but dry and devoid of humour. But he blushed and a queer, sly smile played about his lips.

"No, Villiers, I don't live in Clement's Inn now. I am married."

"You, Richardson! You married! You really astonish me. I thought you were the typical bachelor. I must congratulate you. When did the event take place?"

"We were married three months ago. My wife and I met quite by accident; in fact, I was enabled to render her some assistance in a dispute with an insolent cab-driver; and the acquaintance ripened into affection. I am a very happy man, Villiers."

"You deserve to be, Richardson, you are a good fellow. I should like to meet your wife."

"So you shall. Are you free to-morrow? Good! Then come down and dine with us at seven. Here is my card."

The two friends parted, each darting through a momentary gap in the race of cabs. Villiers looked at the card; it referred him to "'The Limes,' Angelina Terrace, Clapham." He wondered exceedingly what manner of wife this good-hearted, dry, City man had found for

himself; and his wonder sharpened the sauces at his little dinner at the Italian Restaurant in Rupert Street and gave additional zest to the Falerno. He was still wondering as he walked out of Clapham station the next day.

Villiers was some time in finding Angelina Terrace. The neighbourhood was a very new one; two or three old mansions, with their pleasant lawns and cedars, had been "developed"; the result was a maze of brand-new streets and terraces, street like to street, and terrace to terrace, and every house built after the same pattern in blinding white brick, with red facings and green Venetian blinds. The inhabitants thought it a cheerful neighbourhood, artists swore at it, and Villiers accepted it as a fresh chapter in his great study. He found the desired terrace at last, and was shown into the drawing-room at "The Limes." He had barely time to notice that the most prominent work on the polished round table was a "Memoir of the Rev. Alex. Macaw, of Dunblather," when Richardson came in, beaming with pleasure.

"That's right," he said; "you have broken the ice, and I hope we shall often see you. Nice cheerful place, isn't it? Better than the dingy old red-brick inn, eh? Here's my wife. This is my old friend Villiers, my dear; I was just saying that I hoped he would come down often."

Villiers had started as if he had received an electric shock, as the pretty, though demure-looking woman entered the room. He managed to join pretty well in the indifferent conversation which Richardson kept up during the dinner. Mrs. Richardson was silent; indeed, her manner to Villiers was markedly cold. Her husband

addressed himself to her now and again, calling her " my dear Agnes," but Villiers was thinking all the while of one Mary Reynolds; of certain merry dinners at this or that restaurant; of little trips to Hampton and Richmond; of jingling hansoms and St. John's Wood moons. He seemed to hear the popping of champagne corks (Mrs. Richardson drank a little water from a wine-glass) and certain strains of French song of a *fin de siècle* character; Richardson's quiet stream of talk sounded idly in his ears, like a brook murmuring far away.

Villiers looked furtively at the grave lady at the head of the table; she was wearing a diamond brooch he himself had given to Mary Reynolds. He gasped for breath.

" Yes," Richardson was saying, " my wife has some really beautiful jewellery, which she inherited from a distant cousin: Sir Lawrence Buller of Beaulieu Park, in Norfolk. That brooch, which I perceive you are admiring, is by no means the finest piece. After dinner, my dear, you must show Villiers your jewellery; those pearl necklaces are truly magnificent."

" I don't think Mr. Villiers takes much interest in such matters."

The tone was hard and threatening. Villiers bowed and smiled in a dazed sort of way; the champagne, foaming bright in the glasses, danced before his eyes, and his ears were ringing with the daring chanson. What a strong scent of patchouli there was in the room! He felt stifled.

* * * * * *

" You don't seem quite the thing to-night, Villiers," said Mr. Richardson, as he showed his guest out. " Take care of the steps."

" Thanks, I'm all right now; I think the heat has been too much for me. Trying weather, isn't it? Good night, Richardson."

Villiers went home in a kind of stupor; he felt sure he had not been misled by a chance likeness. He remembered the brooch too well. A few days later an irresistible impulse made him find out Mr. Richardson's City address and call upon him there. The worthy man seemed constrained in his manner; he was kind, but looked anxious, like a man charged with some unpleasant duty. The climax came when Villiers proposed to accompany him home and take " pot-luck."

" My dear Villiers, you know I always liked you very much; your poor father was very kind to me; it's a great pity. But, to tell the truth, Agnes is particular; she has evidently heard some stories about you (I am afraid, Villiers, you have never lived a very strict life), and she says that as a married woman, she would not care to meet you again. It grieves me, I assure you, to have to say this; but, after all, one would not wish one's wife . . . "

Villiers had been staring in stupid astonishment, but at this point he burst into a wild peal of laughter, which echoed above the clamour of Cornhill. He roared and roared again, till the tears ran down his cheeks.

" My dear Richardson," he said at last, " I congratulate you again; you have married a wonderful woman. Good-bye."

Villiers went on his way, and as he disappeared into a hansom he was still bubbling over with unconquerable mirth.

London, 1890.

X

By Malachi Whitaker

I slept in the same room as my sister until she died. Not only in the same room, but in the same bed. It was an ordinary old-fashioned bed, brass and iron, one that we had had for a long time. I never remember the house without it. The rails at the top and bottom were round and black, broken in the centre by a brass thing, shaped like a heart, but with the point upwards. It was a very strong bed.

My sister and I were quite unlike. She was big and fair and athletic. She played tennis, and rowed. Once we went for a holiday to a place where there was a lake, and she rowed me round and round this until I was quite sick. I did not like the throaty sound of the water, nor the dank smell of it, and it seemed to me that my heart began to move all about my body. Sometimes it even got into my calf. I thought, How shall I get home with my heart in my leg?

I am little and dark, and very, very thin. You would not notice me but that I have some good teeth. I have always been proud of my teeth. They are large, like white acorns, and I cannot quite close my mouth because of them. Yet they turn inwards rather than out.

I am sure my sister did not like me. I have seen her standing in front of the mirror, brushing her hair, which she wore long, and looking at me in the strangest way through the mirror as I lay in bed. She wore a white flannelette nightgown with a frilled collar and long sleeves. Sometimes the sleeves slipped upwards during the night and left a red mark on her arm. We did not

talk much, but occasionally she would say quite roughly, "What are you staring at?"

Of course, we went through a lot together—small things. Our parents died when we were in our twenties, and we were left to manage our own affairs. Or rather, we had a good solicitor, and he managed them. We went on sleeping in the same room, the same bed.

Our house was square and made of stone, and we kept hens. We used to quarrel sometimes about feeding them on winter mornings. And yet, hens must have their warm food. It smells nasty, but what of that? The smell of hen-food used to make my heart move about my body. Once, I know, it nearly got out of the tip of my left ear. How can that happen, when the heart is so large and the ear so small? It is a complete mystery to me. Have you ever felt underneath a hen's foot? It is always so cold.

My sister was popular in a peculiar way. If there was anything to organise, anything to complain about, anyone's feelings to be trampled on, she would volunteer for the job. She would pull things together that had almost fallen to pieces. Her voice was slow, nasal and penetrating. She had high cheekbones, too. Now, I have no cheekbones at all. I have looked in the mirror, and felt for them, and not found them, and thought, "When I am a skeleton, I shall be quite unlike all the other skeletons." But I have only patted my cheeks lightly, very lightly. Perhaps they are underneath.

I wanted to do so many things: I wanted to learn algebra, and, like many other people, I wanted to fly without wings, just by moving my elbows backwards and forwards, and dropping from a cliff or a high window. I am saving that for the future, however.

But one thing I did: I bought a harp at a sale. It was heavy, and the gilt on it was tarnished. I had it repaired and brought to the house, and when it was my sister's turn to feed the hens I would sometimes run my hands over the strings, from the base where they said *gubble bub bub gubble* up to the highest notes which just went *pee ting*. I loved my harp so much that I was forced to sing. I do not have what is called a voice. For some reason it does not sing the notes which are being played, yet it sounds very nice to me. When there was nobody in the house I would sing a great deal to my harp. I know I sang very loudly, but I did not think it mattered. One day my sister came in with some more people. I did not hear her until she came up to me and pulled my hair roughly, and said, "Shut up! Do you want everybody to think you are mad?"

This was strange to me, as I had begun to think my sister was mad. Why did she row round and round lakes? Why did she play tennis, hitting at a ball that had to come back again, just a round, grey ball? Also, she had begun to have small black spots on her face, and when I looked at her I was forced to count them—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, and so on.

We had but one servant, a very old woman called Hannah Luty. She had followed my mother, and altogether had worked with the family for nearly seventy years. She was very strong, but would not talk much. I do not remember hearing her put a sentence together except once. She spoke almost always in single words, and those with an effort. We all got on quite well together, though Hannah Luty would have nothing to do with the hens.

I would not be dominated by my sister, though she

was older and bigger than me. In some ways she was like a horse, and as she grew older I began to think she was like a horse in bed, that I was sleeping with a horse. Sometimes I would lift the sheet from her face—she always slept with the sheet over her face—expecting to find a horse's head under it, a reddish horse's head with light hair. But I never did.

And yet I was happy. I loved the house, the hens, even Hannah Luty. I kept steadily on with my algebra, teaching myself from torn textbooks. It was very fascinating, for I never learnt what x was. If only I could find x, I thought, the whole world would become different. In the springtime, I used to look for x in birds' nests, when I was out walking, but in my secret heart I was a little ashamed. My wiser self told me it could not possibly be there. Yet I went obstinately on picking out the eggs one by one and replacing them.

My sister began following me around in a way I did not like. It was summer, and as I remember it, a very hot, dry summer. There was sometimes thunder without rain, and we both had headaches. I played my harp as often as I could, but I would no sooner get sat down on the stool beside it than my sister would come for me with one excuse or another. I tried getting up in the night, leaving her in what I thought was a deep sleep, but she would come down after me and get me back upstairs before I had time to draw my hands over the strings.

But everything came to an end the night my sister died. It was a summer night, late summer. The hay had been cut and was still lying. There had been so little rain that the thin grass was almost hay itself before

it was cut. We had the windows of our room open, and the smell of hay came in, and was strong but pleasant.

Not long before, an electric cable had been brought over the land, and we had had the house wired, and had just begun to use the lights. We had two in our bedroom—a small lamp and a ceiling-light over the big mahogany dressing-table. There was a switch hanging down for the big light, but the lamp was on a table at my sister's side of the bed. I liked the light, and would often switch it off and on for pure pleasure. My sister slept soundly unless I moved from the bed. As soon as my feet touched the floor she would say uneasily, " What are you doing ? Where are you going ? " She would sleep though the light went off and on a hundred times, and though I turned back the sheet to see if she had turned into a horse as many more. Yet she could tell if I left her side for one moment.

I was lying by my sister's side, thinking about x and smelling the smell of the hay. We had curtains that you could see through, and the black leaves on the trees outside shone through the thin curtains with a faint light. We are far from a town, though not far from a main road, but everything was very silent this night.

Suddenly I heard something moving. Some creature was flying about in our room. Instead of being frightened, I was extraordinarily happy. I switched on the light and carelessly pulled the sheet from my sister's head. She was quite red in the face, but her neck was white. I looked up, and saw a sort of pig flying about. It was a thin, black pig, and it kept smiling at me, and it had teeth just like mine. All at once it swooped down to my sister's neck, and began to bite and make horrible growling noises. My sister woke and jumped about like

a fish I had seen on a river-bank, but she was not able to scream. It did not last very long. And then I grew cold and more frightened than death.

I jumped out of bed and pulled a drawer from the chest of drawers that stood in the corner opposite the door. And I emptied the clothes that were in it on to the floor and ran about trying to catch the flying pig in it. It wouldn't stay low and it wouldn't come near the floor. No, it kept tapping its bony wings on the ceiling, so I had to go after it.

There was only one way. I managed to stand on the bottom rail of the bed—oh! I can feel that iron tube under my instep still. In some way, I balanced the heavy drawer on the flat of my two hands, waiting until the grinning pig flew near, then I caught him up against the ceiling. How I laughed as I stood there! There was blood drying on my chin, and heavy blood soaking into my cotton nightdress. My sister looked so funny, quite unlike her usual self. I don't forget that sight, but she did not seem in the least like a horse any more.

I began to scream for Hannah Luty, and presently she came. My arms were tired with holding the drawer against the ceiling, and my feet hurt on the bedrail. Hannah always tied her head in a handkerchief for the night, and when she came into the room she screeched: "Oh, God have mercy on our souls!"—the only sentence I ever heard her say. I did not like her with her head tied up in a handkerchief.

The saddest part of all for me was when the police came and I told them I had caught the flying pig in the drawer. For they got me down so carefully, and shut the door and the windows, and lo, there was nothing in the drawer. Even I saw that there was nothing in the

drawer. I began to cry, thinking what a lot of time I had spent standing on the bedrail, and how my arms ached and trembled.

I have never seen my harp since. I have an idea that my sister cut the strings with a linoleum knife some time before she died. I know now that I could have had it repaired, but I did not think of that at the time. I have not yet found *x*. The world seems to have closed in, and there are not many places left in which I can look for it.

THE GARDENER

(For M)

By John Lindsey

Every spring the two old ladies who lived at No. 63 went away for a fortnight's holiday. They took their holidays separately, Miss Alice going to the sea, and Miss Mary, who was the younger by nearly twenty years, going to her nieces in Gloucestershire.

Miss Alice and Miss Mary were sisters. They had lived at No. 63 for over twenty years. When they had moved in, the houses on either side had been tenanted by gentlefolk. Now the gentlefolk had died or moved into poorer quarters and the houses were let to retired tradespeople. The sisters found the neighbours kind and considerate, but they never understood them—as Miss Alice said, they were not off the top shelf. She always smiled apologetically when she said this, as though she were excusing them. Miss Mary would have liked to be friends with the tradespeople, but she knew that any overtures on her part would hurt her sister cruelly.

The ladies were very lonely, but they never confessed this, even to each other, believing that loneliness was the appointed lot of real gentlefolk in these years of democracy. Miss Alice, indeed, regarded her birth as a sacred heritage, so that she sometimes told her sister that " they, at any rate, must keep their flag flying ! " She said this whenever the paper—they took the *Morning Post*—announced the engagement of a peer's daughter to a profiteering business man. Miss Mary would nod then, agreeing, " Yes, indeed," though secretly she felt that

her sister was a little intolerant and old-fashioned. "One must move with the times," she would think, and determine to be particularly pleasant to the people on the trams and 'buses which the old ladies had to use, being too poor to afford a motor-car.

The house at No. 63 was Miss Alice's concern. She managed it with the help of a maid, Florence, who had been with her since before the War. Once a year, at spring-cleaning time, when both the sisters were away, Florence had the help of "a woman." The "woman" did not sleep in the house. She came at eight in the morning and stayed till five. Florence avowedly couldn't abide her, though, secretly, she found her a nice change, with her news of the outside world. The "woman" also brought the *Daily Mirror* with her, and Florence found this refreshing after the *Morning Post!*

Miss Mary looked after the garden. It was not a large garden: indeed, it was no more than a square patch with grass in the middle and borders of flowers on all four sides. In one corner there was a summer-house where the ladies had tea when it was warm enough.

Miss Mary was very proud of her garden: as well she might be, for she had no man to help her, even mowing the small patch of grass herself. Sometimes she "knocked herself up" when she mowed the grass. Miss Alice was always warning her about this, but Miss Mary loved her garden and took no notice.

The nieces in the country with whom Miss Mary stayed in the spring had a large garden, stretching from their house right down to the road in one direction and, in the other, continuing until it met the Paddock. There was also a conservatory. And they had two gardeners. Every year they gave their aunt small roots and bulbs to

place in her own small patch. These roots and bulbs were chosen by Miss Mary herself, and carefully packed in a large cardboard box by one of the gardeners—the older of the two, for the other, being a mere boy of thirty, was distrusted for his carelessness and "slapdash" manners. Miss Mary suspected, too, that he secretly laughed at her.

The nieces always drove their aunt to the station after her visit. They always found the same porter, who carried the box of roots to a first-class carriage, placing it carefully in the rack. "Not that way up," Miss Mary would say, more from habit than from any real knowledge as to which way the plants had been packed.

Whichever of the two sisters arrived first at their home station would wait for the other in the Ladies' Waiting Room, keeping a careful eye on all her packages the while, for in these days of Bolshevism and Socialism you never knew whom you could trust, and this grieved them, for they were kindly people, wishing to think the best of everyone.

In the spring with which this story is concerned Miss Mary arrived some twenty-five minutes before Miss Alice. She took up her place in the waiting-room, being more than usually careful that her box of plants was resting the right way up, for this year the nieces had given her the root of a campanula, a very special campanula which their own gardener had failed to cultivate, called the Tellum Beauty. Miss Mary was proud of this plant, and was determined to see it come to flower in her own garden: for then, she felt, she would have proved herself a real gardener.

Exactly twenty-eight minutes after she had arrived in the waiting-room, Miss Alice appeared, followed by a

porter bearing her belongings. The sisters kissed and went in search of a taxi. Another porter carried Miss Mary's boxes; but she bore the parcel of plants herself, afraid that a rough man might do the Tellum Beauty some injury.

In the taxi they told each other of their visits and how much nicer it had been than last year. The weather had been so kind to them, and Miss Alice had been able to sit on the front twice to listen to the band. Miss Mary clasped her sister's hand and was very glad for her. Then she told her of the Tellum Beauty and how her nieces' gardeners had failed to cultivate it. "But I am going to try now," she said.

"It will be a fine feather in your cap," said Miss Alice, "if you succeed where they have failed; but don't count too much on it, dear."

Miss Mary smiled. She was going to succeed, whatever happened. Sometimes, latterly, she had imagined that the neighbours laughed at her for all the trouble she took with the garden. Real gentlefolk, she knew, would not have done that. She ought really to scorn these people and take no notice of them—but she could not do that. She was going to show them that she *was* a gardener, a real gardener.

Florence met them at the gate and wept over them, and told them of the evil-doings of the "woman." They congratulated Florence on the clean appearance of the house.

"I've mowed the lawn too, Madam," said Florence.

Miss Mary smiled at her. "That was good of you," she said. "Thank you very much."

"And tea's all ready for you in the drawing-room," Florence told them. "I said to myself when I heard

what time you were coming, ' They'll need a cup of tea, they will, after that long journey.' "

The two ladies went upstairs to their rooms to take off their hats and travelling clothes. Florence and the cabman carried the luggage inside; but Miss Mary took the box of plants up to her bedroom. Then she cut the string and loosed it from its brown-paper wrapping. The damp, earthy roots and bulbs were displayed. Right in the middle of the box was the Tellum Beauty. She knew, because there was a label attached to it. For a moment she looked at it lovingly, resolved on success.

Then she hurried out into the garden to plant it. She heard Alice calling her, but tea must wait. The Tellum Beauty must be planted. Indeed it must! Her reputation as a gardener was at stake.

In the small shed by the back door she found a trowel, and, with it, she dug a small hole in the centre of the shadiest border. The garden, she thought, looked bare lacking her tender care; but it was good of Florence to have mowed the grass. Poor Florence, troubled with that " woman "!

When the hole was deep enough, she poured in a little water, let it sink away till there was only an inch of it left at the bottom of the hole; then, with loving, trembling fingers, she placed the small roots in the hole, piled it up again with earth, till only the foliage was showing, patted the earth round with the trowel to make it firm, watered it again and stood up.

Her heart was beating quite fast. There was nothing else she could do, except to wait, and she knew that that was not going to be easy, for on this single plant rested all her reputation as a gardener.

She went indoors, first putting away the trowel and

the watering-can. She washed her hands and entered the drawing-room.

Miss Alice had been waiting for her to begin tea.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"I had to plant the new flower," said Miss Mary.

Miss Alice smiled and started to pour out tea. "I do hope it's a success, dear," she said.

The two ladies were not early risers, for, even with breakfast at half-past nine, they often found the day drag heavily for them and, as they were both bad sleepers, they did not often go to bed till twelve or one o'clock. But all through April—and it was a cold April—Miss Mary woke at seven, and had the greatest difficulty in keeping herself lying still in bed till eight, when Florence brought her tea. Half an hour later she was in the garden, stooping down over the spot where the leaves of the Tellum Beauty just showed above the surface. To tell the truth, she found the leaves rather dull-looking things—long, straight, spiky things that had no particular freshness—but she kept these traitorous thoughts to herself.

Florence could see Miss Mary from the kitchen window, and she was properly worried that one of her ladies should take it into her head to be up and about in the garden a full hour before breakfast was ready. What with the dew on the grass and all! So she found an old mat in the box-room and placed this before the plant at twenty minutes past eight each morning. Miss Mary was filled with gratitude. Now she could kneel and examine the leaves carefully. Every day she watered the plant, and one morning, a fortnight after it had been planted, she thought she could detect a growth.

From then on she measured it once a week. By the

beginning of May it had grown three inches. And every day it stretched higher up towards the light.

Miss Mary's heart trembled in her excitement. She wrote to her nieces, telling them; but in their answer they forgot to mention the Tellum Beauty, and she was deeply wounded.

At the end of May, Miss Mary took a chill.

The whole household was in dismay, but, as Florence said to Miss Alice, "What could you expect, and she out in all weathers at all times of the day and night?" The doctor was called in. She must stay in bed at least a week, and then perhaps she could come down to the drawing-room for an hour each day. She had been running foolish risks. The doctor was a little brusque. There were so many of these old women who bothered him.

Miss Mary lay in bed, shivering, thinking of the Tellum Beauty. Now, after all her care and trouble, it would wither away. Alice could not go out to water it, she was too old. Eighty-two, wasn't it? And, anyway, she didn't know what it looked like. And Florence scolded her so, she dared not ask her. Besides, Florence already had so much to do.

She lay in bed, contemplating the ruin of all her plans. Now people had a right to jeer at her, to say that she was no gardener. A real gardener would not let a little morning air give him a chill. When she was alone she cried to herself, because her flower would never bloom and the plant would die. She felt spent and wasted. The doctor scolded her for not rallying herself, for not trying to recover—and she could not defend herself, nor tell him what it was that ailed her: but she felt that she had no more interest in life.

It was a long time before she was allowed downstairs. Then she sat in the drawing-room for a few hours in the afternoon and evening. Everything looked the same as when she had gone to bed. Alice still sat in her chair by the fire, reading her novel from Boots or knitting socks for her grand-nephews. Miss Mary thought that there was something firm and strong about her sister. But, then, Alice had never staked so much on the Tellum Beauty.

The doctor began to talk of getting her out into the garden for a time when the sun was warm. Summer had come, but Miss Mary dreaded the garden—she did not want to see her withered flower.

Then, one afternoon, when Miss Alice had gone to tea with her friend, Mrs. Starkey, Florence suggested that she should have tea in the summer-house.

"Be a nice change, Madam," she said.

And Miss Mary, because she was unwilling to offend Florence, consented.

At four o'clock the maid came to tell her that tea was ready. She walked slowly out through the French windows: but she did not look at the shady border where the Tellum Beauty had been planted.

She sat in the summer-house; a small, tired old lady. Florence carried out the tea-tray and set it before her—

"Have you seen your flower, Madam?" she asked.

"What flower?" asked Miss Mary, and there was a strange feeling of constriction round her, as though she half-feared the answer.

"Why, that one you were so fond of. That you watered every morning."

Slowly, as though the movement was a great effort, she turned her head in the direction of the shady border.

There it was—the Tellum Beauty! It stood there proudly, with its small blue bells hanging down. A gust of wind shook the flower, making each blossom tremble. Miss Mary thought she heard the distant tinkle of tiny bells.

"Oh, Florence," she cried, "you looked after it for me!"

But Florence had gone into the house.

For a long time Miss Mary sat in the summer-house watching her flower. Presently she rose and walked towards it.

There was a mat set on the grass before it.

Miss Mary knelt down.

IN THE NIGHT

By Philip Henderson

It is often curiously interesting to speculate on the almost incredibly large part played in the life of the mind by objects and ideas that are, in themselves, commonplace or actually devoid of individual significance. We frequently find ourselves, for instance, in the act of becoming totally absorbed in something, whether object or idea, that apparently exists for no other reason and serves no other purpose than that of being merely occasional, utilitarian or, at the most, mildly decorative. It may be that we are momentarily attracted by some subtle harmonisation of colour or loveliness of line, and before we have realised the change of scene we find ourselves wandering in some remote dreamland of memory, being imperceptibly led back to a station on the road of our emotional experience that we had imagined to be so far in the distance as to be almost invisible. Then the residue of past emotions will shine out from the surrounding greyness like a fine deposit of gold in the sand of some river-bed of Eldorado. Yet the mental transition may be caused by something entirely trivial. A chianti bottle, for instance, at our elbow, the rush-work of its base, the green glass of its neck reflecting the remaining wine, may effect a transformation in our perspective as might seem out of all proportion to the position of relative importance that such an object would ordinarily hold in our minds.

And yet . . . the remaining wine gleams invitingly across the table. In the falling lamplight the bottle looks romantic, alluring—almost voluptuous. I stretch

out my hand to take it, and in the act it seems as though I have touched some hidden nerve of response. It shivers like an electric wire . . . cold, yet aflame with a sudden flash of crystal fire. My mind fills with impulsive light like that which flickers round a darkened room at close of day, softly touching one familiar object after another, lingering caressingly for a moment round the imprint of a head in the silk of a cushion, tinting with momentary brightness the cover of a book that has been lately read. As I sip my wine, the memory that it evokes leads me once more down the narrow side-streets of Soho. I am going to that theatre which, although hidden away among the shops with their strings of onions hanging outside, their long sausages in green, red and silver paper, is still recognised as fashionable and "West End." It was to this theatre that I came after every matinée and before every evening performance for the space of perhaps three months. It was winter. I remember the barrel-organs playing in the rain, the lights from shop-windows dissolving in mists that hovered over their own reflections in the shining roadway. I remember, at other times, my happiness being lifted to the purest exultation as I hurried along at half-past five in the evening up the narrow little streets, the air quivering with numberless points of frost and everyone shouting in Italian and French, so that the noise acted as an extra stimulus and combined like modern harmonisation in music with the soft glow of fruit, piled up in pyramids and obelisks of colour. Farther on, chrysanthemums curled in their delicate petals as though recoiling from the cold to some inner warmth.

Arriving at the theatre, I would go round to the stage door and up a narrow flight of stairs to her dressing-

room. Here I would be greeted with the mysterious, Oriental smell of " make-up," in which seemed to be dissolved all the glamour and brilliance of the stage, flashed and refracted in many directions by long mirrors. Here she would be waiting for me. Once I was three-quarters of an hour late, but she was still waiting, her eyes sad and gentle with suspense. That night I called for her after the evening performance.

Anatole France tells us that had he been a god and had a hand in the creation of the universe, he would have fashioned man in the model of the butterflies and winged insects. After passing through the chrysalis stage, he says, " then I should have arranged that, in a final metamorphosis, man and woman, unfurling glittering wings, lived awhile on dew and desire and died in a rapturous kiss. Thus I should have added love as a crown and recompense of their mortal existence." I thought that Anatole France had perhaps had something to do with my creation, but that he had, in a moment of carelessness, reversed the process and reserved the dormant stage for my later years. For in my first youth, at the time of which I am speaking, I unfurled glittering wings and lived awhile on such dew and such desire as I have never since known.

The next day at breakfast she was perfectly charming. She said: " When I am drinking my coffee I always look out for the buttercup at the bottom of the cup. I feel a secret childish happiness welling up inside me, for the lower the level of the coffee the more I see of the buttercup. When I first see the uppermost edge of its golden petals I want to laugh outright with joy." All the day we sat about, talking and smoking cigarettes. We both took a delight in watching each

other's slightest movement, especially as she said, " It is funny to look at one another again after what has happened," and when she spoke I experienced a calm joy, a contentment intensified into something more than contentment, but less than ecstasy.

As the evening approached and the light was turned on, it seemed as though we had always lived together, as though yesterday was some age in the dim past, and when to-morrow came—but we could not visualise to-morrow, except that it was a misty land exquisitely remote. Only the present, warm, intimate and completely self-absorbed, existed.

Pulling a large leather box from under the bed, she took out a few long rolls of paper. When she had unrolled them, they turned out to be theatrical bills, advertising the performances of plays and the names of the principal artists in large lettering. She pointed to several well-known names and then to her own with a satisfaction veiled by an almost too elaborate carelessness. " Here you see the various places where we have played: Paris, Vienna, Berlin . . ." It was not so much vanity as youth that prompted her and a very natural desire, under the circumstances, to better the already good impression that she had made upon me. For, as I turned to her with frank admiration, her pose of carelessness utterly broke down and she blushed with all the ingenuousness of her nature.

From that time I found myself acutely aware of all manner of impressions, that, in the past, would have awakened only the vaguest response in my nature. I found, too, that such works as the " Seventh Symphony " or " Tristan," on being approached, at once took on relative proportions in my mind, where before I had

been completely overwhelmed by them. I found that love—which is the most convenient word to describe such a collection and concatenation of emotions—had developed my sense of value to an extent that would have taken years of my life had any other means been employed. I was enabled now to look down from my seat at Queen's Hall or Covent Garden as from a spiritual height, and to feel the structure of this music rising against the darkness of my lowered eyelids. I was enabled to keep it, as it were, at a distance, resisting the temptation to throw myself into its whirlpool and become wholly absorbed in an intoxication of sound and emotion, a temptation not unlike that which exists for some neurotic people when they sense the steely thunder of an approaching express train. The truth of the matter was that I had for the first time in my life experienced something big. I felt, indeed, possessed by the greatest force in the world.

Our early dinners before the evening performance were always a source of agonised delight: the delight of being together and the agony of our struggle with time. She would look at her watch, saying there were only five minutes more, causing me to protest that surely she need not be in the theatre for at least another ten minutes. At this she would laugh, and we would forget the time looking across the table at each other, astonished at the wave of harmony, the transfusion of love that, like a cold breath, seemed to catch at our throats every time we began to speak. The line of her eyelid, a quiver in the corner of her lips, contained for me at such moments everything that life could hold of delight or pain. And once again I would be amazed at the fair brilliance of her hair, the softly

parted, innocent-seeming lips, and her eyes' clear candour.

We always went to the same café in Charlotte Street, and although it possessed little to distinguish it from the others of that quarter, we were at first attracted to it by a friendly alcove at the back of the shop. Not, of course, as she was fond of saying, that we wished to communicate our affection to one another by any of the traditional signs expected of commonplace people in such cases—still we were sincere enough not to make use of those airs of cynical detachment assumed by certain of the "moderns." The marble-topped tables, the smell of coffee and the wine-bottles ranged tier upon tier behind the counter, imparted that Continental atmosphere peculiar to Soho, while the slightly queer-looking young men and women who came there had earned for it an exciting reputation of a "resort of Bohemians."

There were times when, instead of calling for her at the theatre, I went direct to the café. Then, the very bright electric light made the rows of tumblers glitter along the glass shelves of the counter, and they would sing faintly when the nasal voices shouted orders down the hatch of the serving-lift. I used to sit at our table, glancing up every now and then from the book I was trying to read to the door, where a square of glass hung suspended like a smoothly cut-out sheet of water, reflecting the blueness of the night outside. I returned to my book only to glance up again after the lapse of a minute or so, when the sheet of water would be precipitously projected into the room, so that I held my breath, thinking that everybody near the door would suddenly spring from their tables drenched to the skin and stamping with rage. But no: the suddenness with which the door was opened

did not disturb the perfection of its balance in the least. It returned calmly to its place and after sending a breath of cold air whirling through the haze of tobacco smoke, once more shut out the night.

It was not she who entered. This time I returned to my book and became so absorbed in it that I knew nothing of her approach till she pulled her chair with a clatter from under the table and sat down opposite me. The high-necked jersey accentuated the paleness of her face and the white shadows about her mouth. But when I mentioned that I thought she looked unusually tired, she became furious, saying that she was tired because she had to work for her living. At this, the first words that had been spoken between us in anything but complete sympathy, I felt myself suddenly deprived of volition and every other feeling save the uselessness of life and living. Yet pride caused me to assume an apparent coldness and indifference. She must have seen through my disguise and realised how much pain she had caused, for the next minute she was begging my forgiveness, her eyes soft with tears.

It would be hard to say what constituted the charm that was the essence of her personality. Perhaps it was mainly due to the fact that she had the power of keeping me perpetually astonished, never allowing that paralysing sense of sameness, that is often the cause of unhappiness under conditions that we imagine to be otherwise ideal, to creep into our relations. She retained in me, right from the first moment of our meeting, the idea that however well I could know her there would still remain some subtle odour of passion, some just perceptible thrill of exoticism, of which I had never before known the existence, filling me at the same time with that ex-

quisite dissatisfaction that causes us to follow someone across half London because we desire to know more of an eyelid that has quivered beneath our glance or a mouth that has half-smiled in spite of itself in answer to our silent greeting. And the thought of going away to some place removed from the distractions and irrelevant interests of London where we might fully submerge our personalities one with the other and live in that calm clarity of spirit that spreads itself over our lives for days at a stretch when each infinitesimal desire and ripple of passion has been realised and resolved into the harmonious working of our natures, gave us a sensation of delicious pleasure. Had we been more experienced, we might have known that the very obstacles that came in the way of our doing all we wished, the unwelcome circumstances that put us to such a railing against fate, were the very forces that, reacting on the perversity of our natures, held us together and intensified our pain and pleasures to a greater extent than any amount of freedom could have ever done.

But about this time, at the height of our love for one another—I say " height " because, although the moments in which our dual natures jarred and came into conflict were becoming increasingly frequent, they were more than ever balanced by moments of such ecstasy as we never before thought possible—she suddenly announced that she would be obliged to leave me in order to fulfil an engagement that would take her over to Paris for a period the length of which she said was quite indefinite. And at my expression of pain, she flew into a rage, saying that progress was more important to her than anything else, and that I could not love her very much if I wished to arrest her development by detaining her in London. She flushed as she spoke and tears came

to her eyes. At the time I supposed this to be a sudden outburst of anger and revulsion of feeling provoked by the mere idea of prolonging our relations for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary. Since then I have looked upon it both as the traditionally indignant pose of an artist in defence of the work that is self-expression and therefore life to her, and also as a cloak under which to hide the genuine pain that any break in our relations might cause her. Although why she should wish to hide such natural pain from me seemed equally mysterious, unless she was unwilling to do anything that might prove flattering to my vanity. Finally, I decided upon the first explanation, because the word " pose " in every sense made clear many past situations that were at the time meaningless to me. Similar outbursts for which, when I could find no other explanation, I fell back on the unsatisfactory " excess of temperament," have since resolved themselves in my mind into that type of attitudinising common among certain people not devoid of talent who, at all times, seem particularly anxious to be recognised as artists. Although these outbursts of hers were perfectly sincere, in so far as she herself believed in them, and doubtless at such times she felt as deeply as when she was delivering her part at the theatre—in each case acting on the same principle that unless she herself believed deeply in the words she was saying, although they may not have been the expression of her true nature, they would not " get over "—whether these thoughts passed through her mind or not on such occasions has always remained, for me at any rate, a mystery. I realised, on the other hand, that we often credit people with complex temperaments when in reality they are nothing more than a vortex of conflicting poses.

From that time she seemed to make use of every possible opportunity for either hurting or irritating me. And my nature was so entirely subjugated to hers that the occasions on which I rebelled against such treatment were rare. It is, in fact, humiliating to think of the many instances when an assertive move would have completely changed her tone and, for all I knew, have given me the ascendancy. But such treatment of me was greatly due to her lack of that sensitiveness, that delicacy of taste where other people's feelings are concerned (for which no amount of culture or " intellectuality " will atone), that refinement of tact that may be summed up—although in these days it may sound slightly snobbish to some people—in the word breeding. And the lack of this quality she concealed under that pose of brutality so often affected by modern artists, as though they were ashamed of having advanced from their barbaric ancestors, preferring to stifle their sensitiveness under a guise of voluntary navvyism and a revolt against a natural refinement. For some time since her comparative success on the stage she had acclimatised herself to the company of those " intellectuals " who, dreading in the modern fashion that their superior mental qualities might be suspected and might lead them into snobbism, adopt an attitude of mind which pretends to enjoy, as expressions of human nature, ridiculously crude and boring performances at third-rate music-halls and cinemas. Thus she was enabled to indulge her tastes to the full without impairing the intellectual image of herself that she had so cleverly built up in the minds of her friends. While I, for my part, not possessing the necessary "humanity" and not being amused by this particular pose, was horribly bored on these expeditions to those shoddy quarters of the

town to which the expression of her natural tastes led us. And thinking myself in reality vastly inferior to her in outlook, these expeditions proved to be regular sources of humiliation, although outwardly, to the best of my ability, I appeared to be enjoying myself in the same honest, straightforward, refreshingly "primitive" way no less than any of my companions. On our return I listened to her affected remarks about the "types" we had encountered, and sometimes she wrote short stories about them, which she would read to me with all the pride of a creator, expecting the commendation that somehow I could never find it in my heart to give.

For some weeks before she went to Paris she tortured me (probably quite unconsciously, although only a little thought was needed to show her what she was doing) by talking of nothing else. Immediately all that I had read and imagined of that city rose up before me like the seductive visions that in times gone by Venus sent to tempt the starved bodies of the Coenobites in the Egyptian desert. And the more I was prevented from realising these dreams by circumstances the more vivid they became and, with her help, prolonged. I imagined myself waking in one of those delicate Parisian rooms we read about in Pierre Loti, where everything, even the air, has the whiteness and smoothness of enamel. I thought of the exquisite sense of languor at waking, when no particular urge of necessity takes us out of bed, when we float in a warm world of semi-consciousness and things half-revealed, when sleep becomes a refined pleasure that may be touched and toyed with, when our eyelids close from us the world of reality and we rise and fall, fall and rise in the rhythm of our breathing, and all the while we keep dropping off into little sleeps that last only the intaking of a breath.

Later, wonderfully calm and refreshed, we get up and let the cool waters of our bath slip over us, have our light breakfast of coffee and rolls, and then, still dreamy, saunter out into the new, glittering air of the boulevard. After walking for a short time, we go into a palatial *magasin* to try our French, make silly little explanatory gestures, and to laugh at ourselves with the girl who serves us. Then we buy a morning paper, delighted to feel ourselves in touch with a life so new, so light-hearted, so essentially different from our own. This life, we feel, the delicate life of the body when the mind sleeps, is the ideal, the only life. The brazier in the entrance to the café where we are sitting burns and smoulders in the fresh wind. We watch its glow for a moment and laugh. The air seems to have the tenderness of milk and to be light and lyrical with the singing of thousands of invisible birds. . . .

She would smile and tell me that people " over there " are more indulgent than they are in England; that they understand things that over here we condemn. Especially, that they are more enthusiastic about art and that everybody you meet is willing to sit down and talk to you about your work and ideas. And because of all this, she said, I should adore it, and that I should therefore come over with her. I replied that there was too much intellectual attitudinising in Paris art circles for my taste and that rather than have them patronised as old-fashioned I should prefer to keep my work and my ideas to myself. And as I still liked Wagner, I was sure that I should not fit in. But I was only defending myself. I would have given anything to have gone with her. She would leave with me only the barrenness of my own life.

The more excited she became during our dinners, the less I could eat, and all that I managed to convey from the plate to my mouth gave me violent indigestion as in the old days. The very word Paris seemed to exercise a subtle and (because it took her away from me) poisonous influence over her. According to her, Paris seemed to have a monopoly of the joys of life—everything was Paris. Till, in the end, I became so heartily sick of the very sound of the word that nothing on earth would have induced me to accompany her over there. For another thing, I was in reality secretly pleased that she was going. But so absorbed had I become in her that I could not reconcile myself to the parting, which I saw now, more clearly than ever, was inevitable. Had the choice been left in my hands, I dread to think of the ultimate consequences. Since the very first day of our meeting, my nature had been in a turmoil. Work had become impossible and every projection of my brain that did not concern her was colourless and feeble. While she, on the contrary, seemed to rise on wings of heightened endeavour. Her histrionic sense became keener, the sound of her voice as she spoke seemed to intoxicate her, and the movements of her body transformed themselves into a perfect joy. Her self-confidence increased as my belief in myself declined. For the time being I lived in a world of glass, energy was a fall of frost that melted as soon as it came, leaving the faculties paralysed and numb. More than anything else, I desired stillness and peace. Silence was more dear to me than sound, rest more acceptable than any action of the mind. My world needed to be rebuilt with new values and maintained on a harder, less susceptible, more solitary, foundation. I desired to be more self-sufficient, less dangerously sensitive, and removed to a plane of clearer,

more analytical, vision. Then a wonderful new future would open out like that glimpsed by a convalescent after his eyes have been clarified by the fires of pain, as he sits in the half-light remoulding his world to a vision born of the long, sleepless nights.

Eventually the night of her departure arrived. I accompanied her to the station and found a seat in the Continental express, and after protestations that seemed to me false and affected, we said good-bye and heard the last of each other by promising to write every day. I remember that this final falsehood annoyed me particularly, because I was really exceedingly pleased to think that the cause of so much recent pain and humiliation was making her way to the coast with ever-increasing speed, until all that was left to my sight of her were a few shining strands of smoke melting on the air. I returned home and went straight to bed.

With eyes open on the darkness, I lay awaiting the oncoming tides of sleep. They approached tentatively, like the first six little waves before the great seventh; they curled over, revealing for a moment a curve of grey and crystal that broke, running up the shingle, as it were, towards me, not quite reaching the point of unconsciousness that I knew would submerge body and mind. But gradually, with the incoming tide, they lengthened out, spreading their pale waters above me. Gradually they soaked down with scarcely a sound, till at last the surge grew monotonous, making a full silence of its own.

METAMORPHOSIS

By Arnold Wareham

With the guile of a courtesan who knows the seductive powers of filmy draperies, the hard-visaged city was drawing on the veil of dusk that trailed from the arms of the evening sky. Harsh contours and angularities which had been ruthlessly exposed by the afternoon sun were now being rounded off, softened and beautified. Dancing to the pulse of the outgoing tide, a rich profusion of reflections sparkled upon the swart bosom of the Thames, and from the windows of the hotels came shafts of a mellow light which threw into tawdry contrast the flickerings of the arc-lamps that studded the roadway below.

With heavy, lagging steps a woman mounted the stairway leading up to the footbridge which keeps company with the Charing Cross Railway Bridge in its swinging stride across the river.

Arrived at the top of the stairs, she slowly walked along the bridge; then, pausing and leaning against the iron railings, she gazed down at a string of barges leashed to a fussing tug. The restless, changing beauty of the scene held her attention for a few brief moments. Then her eyes dulled over, eloquent of despair, and save for two hectic spots which marked her cheek-bones, her features showed up grey and lifeless. From the corners of her ripe, over-full lips crept harsh, disfiguring lines.

The rumble of a train passing over the adjacent railway track disturbed her musing. Her thoughts at once leapt back to the event, but a few hours old, that was stifling all desire for further existence. She winced again at the

dream-shattering slam of the door that had knelled Roger's departure from the flat, and she cringed in recollection of his parting words:

"Well, Annabelle, there it is. . . . For months now I've been bored to death, and I'm sticking it no longer. . . . This life has become stale. . . . That's all there is to it. . . . And I'm going. . . . Still . . . don't worry. . . . You'll soon find another market for your charms. . . ."

Once again, cruelly plain in the mirror of her memory, she saw Roger reaching for his hat, his frame tense with hostility. Then had come that vicious slam of the door that had made her sink to the floor as from the impact of a savage blow. Stumbling to her bed, she had lain there, stunned and inert. It was as though a gigantic hypodermic needle had been plunged into her spine: she could feel nothing, and yet knew herself to be mauled, lacerated, torn. Then presently there had crept through her stupor a need—urgent, insistent, imperative: she must fly at once from the scene of her humiliation, for the room had become an inferno of shame, scorching in its mockery. If only she could immolate herself . . . fling her body into some furnace and thus burn to ashes her feelings of violation and outrage. . . . She had been discarded . . . flung off as a soiled garment. . . .

So she had rushed out of the flat, obeying an urge she was powerless to ignore. Walking blindly on, she had at last wakened to a sense of actualities, finding herself in the neighbourhood of the Embankment. With the sudden knowledge of her whereabouts she had become conscious of an intolerable weariness, her limbs trembling with fatigue. Slowly, mechanically, she had mounted Hungerford foot-bridge.

But now, what in God's name had led her to this, of all places? she asked herself.

She knew the answer at the very moment she framed the question. Wasn't it on the Embankment, which now curved out before her, that she had first met Roger? Hadn't it been their regular meeting-place in those intoxicating days that followed? . . . those days during which her scruples, one by one, had withered away before the fire of their passion . . . withered until it had seemed essential that she should flout the standards of her family and their little world . . . defy convention and fly to Roger's arms as his mistress. . . .

And how well she remembered, too, one glorious July evening when, hand in hand like two enchanted children, they had climbed up to this foot-bridge to admire a sunset which had turned the whole river-side vista into burnished gold: an evening which, tincturing her love-laden thoughts, had lent an immaculate beauty to the future they had decided to share together.

Yes, of course, this was the key. Her romance had been born here . . . and—the need was inexorable—here she must bury it. And yet? . . . And yet? . . .

With a half-sob of resentment she was about to turn away when she caught sight of the misty silhouette of Cleopatra's Needle. At once her thoughts swung out in a wider arc:

Cleopatra . . . Egypt . . . Osiris. . . .

She grimaced.

Roger—and those queer books of his! . . . How fond he had always been of delving into ancient rites and mysteries, phallic worship and the like! . . .

Looking back, she realised that in the heyday of their love-making this had amused her rather than otherwise. Every man had some amazing foible or other, she had

persuaded herself—and this had merely happened to be Roger's. She had accepted it, therefore, as part and parcel of her man, unthinkingly, unquestioningly.

Unquestioningly? In retrospect it now seemed to her that in some odd corner of her consciousness there had always lurked a shadowy doubt . . . even, perhaps, an unacknowledged fear—that the castle of her happiness had its sole foundations in the shifting sands of his fleshly desires. . . .

Discarded! This surely was the siren's derisive jeer from the river? . . . And the noises of the taxis . . . the clang of the trams. . . . What were these but echoes of a gibe? . . . And the trains that clamoured and clattered behind her—the pounding wheels and reverberating rails seemed to unite in hammering taunts into her very brain. . . .

Sanctuary? Her eyes swept the length of the bridge, and automaton limbs took her onward a few paces, but soon she found herself again impelled to stop by the railings and listen. The shrilling sirens, the jangling road noises, the metallic shriekings—all seemed to be uniting in a fugue based upon the theme of her humiliation. . . . *Discarded.* . . . *Flouted.* . . . *Scorned.* . . .

For some moments she remained prey to her frenzied imaginings. Then, in a lull, her agitation became less acute, her bearing more normal; but in her eyes the bitterness of disillusion still lurked. Some remembered lines came to her. Quietly she muttered them to herself:—

> Fool that I was, I loved you; your harsh soul
> Was sweet to me: I gave you with both hands
> Love, service, honour, loyalty and praise;
> I would have died for you! And like a mole
> You grubbed and burrowed till the shifting sands
> Opened and swallowed up the dream-forged days. . . .

The dream-forged days. . . . And now the dream had been shattered for ever . . . her love ridiculed and degraded . . . her life laid waste. . . .

Roger. . . . Oh, why hadn't he kept to the compact they had made in the early days of their mating? Hadn't they sworn together that should love wane the issue would be boldly faced? . . . that if ever parting came it should come bravely . . . cleanly . . . and without bitterness? . . .

When happiness held them it had been easy to make those pledges. . . .

But how had he met her when outraged self-respect had forced her to tax him outright? First with mean, clumsy subterfuges; then with coarse innuendoes; and finally with contempt.

A storm of resentment swept over her. If only Roger were here now, she would show him how little he really mattered . . . how little she cared. . . .

Everywhere the gathering dusk turned into greater relief the lights that glowed and twinkled. Slowly she turned and commenced to retrace her steps. As the Embankment Gardens came into full view, her eyes rested upon the bandstand with its festoons of coloured electric bulbs, and strains from the orchestra were borne up to her. A new strength showed itself in her bearing as she descended from the bridge and crossed over the road into the Gardens.

Soon she was seated and stretching her limbs in an ecstasy of relaxing muscles. Automatically came the application of powder-puff and lipstick. A minute or two more and she was just as mechanically groping in her handbag for a packet of chocolates.

The chairs near by were rapidly filling—mainly with callow youths squiring unfledged maidens; but here and

there was a man or woman who had paid full toll at the bridges of experience along life's road. How easy it was to pick these out! she mused to herself: the men with dull, appraising eyes; the women whose eyes held a metallic, predatory glint. . . .

Inevitably her thoughts swung backwards again to dwell upon the incidents, and above all the final scene, which had marked Roger's departure. It was with the relish of an epicure of self-torment that she broodingly savoured each bitter ingredient of her disillusionment. What attractions had she to offer now . . . she who had been flung off like a yesterday's buttonhole . . . no longer deemed fragrant? . . .

Dejection held her for a while, but as the paths echoed with the tread of the gathering promenaders her interest in the throng reawakened.

Presently she observed the approach of two youngish-looking men, hatless, in dinner-jackets, evidently well fed and on good terms with themselves. As they sauntered by she saw that the eyes of the nearer man were bent upon her. A minute or two later, on their return, she was again conscious, in an exercise of feminine occultism, that both men now had her under approving scrutiny. Her heart pulsed unsteadily and a feeling of giddiness momentarily blotted out the scene before her. What if she invited their advances? . . . They would respond!—she was certain. . . .

The moment passed and with it the impulse; but the incident had distilled a peculiar balm. She felt more secure of the future.

But love? . . . Not that! . . . Never again. . . . Love was for the fools of life . . . that particular kind of innocent she had been. . . . Men might rave of love,

setting it up as a god in the outer temple of their lives, professing to worship it . . . yet in the inner chambers they prostrated themselves before the idol of lust. . . .

No man should ever fool her again. . . . From now on she would be the snarer . . . she would spread the net. . . . Why not?—hadn't she a debt to recover? . . .

An ugly, vindictive smile flickered over her features, and her lips narrowed.

A man had cheated her with the counterfeit coinage of love. . . . Well, in future she would offer counterfeit charms. . . . And men should pay for them . . . pay handsomely. . . .

Life was obviously a pretty rotten game. . . . Still, if one could adjust oneself to taking, taking . . . but never giving . . . no doubt it could be made to yield much worth the having. . . .

A whiff of cigar-smoke teased her nostrils, and as she glanced round an elderly man rose from an adjacent chair. As he moved away he carelessly tossed aside the stub of a cigar. She watched intently, and the next moment was fascinated to see another man stoop down, clutch the still-smoking stub, and greedily press it into his pipe.

On the instant certain plans for the future, shadowy as yet, began to crystallise. Opening her handbag, she glanced at the mirror. At first she was amazed, and then cynically amused, for staring at her she saw a pair of calculating, predatory eyes.

THE EXORCISER

By Francis Marsden

"Well, gentlemen, and talking of queer occupations, you will never hear, I fancy, of a rummer job than I had at one time."

He joined in our conversation with that easy movement of mouth and eyebrow which suggests stories—yarns of things seen, and things unseen too. As I judged him, there was not, you may see, a very strong suggestion of veracity in his glance. But, on the other hand, there was a formidable directness in his manner: planting himself on his one sound foot and his wooden stump, he gave one confidence in his competence, at least to maintain his asseverations heartily. In that bar-parlour to which he was a stranger he caught the eye and ear of the regular company. He might be worth hearing.

And so the doyen of the customary frequenters, an old actor with a fine fringe of silver locks about the collar of his ancient Inverness cape, responded, "And what, sir, was that?"

"An exorciser," said he.

"Anything to do with the Excise?" said the landlord, faintly perturbed, it might seem, for he leaned over-heavily on the flap of the bar, which creaked in protest.

"No, guv'nor, no! Nothing to do with them sort of spirits. Oh, no! I had to deal with ghosts!"

"But," interjected the actor, "I should hardly have imagined from your appearance that you had been in holy orders and had officiated as exorcist."

"No, no! quite another thing, I can assure you, sir.

The job was concerned with these séances for raising ghosts—spirits they calls 'em."

At this the company looked more perplexed than ever.

"You see," he went on "at that time it was just getting the fashion, this table-rapping business—a craze, so to speak—and everybody was new to the thing. It was in its beginnings, and some funny things happened. There was trouble at times. Well, the Psychical Investigators' Club was so often telephoned by people who had got themselves into a horrible mess of some kind or another by their ghost-raising experiments, that the committee were forced to arrange for a sort of organised flying-squad to see to urgent cases—and charge a proper fee, of course, for immediate attendance. It was made up of fellows who was used to handling spirits, or at least not afraid of them. That was the notion. I was one of 'em."

"You must have had some remarkable experiences indeed," boomed the actor in his roundest voice, his glance, agleam with anticipation, flickering above the rim of his lifted glass.

"I'll tell you one of the strangest," said the exorciser, "if you gentlemen are interested."

"Yes! Go on!" said several voices in unison.

"Thank you, landlord, the same again," he said, responding to a quiet signal from mine host. "It was late one night, I remember well that the weather was damp and misty, with greasy roads—bad for my peg. An urgent call came from a house in Highgate, and two of us went off as fast as we could by motor-cycle. We reached the place in good time, and found a roomy-looking house—an old-fashioned place with gates and a carriage drive. Most of the windows in the front were

lit up, and inside we found quite a good number of people huddled together in the hall, dressed ready to leave and looking rather scared. Seemingly they were uncertain whether to go or whether to await developments.

" The gentleman of the house came forward when we were admitted, and immediately set about an elaborate explanation. He was a talkative, smooth sort of fellow, with fat hands and a bald head, with wisps of ginger-coloured hair sticking all about his face. Although he was still jumpy, and seemed to have had a proper fright, he could still talk all right. He let it off at me just like a lecture, with all the details, ornamental words—everything nice and pat.

" It appeared that the séance had gone on for a long time without any success. They had turned down the shaded lights until there was just a glimmering. At last somebody said that they ought to appeal to the sacred East and try to get a Mahatma to materialise. Somebody else, whether in joke or in earnest, said they didn't like Mahatmas. Why not an elephant? Something large and definite. He gave it as his opinion that they were all a bit bored and talking foolish. Anyhow, they settled down after that, their fingers and thumbs all touching round the table, and very soon indeed things really began to work. A large purplish shadow, he said, grows over the table and begins to shape up. They see the form of an elephant's head and trunk develop more and more distinct, and just when its shoulders began to loom out, crash went the table as if a big weight had fallen on top of it and the glimmer of light in the room went right off.

" When the table caved in they all fell forward against something huge and warm and leathery, and there was a

bit of a panic in the dark. All of them seemed to have scrambled out somehow without any serious damage. A young fellow, with long black hair and goggles, complained that a packet of rusks had been taken from his coat-pocket and that the pocket had gone with it. And a stout lady in evening dress said that she had been pulled about very indelicately. So far as I could judge, in that dress it would not have been easy to handle her very delicately. Anyhow, they had fairly climbed over one another in the rush to escape, and some of them were still a bit ruffled. For a while after they had got out of the drawing-room, loud noises were heard—trampling and chairs crashing about; after that a sort of trumpeting noise; and later silence.

"Well, after I'd got all this information, I went to the drawing-room door, turned the lock and gave a shine with my e ectric torch into the room. Nothing to be seen; the place was full of a thick mist, a sort of steam with a pungent sort of smell."

"Steam?" said a voice.

"Yes, believe me. There was a kind of haze too thick for my torch to shine through. And the smell—half-familiar sort of odour, too. So, after listening a minute or two, and hearing no sound, I stepped inside the room and groped about for a minute or two. Then I fell over a large heap on the middle of the floor——"

He paused.

"What was it?" asked a tense voice.

"The dead body," said the exorciser.

"The dead body? Of what?" said the professor, one of our cronies. He professes to teach classical languages but, so far as I know, stops at professing.

"Of the elephant, I suppose," said the actor.

" Oh, no," said the exorciser. " Of a—er—haystack, I think."

" What ? " shouted his hearers in unison. " Nonsense ! "

" Whaddyermean ? " bellowed the professor threateningly.

" Well, well," answered the exorciser, " it was not exactly a haystack, but it—er—had been, you know. I got out by the French window opening on the lawn and sent the gardener in to move it out in a wheelbarrow. It took him quite a long time. I thought it should be useful to him too."

" We don't understand you at all," said the actor. " Speak plainly, sir ! What was it ? "

" Ah'm, well," said the exorciser, finishing his drink. " The elephant had left his visiting-card."

" Admirable ! Admirable ! " said the old actor into his glass.

LAST DAYS IN HIGH GERMANY

By Herbert Palmer

When the Great War broke out I was living in Germany. I had been living there for many years, variously occupied. I had been doing erratic journalism and translation work, but chiefly I earned my living by giving English lessons to all kinds of adult people, many students and some Army officers among them. In the latter part of my time I was a student myself and reading for a Ph.D. at the University of Bonn. I was well *au courant* with much that was going to happen, and, expecting war with France or Russia any time, had made foggy plans for slipping out of the country at a moment's notice.

But there came the long calm before the storm. I was completely deceived; so utterly that I took over a wealthy fifth-year student's flat with all his furniture (rejecting, however, his mistress, who was thrown in with the bed), and made plans for getting married to a lady living in England. The first intimation I had of something going grievously wrong came to me through a disturbing dream. I dreamed that the flat was full of coffins. The furniture had all changed into those melancholy long boxes. I should not make mention of this gesture from Heaven were it not that it troubled and oppressed me beyond reason. In a little café, one afternoon, I told an English friend all about it. I said, "I think I am not going to be married in August. Something dreadful is brewing. I am weighed down with oppression."

He laughed, passed over a plate, and said, "Everybody is on tenterhooks before he gets married. All you want

is a holiday before the honeymoon. Have some more cake."

I was not, as yet, occupying the flat; and a few days later, just as I was finishing breakfast in my little student-room, my landlady's husband walked in with a newspaper. He looked sombre and mysterious. He pointed to a paragraph. But I read it without quite understanding. Then he tried to explain, hinting darkly at events which might unpleasantly involve both of us. The newspaper contained accounts of the Austrian murders, but was guarded in its remarks upon what they might lead to. But enough was written by the journalist to put every German into a flame of indignation and apprehension.

I walked out into the street. I shopped, gave a lesson, and paid a visit to the University reading-room. Then I went to a tavern for lunch. Everybody was chattering and discussing. There was much nodding and shaking of heads. But many of the older people were going about with long, solemn faces. There was excitement, eagerness, worry, fear.

As the hours passed, the suspense deepened, and people began to talk quite unguardedly. There was going to be war. It had come at last. It was all the fault of those bears and barbarians, the Russians. The Serbian wolves were mere dupes, and crazily following a wrong lead. The menace was from the East. The Russian hordes were out to sweep away not only German culture, but also all European culture. Behind the Russians were the Tartars, the Chinese and the Japanese. That old grim bogey, the " Yellow Peril," was something real, after all. Germany was about to enter upon a Holy War. The newspapers said this. Public lecturers and propa-

gandists said it. The town palpitated with rage and patriotism. Students in high, shiny boots, blue, red and yellow sashed and capped, their faces scarred with the sabre slashes they had got in the duelling-hall, made Ciceronian speeches in front of the University: "Fellow students and townspeople! We are menaced by the barbarous East. The desolation of the wilderness is upon us. German culture is in danger. Do you not realise, comrades! The Russians are coming. If they enter Germany they will burn our cities and violate our women. We call upon you all to stand by our Kaiser and the Fatherland in this her hour of terrible need. The Cause of Austria is our Cause. Let us root out that band of Serbian brigands and assassins. We, the students of Germany, will spill our blood in Austria's most righteous war. We call upon all true and loyal Germans to be worthy of German culture and the past glory of German arms. Three cheers for our Kaiser and Fatherland. Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

That was the tone of all the speeches and much of the conversation, private and public. Hardly a word was said against France. "If France stands by Russia," they said, "we shall deal with France at once. We shall take Paris in six weeks and then return and seek to pulverise Western Russia before that unwieldy country has had time to mobilise more than half her armies. As to England, it is quite certain that England will do nothing. England has trouble in Ireland. England has trouble with the suffragettes. England's hands are tied by her Colonies, any of which may suddenly rebel. England is full of unemployment, and her working-men are dissatisfied and unpatriotic. England will seize this great occasion to trade with the belligerent countries and

sell provisions and munitions. And, if the miraculous happens and England does move against us, we will send a few policemen to arrest her insignificant little drawing-room army."

I was a member of an International Student Society, and an eminent professor published a newspaper article charging it with being a hot-bed of sedition. A Serb and a Russian, whom I supposed I had met, were accused of being accomplices of the murderers. The Serb, I believe, was the most condemned. It was just as likely to have been a certain Turk, a detestable man, who was extremely popular with everyone, especially the women.

So it went on; and meanwhile it rained. Never in England have I lived through a summer of such terrific downpours and so much thunder and lightning.

"I know there is going to be war," said a scarlet-faced, blear-eyed pupil to me one day in my room.

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Look at the weather," he answered, "it's uncanny. That means something strange—war, probably."

"Yes," I said, "it's the beginning of the Deluge—Heaven's sign and symbol."

The prophet of Mars grinned.

But scarcely anybody in Germany believed that England would take part. I had fair evidences of this. A few days before the actual outbreak of war, an embryo Rhineland schoolmaster brought me his Master of Arts thesis for correction and revision. I remember that it was on the origins of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (fifteen to thirty hand-written pages of foolscap), and I rejected it not so much because it was difficult, but because I had already been involved in a rather shady undertaking of a similar kind, and my conscience was not able to bear the

weight of any more. Why should I finish off his work for him, especially for money? But his trust in me was extraordinary. He begged me to take the thing back to England with me and return it to him in a few weeks. He was quite sure that it would be as safe in England as Germany. About the same time a fräulein student-friend went off to England for a holiday, not anticipating that she would have difficulty in returning. She even let me borrow a twenty-mark piece from her just before she went to the railway station. I loved her passionately; but that was no reason why I should sponge on her, or even borrow from her what would be difficult to return.

And the hours went on, and the days went on. The cafés and taverns throbbed and bellowed with patriotic music. Small detachments of soldiers in field-grey uniforms were seen in the streets. Battalions of them, in their every-day blue uniform and black leather and brass helmets, marched with heavy martial tread down the broad ways. Everywhere there was the glitter of arms and the noise of spirited music. Everywhere the brazen wings of the German Eagle flashed against the uncertainty. And disturbing bulletins were being placed every few hours in prominent places in the streets and squares.

One day, indeed, near the end, I heard a terrifying note—the hoarse murmur of approval from a crowd of working-men, social democrats, one of these fellows menacing me with a snarl as I pushed my way through to ask a question. And when a few days earlier, with a pain in my jaw, I paid a visit to the University dentist, I was told to call again in three weeks, because a crowd of other students were being attended to—fearing toothache on the march, I supposed. Then the crash came.

I had gone out that morning to see about getting a piano into my flat—to be paid for later. In fact, I saw the thing taken up, and came downstairs very pleased with its appearance in the largest room. Then I hurried off to lunch, but at the end of the street I stopped. New and important bulletins had been pasted up in the square. Knots of people were standing round them. I pushed my way through. The notices said that a state of war existed between Russia and Germany, and one of them warned all *foreigners* against staying another hour in Germany *at their peril.* It came to me like a thunderclap—I was an enemy and a foreigner. An acquaintance nudged me and told me to take notice.

"Kicked out like a dog?" I said. "No! I won't go. At least I won't move till the hour I have arranged to move. I am going to England to bring back my bride; and that's not yet."

But coming round the corner I ran into an Anglo-German friend, whom I will call Dr. Brown. He held an important position at the University, and he told me that he had been hunting everywhere for me. He looked the incarnation of despair and worry.

"You must get out at once," he said. "There's no doubt about war now. I tell you, you must get out. It will be too late if you put off till to-morrow, because every train will be requisitioned for the troops. I know this; I have just received an important secret announcement through a friend in high office. But you must not repeat what I have said. Hurry off and pack like the devil. I will pay your debts for you. If you stay you may be lost, for I think England will come into the War."

I left him, and went breathlessly down the street, not to my own rooms, but in an opposite direction—to warn

an Irish student, my chief pal. I took a short cut through a subterranean passage, but was met by a non-commissioned officer with a loaded revolver. I showed him my student card, my testimonial of German Kultur, and passed on. When I reached the Irishman's room he was out, enjoying all the excitement, the fire-eater. But I had misjudged him. He was searching for *me*. I left a message, telling him to look after his safety (for I was very familiar with his spasms of daring and recklessness), and fled to the dry-cleaners to fetch away my frock-coat. On the way I called at the room of a German student, a pedantic, heavy fellow, to whom I had lent Kaluza's *History of English Versification*. He wouldn't or couldn't give me the book. He said he had left it at a friend's house in the country.

" War ! " he snapped incredulously, " it's unthinkable. Why, I haven't passed my examination ! How can there be war yet ? In a few weeks I have to present myself for my examination."

I gave him up ; he had evidently not been outside his room for days, not even for his meals. He was quite guileless and stupid, and immersed in his studies.

Then I tried to get my shirts and collars from the laundry, but they were all in soak and not forthcoming.

When I returned to my lodging, I found a pupil, a young Junker, an officer of the Reserve, waiting for me in one of my landlady's large rooms. He had come for his lesson. When I informed him that I couldn't give him his lesson because war was certain, he replied that I had no need whatever to take alarm, that there was no immediate hurry. Irritated by his nonchalance, I blurted out what I ought not to have told him—that on the next day, or the day after, at the latest, there was going to be

a general mobilisation. He walked across the room, fixed me with an awful stare, and said, " How do you know that? Who let that out? Now tell me. We shall never see one another again. So tell me."

I went dizzy. I was going to get a most kind friend into serious trouble. Or equally easily I might set a mark on the forehead of someone who had not been near me at all that day. All I could do was to answer him vaguely. I said that I had heard through the University, that it was an open secret at the University. He seemed a little surprised, but moderately appeased. Then he pulled out his purse, paid me for some previous lessons, and went off.

I now turned my attention to the packing and the people I was living with. My landlady was in a distressing state of nerves and bewilderment, and her buxom daughter nearly prostrate. She also was going to be married that month, and she feared that her fiancé would be " mobilised " at once. But they both wept over me as well as themselves, and brought me coffee and cakes.

Half an hour afterwards Dr. Brown turned up, and with him the Irishman. They said they had come to see me safe out of the place. The Irishman declared that he had no intention of leaving, that he was going to enlist in the German army if England came into the War. He had an old score to pay off on account of Ulster. He was full of personal friendliness and national animosity. He was exceedingly good to me in those last hours, but he rather worried me by the way he jeered at the careful, selective way in which I packed. " Hurry up, by God! You don't want to take that thing back to England. What's the use of that tin tray? " It was very difficult in the space of an hour to know what to put into a little

trunk and a portmanteau and knapsack. The bulk of my things had to be left behind.

When I got to the station I was confronted by an unparalleled sight. Trunks and portmanteaus were piled right up to the roof, and the free spaces were filled with bewildered and enraged travellers. Some of these were Anglo-Germans, who had refused or forgotten to take out naturalisation papers. Others were ordinary English residents; others were holiday-makers who had been caught unawares. From one of them I learnt that Russia had just begun the War by blowing up a bridge on the frontier.

Dr. Brown and the Irishman stayed with me till the end. The Irishman was in excellent spirits, but Dr. Brown was in the blackest night of gloom. He said that he was certain that England would come into the War, and he believed that as a naturalised German he might be made to fight against England. As a matter of fact, eighteen months later he was sent against Russia. But his two brothers (one of them a soldier from boyhood) fought in the English Army, and were officers of considerable rank before the close of the War.

The train was bulging with passengers. We were a grieving, selfish, embittered crowd. The only selfless person in my compartment was a sweet little Irish lady. She stood up for two hours and let me sit on her portmanteau. She even fed me with cake and fruit. But I was wretchedly fatigued, so spent in body and mind that I was past caring for anybody save myself; and the whole impropriety and unmanliness of the situation didn't dawn upon me till four days later.

The train crawled slowly through woodland and ploughland. After what seemed an eternity of time,

it stopped for good, and we were all bundled out. We had reached the Dutch frontier, but all the lines had been cut, and the only thing we could do was to distribute ourselves into various hotels and then try to cross the frontier next day by cab, car and lorry. I passed a hellish night, sleeping not a wink. I was now convinced that a serious war had begun and that I should not be able to return. All my friends were going to be killed. (How I loved some of those German students!) And I was worried about the Irishman and Dr. Brown. And I miserably realised that I had lost my business as a private tutor and nearly all my possessions. After a betrothal of over seven years I was *not* going to be married; and for the second time in my life my University career had been cut short. Moreover, if England was to join in the War I did not wish to keep out of the army, but also I did not wish to fight against my German friends. I was very convinced of the righteousness of the German cause against Russia and tremendously impressed by German civilisation and efficiency.

Towards morning I began to worry over something else. My holiday excursions from Bonn had led on to the Rhineland trout streams, and I suddenly remembered that I had left some fishing-tackle behind, though rods, net and fly book were safe with my travelling things. But half a dozen artificial flies and some strands of gut had got left in a drawer. For two solid hours the barbs of the fly-hooks stuck in my forehead, and the strands of gut twisted and curled themselves round my brain. All other troubles came to seem insignificant by the side of the loss of less than two-shillings' worth of fishing-tackle. Evidently I had gone completely silly. Or this was the beginning of madness. And the dawn came

up yellow, and green, and orange, and heralded a perfect day.

But after I had dressed, I began to feel saner, and in easier touch with the things that mattered. Then I went out into the street, into the life that was dead and gone from me for ever, and made arrangements for a conveyance to take me as far as the Customs. There, of course, I was stopped. Two officials in green uniforms—but how un-Irish they were!—swords at their belts, hunted through everything in my luggage. Then, finding nothing dangerous, they called me into a private room. "Now," said one of them with an awful scowl, "take off your *left* boot." He was convinced that he had caught me out over something, for when he examined the inside of my left boot and found nothing, he looked nonplussed. Indeed, so was I. Now, why had he done that? Had I come in limping?

Then he began to bully and ask for some particulars about my private affairs. I showed him my student-card and matriculation credentials. Suddenly he got very polite and treated me like a brother. Seemingly, being a German student, I was a propagandist for German Kultur, and must not be offended. I could see his brain working. When I returned to England I should inform everybody of Germany's magnificent civilisation and be one of thousands to help enlist sympathy.

After some further difficulty I got my things carried right on to the frontier-line. The armed policeman was nervy and angry, but, as regards his attitude to me, very affable, and bubbling over with sympathy. "This is a miserable affair," he said. "Somebody will have to answer for this. Swine! Dogs!" But he didn't precisely inform me whom he imagined himself to be cursing.

It sounded to me like the German Higher Command. I had never encountered a queerer policeman. And the German porters who helped me to take my luggage off the cart were also strangely courteous. One of them even refused a tip. And they all seemed to expect nothing. But I had some little difficulties with the people of the Dutch conveyance; and as I went on through Holland I encountered suspicion, irritation and discourtesy. The Dutch were in a panic, inspecting tickets with fixed bayonets. And I even lost some of my luggage. In the train I got precise details about the moment of German mobilisation. After I reached England I found that all the papers had got the date wrong. They had given the day of General Mobilisation as the one on which I had left Germany. But that, I can assure everybody, was untrue. There was no mobilisation in West Germany until next day. It is true that war had broken out on the day on which I left; but it was no more than a detonating spark, a pistol-shot from Russia.

KITCHENER AT ARCHANGEL

By Stephen Graham

Humans who wish magical powers have delight in becoming invisible and impalpable and travelling at heart's desire as quick as thought, in being able to change ordinary substances into gold, at the power of no one being able to say "No" to them when they ask, in never dying, and preserving eternally their vigour and youth, in being able to change other human beings into animals and animals into men, or in being able to render other people invisible and cause them to disappear. But the most thrilling of all powers is that by which one who is dead or has disappeared can be recalled to our world and the vision of men.

Seven days after Kitchener went down off the Orkneys I was in Archangel. Outside the harbour were miles and miles of unmelted ice and yet there was a channel and a waterway through. And ships that had been lost all the winter had come in. The vessels were so thick in the docks that it was possible to step from one to another, from *Cedar Branch* to *Umba*, and *Umba* to *Cordelia*, and *Cordelia* to *Lubof*, and from *Lubof*, which in English is "Love," to *Nadezhda*, which in English is "Hope." Not a soul stirred in the stillness of the midnight sun. It was two by the clock and the melancholy crimsons of dawn and sunset stared from the Northern sky. The sad light of the white night. The brown river water of the Dwina lapping the sides of the ships spoke more audibly than by day and our steps sounded clumsily as we slipped from deck to deck and came at last to the deserted stone stairways and barracks

of the quay. A sentry slept in his box. I awakened him.

" Lord Kitchener has arrived," said I and pointed to the man at my side.

Lord Kitchener stood there as he stood *then*, with his martial cloak around him, silently waiting.

" The great English general, our War Minister, don't you know ? " I added.

The sentry straightened himself and saluted stiffly.

" Here are many English," said he. " And many, many have passed through the town. They come from the sea. We met them very well, I must say. And what fine fellows they were—fine fellows indeed ! "

" You must find us a cab," said I. " We will go to the Governor."

" I shouldn't advise you," said the sentry. " He doesn't receive at this hour."

" Fetch a cab, stupid ! Here's a coin for you."

A sleepy cabman appeared and warned us that he charged double at that hour of the night. We sat in together and commenced an endless journey over the cobbles, bumping and jolting and at times seeming to make no progress at all. Kitchener sat stiffly and silently, and though shaken now and then from his calm posture, he always resumed it. His eyes looked far ahead and he seemed to be more hopeful than I.

It was bright daylight now, and the sun, sure which way he was going, was blazing behind us and flooding our long, " empty " way with silver. But not a single human greeted us, no peeping Tom lifted even a corner of a blind to see who passed ; the whole town slept, and, if you listened intently, snored.

At length the crimson-washed walls of the Governor's

house and two sentries sleeping with their guns in their hands. We awakened them.

" Lord Kitchener has arrived," said I.

" What! He who was lost? "

" The same," said I, and the sentry saluted, fixedly keeping his hand to his brow and staring into Kitchener's eyes till the latter nodded and accepted the salute.

We entered the palace and sat down in a hall where two hundred people might have sat, a scantily furnished but light-flooded chamber, where in a corner a lamp burned dimly before an ikon of St. George.

The Governor, mightily perplexed, came down in his dressing-gown and spied on Kitchener through a spy-hole in the wall and made sure that it actually was Kitchener.

" Kitchener arrived," said he to himself. " And the Ministers gone back to Petrograd and the orders for the flags and bunting cancelled. How annoyed Shuvaef will be at having been deceived by the false news! The Germans must have arranged it. And yet of course, on the other hand, delighted that the Englishman is safe."

He came into the room with many apologies and some questions and exclamations, to which, however, Kitchener offered never a word, and seemed wrapped in thought. I advised his Excellency that it would not be wise to ask questions at this point. In a few minutes a peasant girl with bare legs and garishly bright cotton skirts came through with a puffing samovar, which she held by the handles with both hands. And we followed to have tea.

Meanwhile the Governor's wife, it must be said, was in somewhat of a flurry, and as she hurriedly dressed she said to herself, " Lord Kitchener has arrived. They say he is a great woman-hater. When I appear he will spit on the floor and turn his back on me." When, however,

she appeared, all smiles and apologies and pleasant flurry, Kitchener gravely kissed her hand, and there was that expression of esteem in his movements that caused me to understand that Kitchener had in reality a deep reverence for woman.

Kitchener was then shown to a sumptuous room, one in which upon occasion the Tsar himself had slept. The Governor inquired the details of Kitchener's arrival from the police, who furnished him with a report whereby it appeared that, as ever, they knew everything and had complete intelligence of the affair. It appeared that Kitchener had better go direct to Petrograd now.

" I shall have a sleeping-carriage reserved for you in to-night's train," said the Governor.

* * * * * *

Behold, then, we are in the train! We hasten over the tundras through the green forests of birches and pines to Vologda and Petrograd, leaving behind us the land of the midnight sun and entering a latitude where beautiful fresh darkness has been poured into the night sky, where the darkness is young and its colour as yet mild and dilute. Kitchener sits facing me, with straight military back, and on his face that wonted consecrated expression and a marble sadness. He never was a man of words, and he says nought now, but remains calmly concentrated, wrapped in the thought of certain things he must do at his journey's end. In his mind arise the faces of Joffre, of Haig, of Jellicoe, of Asquith, the King, the Tsar. He thinks of the Russians and of the great plan on which all depends. Yet he is immeasurably calm.

For my part I am anxious and loving. I crave to know the news. I think his calmness perhaps unjustifi-

able. I think we may lose. Pray God we may win. How much depends on this man in front of me and how much is in his hands!

Suddenly as I looked at him I saw the man in the poster on every railway station and every wall of England, the face that every woman has considered in the recruiting appeal, the man who asked for her son, her husband, for the War; our war-King, I had almost said war-God. A boy at school, being asked what K. of K. stood for, replied as it would be possible to reply only in these times, "I know, sir—King of Kings, Lord God Almighty." Great, popular Kitchener! The soldiers call him "Kitch," society people "K." His name a household word—it has a kitchen in it. He is a kitchener, not simply a courtier. The working man believes in him. He has what is called a great emotional appeal. And if he die in silence on the sea, as a common soldier or sailor or fisherman might, you feel he dies for us all and becomes in a way Fate's scapegoat.

I broke the silence at last.

"I saw you yesterday," said I.

K. started.

"I was lonely and I went to the Cinema. There flickered over the screen the latest war pictures, '*Pathé's record. Kitchener reviews the Troops.*' A motor-car came up and an unknown person stepped out and then another unknown, and after him one who was unmistakably you. Many of the Russians in the theatre clapped. Then you began inspecting a detachment of new troops. And I thought, Kitchener, the great builder of armies, is dead, but even his shade is inspecting troops. I know, my lord, where you have been all the week—you have been with the troops."

Kitchener's face turned ashen pale. But he seemed to nod assent.

Then an extra meaning of my words flashed across my mind: He has been with those who have fought, with the heroes of Mons and Ypres and Neuve Chapelle and Loos, with the men in their dusty and riven khaki. And as I thought it, Kitchener rocked in his seat and became insubstantial, and a look of terrible pity crept into his face.

"Stay, stay," I cried, and clutched at his knees. "Remember they are awaiting us at Petrograd."

And Kitchener stayed. But my faith was gone.

"You have it all on your heart as well as on your mind, have you not, Kitch? What will you be able to do at Petrograd? What will you be able to do?"

I broke down. I fell on my knees in the carriage and buried my face in my hands.

"Yah-ho," I cried like a child. "Kitch, Kitch, Kitch, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, go back, go back, go back; you cannot come to Petrograd."

Then Kitchener slowly grew less substantial, and as the train ploughed on South and West, he sat facing the engine, he melted northward toward Archangel. For a moment he was a poster on the carriage wall, and then even the portrait melted away, and as if to-day's bill-poster had just pasted on a new bill, I read for a moment in large and shadowy letters where Kitchener had been, "Vote for Lloyd George." Then that also disappeared.

And I am left travelling by myself in the Petrograd train that runs from Archangel. And darkness was creeping into the sky.

A PILGRIMAGE

By Wilfrid Ewart

It was morning. Flooding October sunshine, cold and gold, kindled the roof-tops of London, making anew and almost beautiful that old, familiar world; whilst across the hard blue of the early sky clouds, boat-shaped and dark, drifted, light, wind-riven. Sunshine streaming through the great glass roof of the station lightly touched Fiona's hair that was itself of the golden quality of autumn. She sat in an outer corner of the carriage: she whose slender lines barely betokened the passing of girlhood into womanhood: whose face contained something gay yet evasive and far-away. Her dress was plain to severity. In her hands was a parcel tightly clasped. . . . Outside the carriage the bustle of the departing Continental express went forward. There were many people—people in sables and fur-coats and astrakhan collars, gentlemen in tweeds and wrappers, Jews defiled by too-palpable riches, red-capped British officers and wives and families, King's Messengers enthroned in first-class carriages surrounded by bags; foreign couriers, and the peculiar travelling type of waiters and cooks and repatriated refugees sandwiched in the third-class carriages of the second train.

From the subdued glow of the station the train moved out into the brilliant sunshine. Smoke was a-blowing. London flitted past—London, which is for ever turning on its own axis, where no one sits still: where housewives hang out washing in back gardens, where children scrape out dishes for grimy fowls, where, on every station platform, crowds of brisk-looking workers await their early

train. What a cinematograph of life! Then the suburbs—so eloquent of our mortal respectability—and then the common English countryside burnished in the colours of the resplendent autumn. The ploughman was at work, rooks hovered above the stubble, and the still green of the oaks and beeches mingled with the saffron of elms and the deeper orange of the chestnuts, that were a background to the ethereal yellow of feathery birches upon silver stems. There were to be seen oast-houses warm red among the hop-fields, while from tumbling orchards the streaked thatch and dull brick of old farm-houses often peeped.

To Fiona's features, too, had come something of these warm tints. Not Time, it was seen, but some obscure, tragic hour had set its mark there; and the expression of her face, for all its tender fairness, contained that suggestion of depth in experience and of suffering not long past, which easily outruns the years. "How I love the autumn!" she said. "It takes off the rough edges. It makes the world look kinder." And the spirit of the russet woods, the brown and yellowing fields, contemplative, quiet, was wafted in through the open window, so that even the Jews became comparable to the peasants, and the too-luxurious Pullman car a simple thing. And closely Fiona clutched the parcel in her lap.

Humanity huddled together on a boat. But it was all the same to the children who, flushed, with hair adrift and tense spindly legs like birds', revelled in the blow of the wind and their first sight of the sea—and the salt of it—crying out for joy, and praying the parents to walk, to run, run about the deck. Folkestone smiled—and the green-fringed cliffs and headlands of England. The crane ceased to clank, the sea-gull to cry; and there was

presently only the sea, now blue, now green, little wave-tossed but never rough, and smiling—smiling too. And the clouds went billowing overhead like ships of the air, like gossamer shadows of dreams. The sunshine called to youth. The children danced for joy and called, playing their games of hide-and-seek among the coils of rope, the funnels, the narrow gangways between the deck-cabins. Soldiers smoked stolid pipes; old ladies glowered amid wraps; gentlemen (in caps) strode manfully up and down the deck two at a time, disdaining chairs. The crew did nothing. The King's Messengers and couriers took their ease in cabins.

No destroyer-escort; no tactical courses; no issuing of life-belts or excited pointing at inoffensive buoys. No mass of soldiers tightly wedged, with laughter on their lips and dread of battle in their eyes. That tableau had passed. The sea smiled at Fiona; Fiona smiled at the sea. . . . It was the most familiar scene in the world.

There were the Customs at Boulogne. But if the English became abusive, the French were coldly rude. Nor was there any diminution of the life of the place. Only the great hotel on the quay—once instinct with khaki activity—seemed to be in the way of an early demise. But along that quay the motor-cars raced, the dull khaki War Office cars and the French grey ones; and there were women in khaki and British girls driving British officers; and a stream of humanity crossing and re-crossing the bridge; and a mass of fishing-boats in the basin; Red Cross ambulances; even yet a lingering suggestion of war. French girls, accompanied by English officers, tripped along the Paris train; French girls in frocks of the shortest, with broad hats oddly

tilted, with parasols carried head first insinuatingly under the arm. . . . What a chapter of life that was too!

No waiting hours or days for a troop-train; no philosophical farewell to civilisation or outlook upon a journey of uncounted length to an unforeseen destination in a vehicle that might break down. But a seat in a restaurant-car. . . . And Fiona, looking out upon the French country, clasping still her parcel in her lap. She spoke again of the autumn: "How wonderfully it touches everything! Look at that pale green light on the poplars! Look at that silvery shimmer of the willows in the wind! I love poplars and willows; they're queer and sad. And the sunshine on that grey church tower. Tell me, will it be like this . . . there?"

Yes—the wavering sunshine made it a thing of Corot. For did it not kindle the whole of the broad river-valley with its low hills crowned by stubble, its lush valley-bottom, marsh-yellow and grey-green with trembling aspen and shimmering willow, where snipe fed and wild duck rose in the dim of the evening? The poplars stood in rows; magpies fluttered down to the railway embankment and back again; in orchards, peasant girls and children were still gathering the fruit; light and shade trembled like chords of music in that wistful, pleasant scene. . . .

We passed through sand-dunes, and heard not even the surge of the sea: only the twisted pines stood on their crests, by their protesting attitudes seeming to whisper of the bitter winter that was at hand. But we—we pursued the river-valley, and so came to Amiens in the waning afternoon. Crowds filled the station. They were black crowds of women carrying large bags and bundles, with many soldiers. Outside the station, on

which builders were at work, dusk was already falling. It was as though Winter himself had suddenly appeared. And the trees of the boulevards of Albert and of Paris were sere and leafless, and from end to end of them the cold, stony figures of Conscience and of Renée Goblet gazed upon the crowds moving in the main street, while lights began to wink among the houses, and the workers to go home. And above the city rose the great mass of the cathedral, beside which the clangour of the tram-bells and the stir of the streets in the falling dusk were as the tinkling of children's toys.

There was desolation in the heart of the town—open spaces of flattened ruins where houses and shops and gay cafés or restaurants once had been. Yet in the life of the place, which had three times been broken, there was now no pause. An advancing enemy had come and gone, an army in flight had stumbled through its echoing streets of deserted houses, bombs and shells had lit it up with the slow glare of impending doom, while the impact of vast explosions had shaken its foundations from end to end. But now the lights shone, the shop windows sparkled, clangour of trams was the speaking voice of the city; and from the overfull cafés long after dark came music of dancing feet and violins.

Morning light shone upon the cathedral—pale through the mist of the rain-storm, its slender spire upward pointing above the mass of the Gothic: that so great monument to the majesty of God and the humility of man. And it was cold out upon the Albert road. That road runs straight as a ruler to the gates of Bapaume, following the adjacent valley of the Ancre with the rolling plains of Picardy on either hand. There is neither relief to the eye nor satisfaction in such monotony of distance. Little

of life was to be seen, but a bitter north-east wind swept across the uplands, whispering ever to the heart of coming winter. Black rooks tossed above the fallows. Leaves anon came fluttering down from wayside trees. Fitful sunshine gleamed from grey cloud-drift. A man and a woman were sowing in a field, the man slinging the seed broadcast, the woman, in drab garments with a shawl over her head, dragging from an adjacent waggon the sacks full of grain: it was the woman's part: on both their faces the dull, dead look of the French soil. There was little traffic on the road, save where a high, springless peasant cart or a French army motor-lorry or slow-moving dray rumbled past. Patient German soldiers worked in gangs at the surface in bright green jackets—the surface of the road that was a series of steep holes—and by the wayside could be seen rusted wire and stakes heaped up, and old dugouts in the cuttings. Ploughmen and their teams dotted the high lands beneath which Albert lay in view. Here all the once-familiar houses and streets shared the common ruin, and were indistinguishable. It was as if a giant had walked over the place. The great new red-brick church with its garish frescoes and barrack-like interior had fallen almost in a heap; and the sole reminder of the leaning Virgin was a twisted iron bar jutting out at right angles from the tower. Strangest of all, many of the inhabitants had returned to the place. A number stood talking and purchasing in a butcher's shop; in a hastily rigged wooden shanty a chemist had resumed his trade. Human beings might be observed passing to and fro like jackals among the ruins—chiefly old women and young children. German prisoners were at work here also, French army lorries rattled along the *pavé* road. The fringe of the great battlefield was marked by skeleton

fingers of blasted trees on the edge of the plateau that seemed to warn the stranger not to approach the region of death. The unbending highway of Bapaume stretched ahead as lifeless and deserted as the vast cemetery on either hand. The penetrating silence of the scene was at once felt. Desolate it had always been, that stretch of country, but never so utterly silent. One brief year ago motor-vehicles of all kinds had streamed endlessly along this broad high road, parties of men were for ever moving backwards and forwards, while overhead aeroplanes never ceased to hum. For months at a time guns were never silent; shells might be heard bursting in the distance with a peculiar hollow sound, and all one winter's day, when the surrounding plains were covered by a mantle of snow, shells went droning overhead to explode in Albert. But now a silence, remote and brooding, had succeeded, and already the battlefield seemed wrapped in a sort of after-death.

At La Boisselle the road turns off to Contalmaison. It was necessary to slow down, unfilled shell-holes and holes made by heavy traffic spoiling the surface of the road. On every side, as far as the limits of the horizon, a gloomy moorland stretched, dark green or brown, overgrown with the red sorrel, vetches and the long, rank vegetation. A little farther on appeared a large coolie camp in the flat space between roads. Those grinning, bronze, unnatural-looking denizens of another world—they were of a piece with the battlefield: its colour was their colour, and they gaped at you as grotesquely as the gaping shell-holes. There was an almost complete absence of natural life. No lark sang, no rook or plover tossed above the waste, no pigeon soared. Nothing was seen in all the vast stretch of heath but an occasional

rabbit, a covey of partridges, a whinchat, and a few finches flitting ahead. Rarely the figure of a man appeared. Nothing was heard but the keening of the wind through the high-growing grass.

> But strange that I was not told
> That the brain can hold
> In a tiny ivory cell
> God's heaven and hell.

After all, Fiona—she was so small, so fragile, so infinitesimal beside this crude, dynamic, blasted thing: she whose rusty-black was the sackcloth and ashes of her own blasted life: she who had blithely danced her way through the pampered elegance of existence. The laughter had faded from the blue eyes that had always laughed: the lips wore no smile, but the rose had not died from her cheeks, nor the gold from her hair. How inadequate she was—unequal in years to the burden of sorrow: her sorrow itself so inadequate! After all—yes!—she had danced, won love and held, been gay, lived for the joy and the quick music of things, known two immortal years, and never yet the deadening pulse of Time—nor Death—but borne a great man in her heart....

It was clear she had never expected this—this world that was of the fibre of an earthly hell: she who had only lived for to-morrow, and this was the yesterday of all time. She had never expected this. Upon the face of the battlefield, as upon no other thing, is inscribed the very character of war: the naked fear and fury of struggling humanity, the conflicting ghosts in the minds of men, the reflected passion of the last moments of uncounted human beings. As sin prints itself upon a man's or a woman's face, so was crucifixion expressed and printed here.

She said: "I never expected this. I have tried to think of it, and of him in it, and of what hell looks like. But I never imagined such loneliness and dreadfulness and sadness in any one place in the world. One cannot imagine it. I thought I knew what it was like, but I only thought. I never felt until now."

It was simple and straightforward after this. There were no tears. All that was inadequate to the immensity of the tragedy printed here upon earth. The earth which was contorted into a hundred different shapes, which was riddled with holes, scarred with the handiwork of man, and hid in its breast a thousand secrets; flecked with the grey wooden crosses, ribbed with the ruins of hearths and hearts; hiding in its breast—how tenderly, how bitterly!—the last clothed emotions, the apprehending agony of a countless sleeping dead. . . .

The aspect of the country was that of a face contorted beyond recognition in a furnace of pain. By one unknowing, it would undoubtedly have been mistaken for the scene of some colossal crime.

Fiona searched. Another was already searching among bricks and bits of masonry. She was a peasant woman, unkempt with straying hair, mahogany-featured, slatternly, depressed-looking as French peasants are. To the strangers she paid no heed nor even raised her head. But a short distance away the sawing of wood was heard, and there could be seen a low wooden shanty at the cross-roads above the village. Beside it was the great crater of a 12-inch shell; behind it rose, on high, a rough-hewn crucifix flanked by crosses. A dirty child peeped out from the shanty, at the door of which hung a card almost illegibly inscribed with the words "*Estaminet. Café et bière.*" Then the sawing ceased. A grey-haired,

grizzled, middle-aged man, in cap, blue blouse, and soiled white linen trousers, appeared. In an almost unintelligible *patois* he began explaining or offering something. The interior of the home he was building, it was possible to see, consisted of two compartments, the one opening into the other, their floor the rough ground. In the first of these a fire was burning on the hearth of roughly laid bricks; there were a couple of benches, and a table knocked up of deal planks. It was obvious that the work had just begun. Outside was litter of wood and shavings, a cart lay at hand, while a short distance away was a pony grazing.

Talking volubly, the man led a way down the road, upon either side of which a few bricks and an occasional household relic or block of masonry showed where a village had been. Strange things protruded from the chaos of ruins. A low brick arch, yet standing, was the portal of his former home. Amid a heap of rubble and greenery he drew attention to a large kitchen range rusted red; that, too, had belonged to the village inn. His life-story then appeared in a series of unconnected phrases and snatches of words. Early in the War he had been evacuated by the Germans, and had been sent as a labourer into Germany. At the Armistice, with his family, he was shipped to England, and for many months had made his abode between the Strand and Leicester Square—he, a common peasant who could neither read nor write.

"And there," he said, pointing, "was the school and there the orchard and there the church and here—at the feet—my home. *Toujours les Boches. . . .*" He spoke in a sort of melancholy singsong, with many shakings of the head.—"But what is this?"—A little cavern opened

into the ground; a white wall above it; among the loose earth a painted French radiator of superior type.

"The château stood here. . . ."

With that we dismissed him, knowing the end of our pilgrimage was at hand. We looked around for the other landmarks we sought. They were there, every one. We stood at the opening of a little valley, completely shut in and circumscribed. A row of derelict iron huts, black, rusted red and yellow, twisted into peculiar shapes, stood at some distance up the valley, as though contaminated and shunned by every living thing. Close to the ruins of the château two grass-grown roads met, winding down the valley and losing themselves ultimately in the grey-green waste. Naked, shell-stricken slopes, already high in coarse grass and every kind of weed, rose on either hand. In the middle of the valley an apple-tree pointed two twisted limbs toward the sky. Rank upon rank of greyish-white poles of trees stretched far along it, and stood nakedly against the horizon like fingers of ghosts or rigid corpses standing upright. Just within the wood was a forest of grey German crosses, all alike, but leaning to this side and that. Up above were the tumbled ruins of the village, grey also, and falling about the crucifix beneath which a man was rebuilding his home.

It was to this spot, then, that the pilgrimage had led us. And after three and a half years all was as had been related: the village, the wood, the German graveyard on the hillside, the ruined château, the parting of the roads, the apple-tree. . . . It was simple and straightforward. There were no tears. It only remained to go to the cross that would be close to the apple-tree. Rain began to fall. The north-east wind drove it out of the scudding clouds. The sound of the wind and the creaking of the derelict

iron huts and the flapping of their frayed canvas were, indeed, the only sounds in that solitary place. Fiona undid her parcel, took out her bundle of tattered letters and her laurel-wreath whose parent tree had come from Athens. We together went straight to the apple-tree. There were shreds of khaki, wet and draggled and discoloured and black, lying around. Several square yards of earth had been disturbed. A dugout had fallen in. A spade lay. A rusted rifle was half buried in a shell-hole: a steel helmet in a pool of water. Of a grave there was no sign nor any cross near.

All was complete—but that. We searched. The rain steadily fell. Wayward rotting crosses "To an Unknown British Soldier" were found, hidden amid the high grass and the rank vegetation, among the brambles of the wild rose, the trailing campion, and the common cornflower; but of that we sought—no sign. There had been some mistake! Our information had been exact, but nevertheless we had come to the wrong place! . . . But no! There they were, as they had been three and a half years before: the village, the wood, the German graveyard on the hillside, the ruined château, the parting of the roads. Here even was the apple-tree and there—yes, distinctly enough—a trench.

Even the last letter truly spoke: " . . . It is very cold for the time of year. I am wearing your woollen scarf which keeps me warm. It is raining, but I am crouching under a piece of corrugated iron. Will you ever be able to read this? . . . The Germans are about a hundred yards away, but I can see nothing except an apple-tree just above their trench. Our line cuts across a road into a wood where there are a lot of German crosses. Just behind are the remains of a village, with a château sort of

upside down. . . . Shells are buzzing overhead. We go for the apple-tree at dusk this evening. I wish it was all over. I am afraid, not so much of what is coming, but that I may not be equal to it. But after all I think I shall be. . . . There is only one more hour to go. Already it's getting dark. I think of you again and again —I know you'll give me strength—and of the little Fiona, though I've never seen her, and of the day that must come when we three shall be together. . . ."

Yes—the evening was closing in. The rain began to sweep up in gusts, and a grey, drab light to blend with the sombre landscape that now became a monochrome in grey. Grey-green the slopes of the valley, grey-green the soil at our feet, greyish-white the stumps of the shattered trees, grey the German crosses and the crosses of the unknown British soldiers, grey the ruins of château and village, grey the sky above. A grey figure stood watching us at the parting of the roads—that of the solitary peasant—like the spectre of Ruin itself.

Fiona knelt down beside the apple-tree and, making the sign of the Cross, laid at its foot the laurel-wreath whose parent tree had come from Athens. It is probable she felt some prayer, for vaguely, disjointedly, Fiona believed in God. Rising, she said: " If only one could know—if only one could *know*—that some day we three shall be together again. . . ."

It was the question that very many years ago a woman, not less bitterly the sport of Fate than she, had asked beneath the monolith on Salisbury Plain in the closing hour of her own life. There was no answer given then; there was no answer given now but that of the crucifix, flanked by its two humble crosses, standing high above the ruined village, clear and distinct against the evening sky.

With that we went back into the world again. And the world was bright, and in high morning the city of Amiens sparkled and shone. And pleasant it was to see the children playing upon the boulevard, while in the windy sunlight autumn leaves came falling, falling, yellow and crinkled, eddying, eddying, fluttering down. (How wintry already were the trees upon the boulevard!) And pleasant it was to know that there were gay feet and laughing voices in life—life in the keen air. And pleasant it was to see the rich light on the Gothic carving of the cathedral, that made of it so splendid and so beautiful a thing. And good it was to hear the bells, and to know that there were yet those among the faithful who answered them: and good to feel around, to hear, to touch the pulsing beat of life on every hand. And better far that the dumb pain of the world, the grief that may not be healed nor ever stilled, should throb on lightly—all unknown and all unknowing.

For the rest—well, it was ended! Of that Fiona spoke no more. She laughed—her little pretty face all over. She chattered blithely all the way to London. Her mind was her own, and it was possible that none should ever peep into it again. Women are deep; covering-up; deeper than the stillest, deepest pools. She went laughing into the world again: and people say, Does she care so very much?—for she dances and sings, dances to sound of piano and violin. Nor has the dancing light ever left her gay blue eyes. Her heart responds; she loves; she lives. . . .

One other knows of what is written there.

WHAT IS THERE TO SAY?

By Rhys Davies

"Why don't you say something?" asked the girl in exasperation.

He moved his feet an inch or two over the gravel. But he still sat back with his hands in his pockets, moodily gazing into the glass of vermouth before him on the green iron table.

"Can you see things in that drink?" she demanded. "Visions of your future?" A dash of venom in her tone made him lift his head.

"What is there to say?" he said.

"A lot," she swam into his remark quickly. "You may be only twenty-one, but you've got to realise you can't get a girl up here to stay with you and then, because the rent is behind and you've no decent shirt to your back, you can do without her. Am I an expense? No, I'm not—that's what you want to realise. You'd have to have a room just the same without me; to feed two instead of one means only three or four lire extra." She had no drink before her—had refused one.

"I'm not thinking of the expense," he said.

"Yes, you are. I'm a few years older than you"—had he not seen her passport!—"and have the advantage of more experience." Ah, why had she said that! She hastened on: "I mean I can read people better than you can conceal your thoughts. Oh, Kenneth, pull yourself together and realise I don't mind roughing it. A dish of spaghetti is enough for me, and a soup in the evening—I'm perfectly content with the room in Farina's. If you like, I'll do the cleaning—then we can ask for it even

cheaper: I'll even say that we want to do our own cooking, and ask for the loan of the kitchen."

He moved a foot over the gravel. "No," he said, "one can't do that."

The girl sat quiet for three or four seconds, pushing her fear and anger into darkness, then spoke again:

"You're letting yourself become brooding and slipshod, Kenneth. Why not leave the plays alone for a bit and try to earn a bit of quick money? Journalism." She waved a hand towards the landscape. "An article or two: 'Early Spring in Italy' or 'Fascism in the Villages'—hundreds of subjects. Because you *can* write, Kenneth, I'm sure you can."

"How d'you know?" he said.

"Haven't you read me your plays!"

"But you may not be a good judge," he said.

Did he want to be rude to her, insult her? Had it come to that even? But no—he was too gentle, had too sweet a nature. But phlegmatic. Phlegmatic—like all his countrymen. She would not lose patience. He was young—oh, so young! She had to be maternal with him, and helpful and cherishing. But she loved him too. She went on, glad at least of having roused him to a few words:

"And, anyhow, I can't go back to Rome. Rinato wouldn't take me back." He must be made to realise his responsibility—even at twenty-one. "You know I gave up everything for you. Not that I regret it. Not in the slightest. It's been grand with you here: I like a simple life, especially in such beautiful surroundings as these." Her gaze left him for a moment and pecked desultorily at the lilac mountains, tall and vehement above the slender valleys, and at the sea far below, like a violet

mist through the antique olives skirting the hillside *albergo*. They had climbed from the village that morning as though the clear gold heights would give them a peace and perhaps a meaning. But during the climb he had not spoken one word, not one, leaping up before her with his youthful agility and whisking among the bushes like a fox. " I'm quite happy here," she said, her voice raised a little, but blurred, ah! so slightly, with tears. " Quite happy."

" I'm glad you're happy," he said austerely.

" Are you thinking out a play or something? " she asked bitterly. " I'm sorry I climbed up here with you; perhaps you wanted to be alone."

" Why don't you have a vermouth? " he said.

Her exasperation made her reply without thought.

" I'm going to do without drink. We can't afford it."

The distaste came back to his face, severe and deepened. She regretted what she had said. A mere vermouth—two lire: he could not bear the accumulation of trivial economies. At the same time, her need to take their lives in hand and make the best of what there was, prevented her from contradicting what she had said and taking a drink. But she was not going to be led up a dead end: she went on, with a peculiar briskness:

" The great thing is, not to allow trivialities to annoy or bore one. Heavens! I've never been one for stuffy comfort or gross eating. Give me clean air, beautiful country around, and a bright companion, and I'm A1."

He moved his head slightly, as if searching vaguely for something. Then he took out his cigarette-case, found it empty, and sat back with folded arms, gazing, with an expression that gave no comment, below to the violet sea. As if terrified of the appalling stillness of the world, she

could not look up, at the savage flight of the mountains into the broken sky, or down, over the writhing plunge of the hillside into the immense sea. His good looks were a perpetual joy to her.

" I know what I'll do," she said then. " I'll write to a man I know on the Paris *Mail*—he used to be in Rome: a nice, good-natured man. That sketch you did of the spinsters' conversation in the *pension*, I'll send it him. And rake up some others."

" The spinsters will like reading about themselves in the *Mail*," he said.

Even to herself her voice sounded swollen and false:

" But you must *try*, keep on trying. The trash I read in papers—surely for a day a week you can lower yourself and turn out what's wanted." With careful patience she pleaded, " Kenneth darling, all of us have to submit to some disagreeable thing or other in this world: all one has to learn is to do it with good-humour. Then it doesn't sour one."

She waited. But still he gave her nothing. And yet he seemed enamoured of nothing else. Just held his face towards the depths below like a blind man. The oppression of the mountain silence began to grip her tenaciously. She wanted to go on talking, talking: she felt a terror of the silence. And there was something else, something she could not face, a thought she would not admit. But every moment of this terrible silence it was prowling nearer, waiting to dart into her mind.

" Kenneth," she said desperately at last, " Kenneth, haven't you been listening to——"

He was lifting his head; and she waited in an agony of suspense. But he looked round, away from her slowly, the same blind inscrutability over his eyes. He

was looking idly towards a shed beside the *albergo*, an ancient stone shed, crumbling and grey. Then she saw the nerves in his throat tremble.

" Why," he said in a startled voice, " isn't that blossom beautiful ! "

The sunlight had moved and caught a branch of a flowering almond-tree, a single branch thrust from behind the shed, which concealed the rest of the tree. And it was full of bloom and still covered with the morning dew, the pink blossom sparkling and quivering out of the dark branch, brilliant in the strong gold light.

" Exquisite," he said. His voice was alive.

She could see his face open and flush with pleasure, turned to the flowered branch. For some seconds she sat like stone. Then she sprang madly to her feet.

" You . . . " she cried loudly, " you clod ! "

He turned his head. Slowly. And the movement maddened her.

" Are you human ! " she cried. Her chest swelled. " You can't be. Heartless beast ! Moron, clod ! "

He stared at her. His face became rigid as she spat the abuse. But into his eyes came a faint confusion of wonder and suffering. She did not notice it. He did not speak. With a final epithet she turned, tears dashing over her rouge, and hurried across the little plateau to the steps that twisted down to the hillside path. Then he rose and took a few quick strides towards her. She darted blindly, dangerously, down the steps. He drew up when he reached the first. And he stood watching her wild progress over the stony path, until she had disappeared among the bushes.

THE FUR COAT

By Charles Duff

Mrs. Marchbank (wife of old Joe Marchbank, master plumber) said that it was far more important for a girl to be nice-natured than nice-looking, and that Mary Adams was so forward that this was going to be the girl's undoing—" Because any man worth having would think twice before marrying a brazen hussy, even if she did happen to have a pretty face! "

Then there was Mrs. Williamson, the newsagent's wife, who, after nearly four decades of saturation in tuppenny periodicals, was the best-read woman in the whole suburb. A special significance attached to her commentary upon life. On the Adams' girl her pronouncement was: " H'm! Attractive? Well, y-e-s. But *very empty-headed*! What *can* you expect in a family so backward that they hardly ever buy even the *News of the World*, or indeed anything but silly fashion papers! "

Other women who heard these comments agreed it was a great pity that the girl Mary Adams should be a puss-bitch, forward, empty-headed, stuck-up and so forth. But Mary, who felt rather than heard what they were saying, laughed at them—because she knew that she was young and attractive and that they were all long past youth and nearly all without the slightest attractions for anybody. She was fully conscious of her power, her biological superiority and their weakness. She could afford to flaunt her beauty before them and, if driven to it, to snap her fingers at them all. " Pooh! As if *they* count! " she would say to herself, throwing back her head.

Her big, hazel eyes with curved, silken lashes turned

often with cunning coyness in the direction of eligible young men, who rarely felt safe before such devastating effulgence. Mary was not only physically attractive by nature, but took care to be as well dressed as her mother's limited means permitted: Mrs. Adams was clever with scissors and needle, and relied upon her powers of observation to keep her daughter up-to-date in matters of fashion. Mary's grace, her beauty, a certain tomboyish charm, and an indisputable ability to make the best of dress, all combined to provide her with a passport into any society she might desire. They compensated for humble birth, lack of the snobbery called polite education, and a chronic shortage of money in the family.

* * * * * *

Opposite to the Adams' household in Acacia Road there lived a young man who was more deeply moved by Mary's attractions than any of the other young men in that suburb. But he was very shy. On several occasions he had met the madonna of his dreams in the local dance hall, though she was always so beset by admirers that he had never been able to progress beyond the exchange of a few hesitating, commonplace remarks, before some vulgar fellow butted in and whirled her away. George Titmarsh was the name of Mary's shy worshipper, and he was a clerk in the local branch of the great Joint Stock Bank—a standing example of how a youth can forge his way ahead in the world by means of Self-Help, for his father, like Jesus Christ, was only a carpenter: and not a very good one at that. George had climbed to his present responsible position by hard study in the evenings. He, too, had started life in the carpentry trade, but that had been left behind. Now he was a member of the Great Middle Class, the vertebral column of England. "It

just shows you what *education* can do," the newsagent's wife would slyly remark to her cronies in Acacia Road. To which they would solemnly nod that indeed it did.

Old Titmarsh was not unlike the preposterous Joxer Daly of Seán O'Casey's play. Most of his time was spent in a bar near by, and he worked only when work could not be avoided (which occasionally happened). The main task of providing for the three younger members of the family fell upon Mrs. Titmarsh. George's salary was small and, as he had a smart appearance to keep up, his contribution to the family exchequer was also small. Mrs. Titmarsh had to work hard to earn the money necessary to keep the house going. She undertook charing, laundering, cooking, needlework—anything that came her way. After paying expenses every week she usually succeeded in saving a sum which seldom exceeded five shillings, and this little surplus was carefully deposited in the Post Office Saving's Bank for a PURPOSE which dominated all her other interests. Her great ambition was to be able to hand to each of her children as they reached the age of twenty-one years the sum of Twenty-Five Pounds Sterling.

At the time with which this story deals, George had already passed twenty; and Mrs. Titmarsh had already put aside more than twenty pounds towards his nest-egg. For him the money was imperatively necessary. There is nothing which will increase a person's importance in the eyes of a Bank more than the possession of money; and, if a bank clerk can become a CUSTOMER of the institution which employs him, he gives thereby a practical demonstration of trustworthiness which is the equivalent of an immense amount of theoretical knowledge of banking. This leads inevitably to prestige and

preferment. George *must* have his twenty-five pounds to place On Deposit, for this is the account a Bank cherishes above all other accounts: being the raw material for the usurious transactions whereby Banks flourish and pay 25 per cent. dividends.

Most people in that little world realised what the saving of an extra shilling cost Mrs. Titmarsh in effort. The marks of her toil were visible, but, as there were millions of other women like her, nobody ever thought it worth while to comment upon them. The fast-ageing face with its wrinkles, furrows and dirty pallor; the rough, knotted hands; the tired, shuffling walk; the red eyes, partly bloodshot; and the shabby clothing—these were the payments which nature exacted to counterbalance the few shillings saved every week. Mrs. Titmarsh's path in life was quite clear. She never considered the cost of the journey along it—it would have made little difference had she done so. She must *work* and WORK and GO ON WORKING, even with the sacrifice of all that woman values most. Her son was still her Baby Boy and he had to *be set up in life*: to achieve this she had condemned herself to hard labour. A manifestation of the biological law, as applied to human beings.

* * * * * *

George Titmarsh's longings to cultivate a closer acquaintance with Mary Adams were frustrated by his own shyness, until one day Fate provided a magnificent opening which even he could not avoid. To begin with, it amounted to nothing more than giving Mary his seat in a crowded omnibus one evening when it was raining. The conductor rudely refused to let him stand and, had it not been for the excessive rudeness of that 'bus conductor, nothing extraordinary would have happened. The offi-

cial insisted brutally that George should either go outside (" a blinking drop o' rain don't do no harm ") or get off. Mary was stirred by the injustice. She stood up and said to the scarlet George that she also would get off and wait with him for the next 'bus.

She noticed, not for the first time, that he was a very presentable young fellow, if shy; and her mind hovered lightly around his good taste in neckties. There came to her images of him in Creamy Flannels, in Black Coat and Waistcoat and Striped Trousers with Bowler Hat and Umbrella; and, on Sundays, in the Plus Fours of good imitation Harris tweed which gave him such an upstanding, sportsmanlike, even military air. Besides, there loomed in the background something else: *The Joint Stock Bank*, with all it stood for in the way of Security, Solidity and Respectability—the Holy Trinity of woman looking for a mate.

In a moment of time (far less than that required to tell it here) her mind slipped into a reverie, a flashing day-dream. First, there was the Bank. Steady job, perhaps not too well paid to begin with, but . . . promotion to cashier, and then to manager of a little branch in suburb or country. *Manager!* How everybody would respect him! And then . . . Manager of a London branch . . . and then . . . then Head Office, just think! General Manager, Director, Chairman of the Board of Directors—in a day-dream such advancement runs easily. Who could tell where the career might end? In a flash Threadneedle Street and the BANK OF ENGLAND appeared vividly before her startled and now joyful fancy. George Titmarsh a Governor of the Bank of England! Why not? And if not, why not a Knighthood (" Arise Sir George ")? That would mean *Lady* Titmarsh. . . .

Wealth, society, dresses, orgies of shopping. . . . "Yes, m'lady. Certainly, m'lady. Only a hundred guineas this beautiful Paris model, m'lady. (*Sign* please, Miss Twiddle, for Lady Titmarsh's account.)"

Mary realised in a hazy sort of way that these thoughts had occurred to her before in regard to George; but never had they appeared with such speed and intensity. They scampered before her vision during the half minute or so taken by the 'bus to slow up as she and George got out.

To her romantic temperament a young man charged with such thrilling possibilities was worth nursing. She knew that by reputation George Titmarsh was a steady, sober, hard-working fellow. His shyness must be removed, as one would remove the wrapping of a parcel containing something valuable—not torn off lest something inside be damaged, but skilfully, delicately removed. To do so would be her duty. So, instead of catching the next 'bus home, they caught the last one at 11.45 p.m. and, in the porchway of the Adams' villa, before bidding each other Good-night, they made an appointment to go to the cinema next evening. George's shyness was not quite so formidable an obstacle as she suspected it might be. What finally broke it down (she asserted later) was the afternoon they spent together at a Public Bath where mixed bathing is permitted. In the cinema afterwards George timidly touched her. She seized his hand, squeezed it, lifted it and put it right round her neck. Later, she placed it over her round firm breast, snuggling as close to him as the horrid, separated seats permitted.

From that hand-touch and breast-feel to the complete capture of George was as simple as gathering honey and carrying it to the hive is to the average bee.

* * * * * *

The courtship of George Titmarsh and Mary Adams was as idyllic a romance as had ever been discussed in Acacia Road. It lasted the best part of a year, because George's mother expressed a wish that the marriage should take place on her son's twenty-first birthday, the reason being that she could use the twenty-five pounds for the double purpose of birthday and wedding gift. During this last year of struggle to make up her son's nest-egg there had been one setback so serious that it all but wrecked her project. Titmarsh senior developed a severe attack of rheumatism one night coming home after a Lodge meeting of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes. The pain took him so badly that he fell twice, once through a privet hedge in a road which he thought was Acacia Road but was not, and once into the oval-shaped pond which faces the *Four Brewers* Inn. A chill followed, and the chill turned to pneumonia. Old Titmarsh almost died: and it might not have been a bad thing for all concerned had he quietly faded out. Mrs. Titmarsh loyally nursed her husband. This meant not only loss of income through loss of time, but it also meant that she had to draw upon the money saved for George. As she filled in withdrawal forms she would say to herself, "How *ever* shall I make it up?" and then she would sigh, "Well, it's God's will!"

George was unable to help. His small savings went to pay the deposit on a little house for himself and Mary. He had even arranged for his bank to advance him a hundred pounds towards the establishment of his prospective home, but of this his mother was not aware. She had no wealthy friend to whom she could turn for help.

Old Titmarsh recovered and became as strong as he had ever been. But for months and even years after-

wards he maintained the attitude of a semi-invalid, which provided an admirable excuse for avoiding any work he wished to avoid. What he earned kept him in pocket-money, but was insufficient to pay for his meals. He was one more burden added to that of his unfortunate wife, who was already shouldering as much as she could bear.

Time sped. The day appointed for the marriage of George Titmarsh and Mary Adams approached. Mrs. Titmarsh found new jobs and worked overtime to make up the money she had withdrawn from the Post Office Savings Bank during her husband's illness. Her hands became chapped and sore from overwork, her knees calloused and stiff from kneeling to scrub floors. Her eyes grew redder and more bloodshot than ever, from sewing by gaslight. She returned home late every evening after a series of tasks which began at six o'clock in the morning; and then she had to face the work of her own household. This kept her occupied until midnight most nights. On others she had to finish some piece of needlework promised for the morrow, which meant perhaps another hour's toil. The woman who, a few months before, had been comparatively vigorous, if already strained and worn in appearance, began to wither and age rapidly and fail in health. Never once did she think of abandoning her PROJECT to present George with twenty-five pounds on the day of his marriage. That wedding-birthday gift would have to be provided at all costs. It had now become to her a sort of spiritual goal, and every night, before throwing her exhausted body on the bed, she knelt down and prayed God to help her. By this means and by an incessant process of auto-suggestion she was able to keep on working when she

would otherwise have collapsed. Little by little she decreased the deficit; and never worried about the cost in terms of life.

Yet, in spite of all her efforts, there were still seven pounds short a month before the date of the wedding. Mrs. Titmarsh realised that she would never be able to save so much money in so short a period: two pounds, or at most three—but seven?—impossible!

In despair and in defiance of the consequences, she then did what was against all her principles. She went to a money-lender and applied for a loan. Mr. MacTaggart decided to risk a fiver. He was most sympathetic, and assured her that repayment need not be unduly hurried. He was quite willing that it should be made by very reasonable instalments spread over six months or a year. Yes, or even two years, he added casually—as if by an afterthought.

Mrs. Titmarsh signed a document which had been drawn up by an eminent lawyer in accordance with the Moneylenders' Act. It was couched in phraseology which would have required preliminary education of a high type as well as several years' legal training to understand. To her it was so much Hottentot.

But what matter? She received the five pounds, and walked out profoundly relieved.

* * * * * *

A Wedding in Acacia Road is an event which ranks higher in importance than a Death, and this in turn ranks higher than a Birth. To all but the families concerned (and sometimes to them also) it causes a jealousy hidden behind much vociferous well-wishing. This jealousy could be noticed in the remarks which the neighbours exchanged amongst themselves. The women were the

most outspoken about the marriage of George and Mary. One said, " He's only a bank clerk after all, and don't earn half as much as a good plumber." Another wondered whether Mary would be able to *hold* him—and what when the *kids* began to arrive? A third commented with satisfaction that a few months' housekeeping would knock some of the good looks and conceit out of that hussy. One or two of Mary's girl friends went about giggling and, when they whispered something into her ear, she would push them away with a " *Go on now!* " and a wicked flash of her great big eyes.

Young men would come up to George, slap him on the back, congratulate him, and say what a lucky man he was. Others referred to the celebrated remarkably humorous remark of Mr. Punch on the subject.

During the week or two before the great event, Mary's mother out-fussed herself preparing her daughter's *trousseau*. This included a pair of lady's silk pyjamas, upon which Mary insisted, saying they were *la mode*.

Mrs. Adams contemplated the pyjamas with some uneasiness and at last found courage to say, " Now I think that a nice nightie would be *far* better. Don't you, duckie? That's what I had on my honeymoon."

Mary giggled into her fist and merely replied, " Go on with you, ma! " And the conversation was quickly changed to a less controversial subject.

The wedding went off as such things go off in Acacia Road. The bride blushed and the bridegroom felt a preposterous ass. Mothers wept the usual pleasure-pain tears. Afterwards the fathers steadily saturated themselves with alcohol of miscellaneous and inferior brands. Someone tended the cheap, screaming gramophone with worn-out jazz records. Several of George's

friends from the Bank (all very conscious of their Social Superiority) condescended to flirt mildly with Mary's girl friends. After many glasses of a sweet, permanganate-coloured liquid of heavy specific gravity and high intoxicating powers, these flirtations gathered an impetus which might have been embarrassing had it not happened that nearly everybody in the parlour of Mrs. Titmarsh's house was by this time also suffering from the exhilarating effects of " Invalid Port." This fine product of nature and science is the favourite beverage at wedding sprees in Acacia Road.

In the midst of the jollification Mrs. Titmarsh asked her son and Mary to come for a moment into the adjoining room, as she had something to say to them privately. There was an expression of joy and satisfaction in the woman's face.

When they were in the back room, and after Mrs. Titmarsh had carefully closed the door, she went to a drawer, unlocked it, and took from it an envelope. A great moment of her life had arrived. She was blushing slightly and a little nervous.

" George, dear, and Mary," she said, " I have a little something for you which will be useful. It's both a wedding present and a birthday gift. If I were you, George, I'd put it in your Bank." She handed him the envelope, and looked quickly out of the window.

George took the envelope and opened it.

" Why, mums, it's *money!* " he exclaimed. He had expected some sort of present. But money? He *was* surprised.

" Yes, son, it's not as much as I'd like to give you. But it's all I could manage. Twenty-five pounds it is, and you should put it towards a nest-egg."

George realised, perhaps not fully, but at all events with some sense of proportion, what the saving of twenty-five pounds must have meant to his mother. He felt, somehow, that it would not be right to accept it. He did not know what to say. But Mary came to his rescue. She went over to Mrs. Titmarsh, put her arms around her neck, and kissed her. "Mums," she said, "you are a real darling!"

George also kissed his mother and thanked her. Mary's action and words had indicated that the money was already accepted. All the same, he felt a little stupid, humiliated and caddish.

In due course the bride and bridegroom drove off in a taxi, to the back of which one of the wedding guests had attached the usual old shoe. In George's pocket-book there was a sum of nearly forty pounds, of which twenty-five represented his mother's gift.

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Mon Repos is a desirable suburban residence (three bed, two reception, h. & c.) with a small garden behind and a little grass plot in front, all screened off and half-hidden from the public by a hedge now nearly six feet high. It is situated in Montmorency Avenue, which, as you know, is about a mile farther out from Acacia Road, and two turnings down Deer Park Avenue. This very pleasantly appointed modern villa, beautifully furnished on the hire-purchase system, and now owned (subject to a trifling weekly payment for a period of twenty years) by George Titmarsh,[1] was occupied only by George's mother, who awaited the return of the young couple from their honeymoon. She had spent all her spare time there during a fortnight, putting the finishing touches to curtains,

[1] Total cost of house to builder £550 : ultimate cost to George £1750.

bedrooms and kitchen. The hour was six o'clock in the evening, and George and Mary were due to arrive at least half an hour earlier. Twice Mrs. Titmarsh re-boiled the kettle for high tea, and several times she complained impatiently to herself that those delicious haddocks simmering in the pan would be spoilt. "What can be delaying them, I wonder?" she murmured.

At last they arrived. George and Mary kissed Mrs. Titmarsh affectionately.

"We've got a secret for you, mums," said Mary, looking coyly from her to George.

"A secret?" Mrs. Titmarsh looked narrowly and half-askance at her daughter-in-law. "What, *already*?"

Mary giggled. "No, no, no! Not that. But haven't you noticed?" She pulled her coat tightly round her young, *svelte* figure, and revolved herself slowly in the full light of the hall.

"Why," exclaimed Mrs. Titmarsh, "why, Mary, it's a *fur coat*!"

"Isn't it just lovely, mums?" asked Mary.

"It's beautiful, Mary. But how could you afford it?" asked Mrs. Titmarsh. "Aren't they very expensive?"

"This one cost twenty-five pounds," said Mary.

"Twenty-five pounds!" Mrs. Titmarsh slowly repeated.

"Yes, mums, twenty-five pounds. I persuaded George to invest that twenty-five pounds you gave us for the wedding present in it. Don't you just love it?"

Again Mary drew the coat tightly about her hips and turned to display it. George looked at those hips and at that face, a proud love in his eye. Mrs. Titmarsh looked at her son and saw that he was admiring his wife and the coat.

" Yes, Mary, I do indeed love it," was all Mrs. Titmarsh could say. She went out to the kitchen and served the high tea. George and Mary noticed that she seemed tired, distracted, and without appetite as they sat over it.

" What you want, mums," said Mary gushingly, " is a good tonic. Why don't you buy a new hat or something? Since George bought me that coat I feel a different person."

Mrs. Titmarsh, a good mother, looked out of the window. A smile emphasised the lines on her pale, disillusioned face. " By the way," she said suddenly, " I've forgotten to get soap. Remind me before I go."

THE FLUKE CANNON

By R. L. Mégroz

I can hardly expect the following account of strange events which occurred last Christmas Eve to be credited by many people, but since it is as true as I can make it, the sympathetic reader will realise why a certain discretion is necessary. I could not, for instance, mention the name of the woman concerned, even if I knew it, and it would not do for me to repeat the name of the club where these things happened. It is a very good club in Manchester, to which Fred Allan took me to dine on that memorable evening after I had addressed his literary society in Balloon Street.

As we sat down at a table in the somewhat deserted dining-room, Allan remarked that we could play billiards afterwards, as there would not be many members in that night. Our billiards, I may say, is of the "100 up" variety. We usually take half an hour at least to do it, but though our skill might be described as moderate, our enjoyment of the game is regarded by some people as almost indecent. We do not despise such additions to the score as lucky flukes may bring, and I have never heard Allan apologise for a fluke, not until that evening. But I am anticipating, and it is important that I should get all the facts in their proper order.

A small, bookwormish-looking man came in just after we had reached the momentous decision to play billiards after dinner.

"Here's Worthington, our Hon. Sec.; an interesting chap," said Allan. "Shall I ask him to sit here?"

"Do," I said.

"Hullo, Bass!" called out Allan, waving a hand; "take a pew with us, won't you?"

"I did not expect to see you here to-night, Fred," said the miscalled Worthington, sitting down opposite us and smiling at me.

"This is Mégroz," Allan informed him, "otherwise known as Meg or Megrims. He writes shockers, I don't think!"

After these pleasantries, and the discovery that Worthington really knew I did not write shockers, an hour passed agreeably enough before the club Secretary said he must leave us. We settled ourselves on a capacious settee with a glass of port. A few minutes later I noticed the clock on the mantelpiece. It had just turned nine. I reminded Allan that we were going to play billiards. He rose at once.

"Come on. Nobody is likely to be up there now. We'll have the room to ourselves."

Out on the landing Allan gazed up at a window on the next floor. It overlooked the wall of the central staircase.

"All O.K. That's the billiards-room. Dark."

He led the way. As we began to climb the stairs, I thought I heard a click of billiard-balls.

"Somebody is playing," I said.

Allan had already paused. He was looking up at the interior window again.

"Can't be. No light," he said.

After turning the first flight of stairs we faced the window and could also see the glass-partitioned door of the billiards-room. I had just noted that no light shone through when I heard the unmistakable click of billiard balls. Allan checked himself and looked back at me. He had heard it, too.

We hastened up the remaining stairs, Allan muttering that he wondered who the something or other was playing the something or other fool. When we reached the top landing, there was a quite clear click, followed by a second click about two seconds later—the sound of a long-distance cannon.

Allan strode to the door of the billiards-room and peered through the glass panel. Looking over his shoulder a moment later, I saw that the room was in darkness except for a faint reddish glow on one side. Just then we heard the double click again. Allan straightened himself so suddenly that his shoulder gave me a jab under the jaw. Both of us were a little flustered, but a second later Allan switched on the lights and stepped into the room with me at his heels. He took only two paces and stopped dead, so that I had to edge round his ample figure before the green table under the glare of the large shaded lamps presented itself to my gaze. Two white balls at the far end of the table, near the balk line, and a red near the middle of the top cushion nearest to us offered a pleasant and cheering sight to a keen amateur, but my feelings were more complicated than usual. After that instantaneous vision of the table, my gaze had fixed upon one of the white balls. It had been moving when I first saw it. It had just stopped rolling while I watched it. This impression seemed to me for a brief moment unquestionable. My conviction began to fade as soon as I looked at Allan. He was now gazing at the table and beginning to smile.

"Anyone would think we'd had a lot of drinks downstairs," he said. "Do you know that as I came in here I fancied there was a man in shirt-sleeves at that corner of the table. Near that cue. It was the firelight. Some

of our chaps are damned haphazard," he exclaimed, striding round to the cue, which had been left leaning against the table near the top end. " It's bad enough leaving the balls on the table. They might at least put their own cue back in the rack."

He took hold of the cue and felt the weight.

" It's a good one. I'll play with it, I think," he remarked as he put it against the table again. " You get one over there. I'll just see who's been knocking the balls about."

Deciding I had better say no more about my fanciful impression of seeing a ball in motion, I made for the cue-rack, while Allan crossed to the other end of the room and opened a small door. I heard him switch the light on, then switch it off, and return. He grunted as he re-entered the billiards-room, and he seemed less at ease, too.

" We did hear some balls knocking, didn't we ? "

" Undoubtedly."

" Well, if it was in here, he must have gone up the chimney, because there's no other exit but the door we came in by. That other door leads to the wash-place. It's only for this room. There's no outlet on the other side. What do you make of that ? "

" Ask me another," I said. " But what about poking up the fire ? "

" Yes, it's frightfully cold, isn't it ? " and Allan stooped his heavy form over the small scuttle and shovelled some coals on the fairly large fire. Then he rammed the poker under it with more vigour than sense.

We began to play. Allan reached the respectable break of 18 at his second visit to the table, and then made what I described as a disgusting fluke. It raised his score

to 20. I missed his usual facetious pretence of having tried for the shot, and he bungled the next one.

"Carry on," he said, as I bent over my cue, and he went to the service telephone.

"Is the marker in?" I heard him ask. "When did the marker go off duty?"

Thirty minutes later (honesty compels me to admit that it was at least thirty minutes later), my score was 41 and Allan's 63. He remarked upon it. Naturally I reminded him that he had fluked at least ten times, "But you've also done several pretty shots, for you," I added, not less truthfully than tactfully.

"Thank you, so much, my dear Megrims," retorted Allan. "I'm afraid you haven't studied my book on the art of billiards."

"Especially the art of making cannons," I threw out.

He was just going to pot the red. Instead, to my surprise, I noticed a kind of shiver pass over him. He raised his cue, stepped back from the table, very serious all of a sudden.

"Have you noticed anything unusual about my flukes?" he asked.

"No, joking apart," he went on, anticipating an obvious retort.

"They've been nearly all cannons," I said, "and nearly all the same kind of cannon, when you were trying something else. You got out of the same awkward position, with my ball in balk, several times by a cannon off the red at the other end, when you meant to do the easy thing and pot the red or go in off it."

"That's what has just occurred to me," he replied. "I think I'll use my own cue. It always puts one off, using somebody else's."

"Let me have a go with it, I don't much care about this one," I said, and so we changed cues.

My suspicion that the cue I had been using was faulty soon received some confirmation. A little later our scores were, Allan 79, myself 76. I had scored another 38 while he was making 13. This ought to have given me confidence, but I was worried. As I have admitted, neither of us is usually troubled overmuch by flukes, but I could remember at least three astonishing accidents by which I had scored difficult shots. Allan seemed easier, and in spite of my luck we found ourselves eventually both with a score of 96.

It was my turn to play. The red was near enough to the top pocket to make a losing hazard easy if I did not try to leave the red in a favourable position for scoring again. Although the other white ball was behind the balk line, so that I could not play it next stroke, I decided to risk leaving myself a difficult position and play to go in the pocket off the red. A fairly certain three is not to be sneezed at. Accordingly, I took a careful aim, but I cannot remember seeing anything at all as my cue struck the ball. I seemed suddenly to be enveloped in icy air, and a shutter, like frosted glass, seemed to drop in front of my eyes. If it did not sound so absurd, I would still declare what then seemed certain, that through the film, or perhaps a moment before the film obscured my vision, I saw a hand resting on my hand as it formed a bridge for the cue, a hand quite normal in appearance, and yet so transparent that I could see my own hand under it.

The shot was bungled, but this would not have upset me much. Standing upright once more, and rather dizzy, I watched my ball coming down the table. It had neatly cut the red into the top pocket. Now it travelled

diagonally the length of the table, rebounded from the bottom cushion and hit Allan's ball, scoring a cannon I had intended not to try for and completing a good five shot which had won the game. Allan's normal reaction to such an ending would have been a flood of facetious abuse. Instead we exchanged a glance and, " I suggest a drink," he said.

" A wonderful notion, but downstairs. It's too cold here," I replied.

" Of course," returned Allan in a strained voice.

Footsteps sounded outside the door as I was about to ask Allan where to put my cue—there was not a spare place in the rack. The door opened.

" You chaps still at it ? " said a soft voice. " How many games have you played ? "

It was the Secretary.

" We've been playing 100 up, that's all," said Allan. He looked at the clock. " Quarter past ten. We've been over an hour. I've had enough, haven't you ? "

I nodded.

" It's like a furnace in here," remarked the Secretary. " You're too hot."

I was about to contradict this statement when I realised that it was perfectly true.

" That's curious, too," said Allan, speaking my thought. " We've been frozen."

The Secretary had walked over to the fireplace.

" It's not the fault of your fire," he observed, with a nod at the conflagration developed by Allan's stoking. " Hullo ! " he added, " you haven't been playing with Bendrum's cue, have you ? "

He was pointing at a place above the mantelpiece where two wooden brackets were fixed on the wall.

"No," Allan replied. "I'm using mine, and he's using one from the rack."

Worthington glanced at the cue in my hand.

"That's it," he said quietly.

There was a pregnant silence. Without understanding it, I felt an embarrassment in the air.

At last Allan spoke.

"Look here, Worthington, there's something queer about all this."

The Secretary listened to his version of our game, of finding the cue beside the table, and of our fancy that we had heard balls clicking in the dark. He lifted his hand slowly, and interrupted.

"Fred, order us all a drink, will you? Let's have it up here. It's quiet and we can talk."

After telephoning, Allan joined us on the settee and turned to the Secretary.

"There's another thing I was going to say. They told me when I rang down before that the marker went off duty at eight o'clock, and nobody had been up here after that until we came."

The Secretary nodded.

"I believe that's correct. Now listen. You remember Bendrum?"

Without waiting for Allan's reply, he looked at me: "Bendrum was a member of this club."

"I see," I answered, somewhat inaccurately.

"You, Fred, know that he died nearly a year ago?"

Allan nodded.

"Did you see his match with Norton in this room before he died?"

A waiter entered with a tray. We took our drinks.

" Here's how," said Allan.

The Secretary sipped at his glass, and before I could speak, " Here's peace to Bendrum," he said unexpectedly as the waiter went out.

" No, I didn't see the match Bendrum played with Norton," said Allan, reverting to Worthington's last question. " I heard about it, though. They played 500 up, didn't they ? Rather big stakes."

" A very big stake," said the Secretary gravely, " though only a few of us know what."

" Wasn't it money ? " Allan asked.

" No, it was a woman. As you are aware, Norton is now a professional player, so you will realise how good he was. Bendrum was his equal, and even prettier to watch. I need not mention who the girl was. She's married now. She was friendly to both of them. Bendrum and Norton had been cronies for a long time. They were in the War together. When Norton confessed one day that he was keen on the girl, Bendrum betrayed the fact that he was, too, but he certainly failed to convey to Norton how much he cared. I gathered that from Norton afterwards. He had that temperament which can concentrate rather dangerously upon one person and then suffers badly from repression.

" Anyhow, the friends agreed to play a match, the loser to give his opponent a clear field until he had either won the girl or lost hope of doing so. If Bendrum had awakened any deep feelings in her, he was not the sort of chap to have guessed it, and though she may easily have been aware of his condition, I suppose she could have said nothing explicit enough for Bendrum, at least not until he had given her sufficient excuse.

" Possibly she merely enjoyed a spurious sense of

power while both men attended on her, without caring deeply for either."

The Secretary squashed the stub of his cigarette in an ash-tray and gently rested a hand on each knee. He looked round at each of us in turn. "But I don't want to express any opinions on that, you understand."

"Bendrum died on New Year's Eve, didn't he?" Allan asked.

"Yes. He lost the billiards match, as you perhaps know. I think he believed he had lost the girl, too. A week later, on New Year night, he fell out of his bedroom window. A third-floor window in Westland Road. He and Norton had both been asked to a New Year party of some jolly theatrical folk, the hostess being the girl in the case. Bendrum did not go, possibly because of his compact with Norton. From my own knowledge I can say that he had been in a pretty bad way during the week following the billiards match, and as he had started drinking heavily it was only a matter of time, and not a long time either, before his touch failed him in billiards. Nothing like billiards for testing nervous control.

"Well, nobody knew where he was on the night of the party until he returned to his flat about eleven. They found his body on the pavement next morning. I said just now that he fell out of the window. You have to say that to agree with the coroner's verdict of 'Accidental death,' but I know the house, and I know that if he had not leaped out he must have fallen into the basement area. Norton, unaware of the 'accident,' hastened round the morning after the party to tell his friend to go in and win, because he himself had been rejected; uncompromisingly rejected he was, so that I have wondered if she may not have cared for Bendrum more than either of

them knew. Or for somebody else. Who knows? She was married some months ago. But that's nothing to go by."

"Did you yourself see their game of billiards?" I asked Worthington.

"Oh, yes. This room, indeed, was rather crowded, because members had got wind of the match, though nobody knew what was behind it. But a match between first-class amateurs in one's own club, you know . . ."

"I should have come, too, if I had heard of it in time," said Allan; "but that reminds me, wasn't it played on Christmas Day? If so I couldn't have got there."

"It was played a year ago to-night, on Christmas Eve," the Secretary replied. "And it will be a long time before I forget the suspense at the end. When you told me about your fluke cannon to-night, and then I noticed that Bendrum's cue, which we keep now on the wall as a memento, had been removed, the association of ideas brought it rather vividly to my mind. Bendrum lost the match by missing his last shot, one rather difficult for us, but easy enough to him. They had both reached the score of 496. . . ."

"What?" shouted Allan.

"I said 496. It was the tightest match I have ever seen. And Bendrum had to make only one shot to run out. He had to pot the red and cannon on to the white, which was in balk near the side cushion. That would have scored five points."

"We were 96 all," barked Allan. "Look at that score board."

"And I won with a fluke five-shot when I was trying instead to get three by going in off the red," I added, with excusable excitement.

" Quite, quite," said the Secretary. " That was the shot that Bendrum missed, purely through nervousness. And the match began just after nine o'clock, you might like to know."

" And finished about a quarter-past ten ? " I hazarded.

" Exactly," said the Secretary. " When you made the belated discovery that this room was overheated. It is still. I think the lounge would be more comfortable, don't you ? "

As we rose Allan put a hand on Worthington's shoulder.

" But, I say, Worthington, do you mean to suggest that Bendrum's ghost has been practising that shot he . . ."

" I suggest nothing," said the Secretary. " I've told you the facts as I know them. The facts may seem suggestive enough to you."

" They do to me," I murmured, slipping through the doorway in front of the others.

And now I am wondering who will believe the facts as Allan and I know them. We can scarcely believe them ourselves.

FINDING

(For M)

By John Lindsey

The inn at Goliard is situated about half-way down the street, on the left-hand side as you approach the church. It stands a little back from the road, with a clear, bare space before it where farmers and passing travellers may leave their traps and motor-cars. Village boys hover about the inn in their spare time in the hope of being told to mind some horse or pony, receiving a penny for their vigilance.

Mrs. Polcombe, the Rector's wife, tried vainly to keep the children away from the inn, feeling that they might be contaminated by association with those who drink there. She visited the innkeeper, suggesting that he place convenient hooks in the walls where horses might be tethered. Mr. Spragge—for that is the innkeeper's name—had only smiled at the lady, wondering whence would come the money with which the hooks should be purchased. But Mrs. Polcombe did not offer to buy them. She went away, realising that innkeepers were poor men, harassed by brewers' companies and idiotic laws governing the hours when their houses may be opened.

Mrs. Polcombe also visited the parents of the boys, pointing out the incredible evils arising from drink, begging that the youngsters should be kept away, given useful employment about the houses or on the allotments. The parents shook their heads. They knew what "useful employment" meant to boys—broken china and

muddied boots tramping all over the house and the whole garden dragged to pieces.

No, no. It would not do.

So the children still played and loitered before the inn.

There was nothing attractive about the inn at Goliard. It had none of the charm which a mellowed age gives a building: even such a building as an inn, making it appear pleasant to the eyes of those richer people who either do not drink or can afford to be respectably, stupidly drunk in their own houses.

It was built, replacing an older building, in that period of the Victorian reign when the object of every decent architect or builder seemed to be to make his buildings as drab and unattractive as possible; and these architects and builders were certainly inspired in their cult of the useful and, to them, essentially ugly.

The building had been plain red brick at first; glaringly red, glaringly brick. In time the redness would have faded and the house might have possessed some charm, some attraction of its own. But as soon as there was a sign of fading in the brick, as soon as it began to be seasoned, a pernicious publicity company, paid by the brewer for its services in disfiguring the countryside, discovered that unless the house stood out as something superlatively hideous (they called it distinctive) trade might fall off.

So the inn was washed a vile and vivid yellow. It remained yellow, just as yellow as it had ever been: for it was re-washed every three years. Apparently a sign hanging from a pole is no longer sufficient notice of an inn's existence.

Down in Hasham there were a few signs left; but

gradually they were giving place to rude colouring; artificial ageing: the "bringing out of *old* oak."

Above the door of the inn in Goliard were inscribed the words

THE BLACK SWAN

ARTHUR SPRAGGE

Licensed to sell Beer, Spirits and Tobacco

To be consumed on the premises

The last six words were written in smaller letters than those preceding; as though in deprecation of some rude gesture of men or God. . . . No one knew which.

Here, in the "Black Swan," Goliard got drunk. Or, at any rate, those people of Goliard who were lucky enough to have the money to get drunk with. . . .

People did not *drink* in the "Swan." They got drunk. No one went to the "Swan" for a drink, something refreshing, and the fellowship that went with it.

Perhaps it was that in Goliard there was no fellowship; that the weariness and the struggle of their lives had taken all the generosity of comradeship away from them; leaving them only mean with the meanness of soul, the meanness of suffering.

For suffering does *not* ennoble the soul, drawing it out of itself, embracing the whole world: it makes it retreat into itself, a poor, cringing coward thing, that has one great fear in it—the fear that has come through the pain in the belly.

William Mole came into the parlour at the "Black Swan." It was empty. And William Mole nodded

as though in satisfaction at its emptiness, for so it was every night. Mole was the first to arrive. He was the last to go.

And it was so because the soul of him was more starved than most other souls; because the weariness and the disappointment on him were heavier than on most other folk; because the pain of the rheumatism rent him, making him snarl with the dull eternity of it. For he had been a labourer from his youth up. He was now fifty-five.

He crossed over to the fireplace, where his chair was. He sat down, holding his stick between his knees, resting his hands on it. He sat thus every night.

Old Mole waited five minutes before the barmaid came to him. The barmaid always served old Mole, since Mr. Spragge had found how much better a customer he was when this happened.

Her name was Rhoda. She had been at the " Black Swan " for six months, having come there in the first place through some trouble in the town, trouble into which no one cared sufficiently to inquire. Anyway, whose business was it, if not hers? . . . And *she* did not trouble.

She laughed always, and she flaunted herself before the eyes of the men in the bar and in the parlour; knowing her own power over them, glorying in it, because to her her sex and the things of her sex were only things to be bartered, to be flaunted, made much of: to be sold for what they were worth. . . .

She stood by old Mole and she laughed in his ear . . . a hard, mocking laughter because of the weariness she saw in him, the poor, weak ineffectuality; because he was no longer a man who could charm and capture,

hurling his woman to the ground for his will. . . . Her laughter despised him. But William Mole heard in it only an invitation. And his heart leapt. He felt quite sick with the urgency of his desire for her . . . his body quivering and tightening, his mouth dry. . . . And he thought, " Christ, this is a woman ! God, what breasts ! God, what a body ! " And he put forth a hand to touch her.

She stood still. . . . The old man's hand explored her. Fumblingly it went over her . . . her face— " God," she thought, " the smell of it and the hardness " —and her neck that was white and strong and straight as a marble column. He passed his hand down her back, so that even against her will there ran a shudder and a thrill through her. And the old man grinned.

His hand rested on her right buttock. He felt it very much as though the girl were a cow . . . some animal that he was contemplating purchasing.

He breathed sharply, in painful breaths. . . . Neither had spoken.

And between them there was a whole war waging. . . . The contempt of the girl filled the air. It was vitriolic. It bit into the atmosphere. . . . But she smiled down at the man. . . . And the man returned the smile.

His hand pressed on her right buttock. . . . There was a quivering in his hand. It gathered comfort from the warmth of the girl.

She hated him. . . . Her smile shone down, dazzling him.

" Dear," he muttered, half afraid to speak, half afraid that she would think him a fool if he kept silent. " Dear." The voice pleaded to her: the prayer of old

age to youth; that old age may be; that youth will not totally stay it. . . . And the eyes of old Mole paid their tribute to beauty.

For Rhoda was beautiful. There was the wildness of an animal about her . . . and the darkness of a gipsy. Her lips were red, painted red like the lips of a harlot, lips that can be bought and kisses that can be bought, by the night or by the hour. . . . And those kisses mean much to men like William Mole, though for many they mean only degradation and shame.

She was the only thing of beauty he could remember in his life for years and years. "Maybe," he thought, "she has come too late. Maybe, I am too old for her; that she is nothing to me. God blast that woman of mine! The brokenness of her and the silence. The way she can give a man no joy in the night. God blast the shame of her when a man would be having his pleasure; the way she'd be treating the whole thing as though maybe it were a sin!" Weren't they married? Wasn't he clean? But this girl, this Rhoda . . .

The old man's hands went moving slowly over her body . . . and they came to her stomach—a small stomach, firm, with a beauty in it. . . . He thought of young girls' bodies. His thoughts were not unholy thoughts; only those of a man starved, a man famished suddenly confronted with a rich meal.

He had expected great things from life, hadn't he? And his hands stayed on the girl's stomach. Near her navel, near the seat of birth; the place where the young body had remained clinging to the mother who had borne it, the place which held the whole meaning to the heritage of human life.

The girl looked down at the man. She wanted to

hurt him. The wild pain in her own flesh demanded that there be pain in his. All men were alike, ready to handle you, to run their filthy, sweaty hands over the clean frock or the white skin. Their hardened, calloused hands that hurt the tenderness of the white skin; hands that dealt with cattle and sheep; lifting the calves from the birth; hands that often were covered in blood and filth and excrement.

Oh, they were horrible! Hands working in darkness, greedy hands and vile, prying hands exploring the bodies of women: touching their breasts and their bellies. . . .

"God, God," her heart wept, for she too wanted comfort in the things that had happened to her, the man who had left her, he whom she had loved more than life. Left her with the unborn child, the child that struggled in her womb, causing her pain and the agony that was a mixture of ecstasy and terror. . . . And the child had died.

All the pain, all the agony and terror, the strange false ecstasy had been waste, a gamble, some lie of God and Man. . . . For God and Man were the same. "Let us make Man in our own image." A lie. "Perfect God and perfect Man." Another lie.

She looked down at the old man, who was trembling with the emotion and the excitement he felt. This man like God! She almost laughed—a pained, false, brutal laughter, as one imagines a trapped animal might laugh. For it was as an animal that she knew herself: one trapped and caught, held up in the horror of some iron cage.

He was like God . . . God who held out greedy hands, who had terrified her as a child: the God of whom she had dreamed of nights, one demanding sacrifice and

offering . . . a jealous God—a God demanding the sacrifice of the body; of all bodies.

" Virginity," she smiled, and old Mole saw her smile, thinking the smile was meant for him, thinking it established some new intimacy.

" Beauty," he thought, " dear beauty." And his old, disappointed heart leapt again—oh, so painfully it leapt! —at the revelation of the smile on beauty's face.

He sat still. Within himself he knew he was having something that life had never given him before: a perfect peace which no person had shown him. . . . He would like to remain like this with his hand on the girl's belly; his eyes seeing, remembering, holding the smile on the face of beauty. He would like to remain so. . . .

" Oh, God," he prayed in his heart, " let this be . . . let it be. Let it remain. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. For ever and ever. . . ."

The power and the glory. Suddenly there came to him the realisation of their meaning. . . . The power and the glory. And power was no longer physical might; no longer the setting up of oneself as overlord. Power was the deep, deep content in the soul. That which he now knew.

The clock in the corner ticked on. . . . The girl stood still.

How she hated him! God and Man. Had it not been God and Man who had taken from her her man, that one man she had loved . . . and the child that had died?

She would have power too; have vengeance.

This man, let him be the first. Let him suffer. And, almost aloud, she whispered, " You poor bloody—— "

Old Mole heard some whisper. He did not know the

words. Only, suddenly he felt a drawing of himself to the girl. And the girl felt the same thing.

They stood up, facing one another. They looked into the eyes, each of each. They saw, and God knew what they saw; only that it was made up of suffering and grief and disappointment and the great bitterness eating at the heart of life. . . .

The girl dropped her eyes. . . . Somehow she could not look, could not see the bared mutilation of man . . . for she knew that man should be lovely as the new morning; that man should be as the new sun; man with the flowers and the garlands in his hair, with the jewel-points in his eyes. . . . And this man. . . . Only in *him* was there mutilation, the horror of the affrighted, the poor banality of the old and dirtied seeking again for youth and the cleanliness that is youth's.

She could not look. In her heart there was the sobbing which would never stop: the broken sobbing which came from the fount of the world's tears.

Old Mole stretched out his hands. They came together—old man and young girl, they held together in the dimness of the bar. For a moment time stopped and the world was shut out. There was no more life. Hate died and desire fled, and they were only two spirits caught at some moment of their flight through Eternity—two spirits who had seen through the bitterness and the emptiness and seen the bared heart of life, the bared, broken heart with the gouts of blood on it.

There was no more life.

They stood apart again. They were white and trembling. They dared not look into the eyes of each other. They had seen too much. . . . The whole secret. . . . The whole of the barrenness. . . .

But underneath the barrenness there was the plenty . . . the land flowing with milk and honey: the forty years' wandering was over.

Old William Mole had come to Zion. . . .

* * * * * *

The girl waited at the back of the inn. Something had happened. She had not understood.

But there was no more hate. . . . She felt spent with great forces. No power left in her for love and hate. . . . She had only the knowledge and the realisation that everything was inevitable.

The night was alive with stars. The moon looked down. All the sounds of the village came to her as she stood in the yard, by the water-butt; dispassionately, as from a great distance, the sounds approached her; entering her not at all; passing by her as a chance acquaintance might pass . . . with a nod, maybe, or a smile.

She leant against the butt. It was cold to her back; the coldness of it struck through her thin dress, making her shiver. But there was a gladness in the chill, as though it contained great forces, great emotions.

She dipped her hand in the cold water and held her wet fingers to her forehead.

And on her forehead she made the Sign of the Cross.

She did not know that she made that sign. She had been reared a Catholic. But there was no God.

In the city she had found that. In the city, looking in the hard faces of men; wandering from place to place searching for work when the child stirred in her, when her body was big with the child.

Men had smiled at her misshapenness. They had watched her, avidly, pruriently, with a loathing and a

desire in their hearts—loathing and desire that looked out of their eyes. It seemed that even then she had known, and that it was the men who needed pity. The men with their comfortable houses, their wives, their chairs by the fire, their pipes and drink—it was they who needed the pity. . . . And even then she had known that they had not understood.

There were those who had never understood the mystery of birth; who, in their ignorance, mocked at the misshapen figure of the woman; at the great, pendulent breasts . . . at the difficult walk. . . .

Then she had remembered that Mary had been even as herself.

And she would creep into some church, where there was dimness and the light over the altar, where the Body and the Blood were; the physical presence of Christ.

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus.

So she had prayed in the city. But no one had heard. . . . The men had laughed and the women with the hard eyes had turned her from their doors, watching her body, noting the swelling. . . . Their eyes shrivelled up and the hearts in them contracted with deadly hate: the hate that all feel in the face of the bravery they dare not commit; hate, when they know they are safe in the multitude of those who pour contempt. . . .

And the days had passed. Like an arid desert it had been for her in the great city. Where live all men, equal in number to the sands of the seashore; men from the green lands and from the city, and men who had business on the great waters. There they all came wooing the goddess of Gold, her with the tinsel crown,

whose laughter is the laughter of harlotry; whose mother is the mother of harlots.

Cold and hard and calculative the harlot had made them—cold and hard and wondering what their neighbours would think; the way so-and-so would take his business elsewhere; the way the vicar's wife would not call; the way there'd be scandal in the street; and the landlord asking them to leave at the end of the quarter.

It seemed she wandered a lifetime in the city. . . . And she saw no smiles. Men had forgotten to smile . . . for the laughter of men; the fresh laughter which is now on the hills; and the laughter which sounds through the violence of the storm at sea; they had no place in the city, for there the laughter was a frightened, niggard thing . . . a thing of the dark places where the bodies of women and the souls of men are sold; a thing of the upper chamber of the betrayal feast . . . where the sons and daughters of the heritage are without and only the Dark Ones enter.

And God had died. . . . There had been no great death for God. He had just died. One day He was there and the next He was not; like an old woman who sits by the church for years, selling postcards and matches and, maybe, violets in the spring. For years God had sat there, in the heart of her . . . and then, one day, He was there no more. The old woman did not come to the church door. People said, "Old Rose wasn't there to-day, I could not bring you your flowers, dear." People said, "The old woman had gone somewhere else, I had to buy my matches at the shop at the corner."

Maybe God, too, had gone somewhere else; that, like the old woman, He had not died; but had gone to the heart of another. . . .

And she never prayed again. . . . And the burden in the womb of her was heavy with the heaviness of the release after labour . . . the heaviness and the weight as of the Cross. . . .

For there was the three hours and the agony on the hill and the death when she went down to the pit.

And there she brought forth a son and she laid him in a gutter; that he might not live to see the brute-face of man; that he might not know God had died and laughter become a niggardly, coward thing. . . .

And for her there had been no Easter Day.

They had not searched diligently for her in the city, for so many children are born, and it's a costly job hanging a woman in these days. And the papers, maybe, would get sentimental and make a fuss, speaking of the sanctity of motherhood. So it's not much use collecting a judge and two barristers and God knows how many solicitors and hawking out twelve little men whose hearts are much more with their bacon and their condensed milk and grape-nuts; it's not much use getting all these together for a mite of a child only an hour old; a mite of a child found in a gutter.

So she slipped away quietly. . . . And the pain under her heart, that she had thought would go, grew the more intense, suffocating her as though it were love and the fulfilment of love. But the pain she felt was hate, and it had a courage as that of love, of a woman going to her lover.

She slipped away from the city where the streets, they say, are golden and men stand in long queues waiting for bread. . . . And she slipped away, taking her pain and the nobility of the hate in her to the green lands and the men of the green lands, men with the smell

of the animals and the hardened, calloused hands. . . . And these men she hated as all men.

She let them suffer, for there was that in her that excited them . . . calling them up to a frenzy of madness; the madness of the desire that is not love; the animal on heat. . . .

* * * * * *

She stood in the yard and she made the Sign of the Cross on her forehead. And she did not know. . . .

Quite alone she stood there. . . . A dog rattled its chain. She spoke, but she was not aware of speaking. "Lie down," she said. "It's me." So the dog lay down and her fingers trailed back to the water-butt; feeling the grateful ice of the water; the cooling, cleansing thing which men had not sullied.

And she thought, "I do not know. I am at peace. I do not know whether I love or hate, nor whether I live or die. I am at peace." And, because of the peace of her, she raised her hands to her breasts and stood there, alone in the yard, with her hands tight on her breasts and her breathing the leisured breathing of one who has come through great travail and now has rest. . . .

And the stars shone. Far-off, inanimate things they were, peering down at the girl in the yard. The girl who rested. . . . And the stars shone down on the city where was the gold and the starvation; the city where the men pointed at the mother, that one with her child still living the secret life in the dark chamber; where the men pointed and grinned.

Through the darkness of the yard she sensed the man's coming to her, and, before she saw him, she thought, "Why am I here? He is old. He is old. He is as

the dead." And she knew that that was why she was there; because she too was as the dead; as the still silence of the corpse; as the child in the gutter. She thought, " Child gurgled once and then twice and again it gurgled. . . . And I killed it."

But she was not unhappy. For she had saved the child from all things: from the grandeur of the dawn and the cruelty of men. . . .

The man came to her, holding her hand in the darkness. And her hand was cold and wet from the water in the butt.

" Come! " he said.

So she went with him, her hand in his hand, and no one heard their tread; for they were as the lost ones, those who are out of the flesh, who have seen the light. . . .

She went without speech or question, knowing only that the going was right; that this thing had been ordained from the beginning of the world.

Across fields they walked, not keeping to the hedges, for they were out of the flesh and the man knew that they could leave no footprints; that they were as the sprites, as the fairies who danced in the rings in the meadows; as the grey ghosts in the churchyard; as the ghosts of all the saved.

Far in the distance, over the hills, they saw the lights of Hasham; a reflection, the light in the sky. . . . And the girl thought of the lights of the city and the men with foul eyes. . . . But she did not hate them. *They were not.* . . .

She faltered in her walk and the man waited for her; but he did not ask her " What is it? " knowing that it was good for her to be alone; that only in solitude could the consummation be achieved. . . .

She did not hate; because the men were not. They had never been. . . . And she wondered at herself as she thought of this thing; wondered that she had never seen it; that it had been hidden from her; that she had not understood.

For the men who had laughed and the women with the cold eyes need not have worried her. She could have shut them out and been alone.

They came to the stream . . . and the water gurgled over the stones, laughing and chuckling, singing some new song that had been sung at the beginning of the world. A song of forgotten things; of the times before men, of the first love and the flaming banner of peace.

For " peace " was a shout of victory . . . not signed with the sign of the blood of men; for that brought no peace; only desolation on desolation; the woman wailing for her children. Rachel who would not be comforted because they were not. Peace was a cry they sent out to the ends of the earth. . . . And she felt the shout in her heart. . . .

So they stood by the stream, and the water lapped on the stones like the sound of the kisses of lovers a thousand years old; like the laughter of children in the forest before war and wealth and the dread thing of civilisation came.

The man knew these sounds and he knew that the stream would flood; that there had been rain in the hills. . . . Before morning the stream would be a raging torrent. . . .

He still held the girl's hand, lightly as though it were a flower. For there was no desire in him.

And he turned to her knowing her happiness, saying to her, " We are here." As one who should say, " This

is the consummation." As One who cried, "It is finished."

"Yes," she whispered, "we are here." Through her words he felt the heartbreak and the ache, and he knew it was not well with her.

"Tell me," he urged, not knowing his own mind nor what he said; only that now they were alone and they could tell each other all the secrets of life, the fears and the lies, and though they told all, they would never give up the secret and the solitude of their own being. . . . For they were inviolate.

So she told him of how she had been purified as silver is purified in the fire; how she had had the love of man and been pure. . . . And he listened, silent because of the great understanding in him. She told him, too, of the small child she had slain in three inches of water. . . . And he nodded his head, understanding.

"It is well," he said. "You did well."

So again she spoke, and she told him of the city where he had never been, the city of the gold and queues waiting for bread. . . . And the heart of him hardened towards men and all men, and he said:

"They dirtied you. But it does not matter. There is cleanness now."

So they stood still. And only the laughter of the stream came to them; laughter that grew each minute, for the floods were coming down from the hills.

"I came here as a child," he said, "and I bathed in the stream. It were good." And she nodded her head in the darkness.

A great weight came on her—the weight of the eyes of the world; the weight that Jesus bore to Calvary; the cross that bowed Him as He climbed the hill. . . .

All the lost happiness of the world was in the man's voice—" I came as a boy. It were good."

And life, she knew, should be good all through. Not only good as a boy. All through life there should be singing and the sound of the laughter of love. All life long there should be the peace of understanding which only came when one's belly was full; that only came when men were brave and when laughter was brave, the laughter of the hero . . . the white laughter of the saint.

" Let us bathe," she said.

So they undressed, there on the bank, and for a moment they stood facing each other . . . standing each alone, separate, with a great agony between them. . . .

Then the girl sobbed and the man laid his hand on her shoulder, which was white and small and thin. . . . And she wept on his chest. . . . All humanity was in the girl as she wept. All the stricken lostness of mankind. All children denied the sunlight; all the great cloud of the unwanted; all those who have the hunger in hearts and bellies; the great company whom no man wants. . . .

And the sound of the stream was changed till it became as the sound of golden sovereigns clinking together in a pile; a sound of dim mockery; of a thin-edged sword that cut through the courage of life.

" My child," he said. . . . And the girl sobbed.

Madly, madly now he wanted to comfort her. . . . And there were no words . . . nothing . . . utter, utter desolation. . . .

Presently he said, " I made my wife unhappy. My children hated me. I was cruel."

And she said, " It does not matter. You could not help it. You were hungry."

" My wife was hungry too," he said, and his voice was dull, toneless with the remembered pain of his own woman.

" Then she will understand," the girl said.

She stood away from him. . . . But he caught her to him, holding her, pressing her small frail body to his old thin body.

And she gave herself to him. . . . And she whispered to him strange things such as he had never heard; but which he knew were . . . and he knew they were his heritage. . . .

So, together, they came to the mountain of fulfilment. They knew life and they tasted life. And they knew the taste was good, rejoicing the soul. . . .

For a little while it seemed they slept there in each other's arms. . . .

The night sailed on. And the man and the maid slept; the man and the maid who had reached the greatness of life, had been at the heart of life, had lived and been in the deep harmony.

The stream rose. All through the night the stream rose higher and higher. The water poured down from the hills. The cattle fled away from the lower pastures. The sky was overcast with clouds; heavy clouds that hid the moon and the stars. Clouds filled with rain.

It became warm . . . a humid heat. The girl woke first. She looked down at the nakedness of her body. She saw its beauty and she saw the beauty of the man's body, even though it was old.

She held herself up on her elbow and she said, " We can never go back. We can never go back."

She kissed the man on the lips; full on the lips; as

though she must die in the embrace. So the man woke. . . .

The sun came creeping over the edge of the world. . . . The girl said, "We cannot go back. We cannot go back."

He lay still listening to her, hearing the echo of her words in his heart. And he knew she was right. He knew that now there was no backward path . . . that now life must go on, and go on and be more abundantly. . . .

He knew that they must be together till the end of the world.

There would be no more toil, no more hunger. Nothing. . . . Nothing any more; only the deep peace.

Together, as of one impulse, they rose. . . . Hand in hand they walked to the edge of the stream, and they saw how in the night it had risen to a heaving of muddy waters; muddy, swirling as though some demon disturbed them, as though all the gods of the waters were engaging in battle.

For a moment they stood on the bank, and the sun shone down illuminating them, making the whiteness of their bodies seem as the whiteness of spirits seen in the fresh light of morning. And they kissed.

For a long time, till it seemed that the world must end, they kissed. And their souls drained of emotion, casting out all the pain and the suffering and the hunger that they had known, the one in the city and the other in the green fields where it was thought there was rest.

All pain and all bitterness fled from them. All the barrenness of unrewarded effort. All the brokenness of the heart of man; all the tears and the sorrows of the

world were drowned and lost in that kiss of perfect love and understanding wherein was no fear, nor malice nor evil thinking. . . .

So they drew back cleansed. The waters rushed beneath them and the gods of water fought their mad fight as though it were the end of the world; as though it were the end of time.

And the man and the girl stood there. Then the girl spoke, and her words came to him as from an immense distance; as from a cloud, as she cried again and again, "For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory. For ever and ever."

Hundreds of times he had said those words; hundreds of times he had heard them. But they had meant nothing. . . .

And he bowed his head listening to the girl. . . .

Once more she spoke, and now her voice rang out vibrant with power, ringing with the gladness of the truth that was in her.

"For *Ours* is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory. For ever and ever."

For a moment there was stillness; ghastly, dreadful, complete. . . .

Then the man knew and, knowing, he smiled.

They stepped forward, hand locked in hand. Stepped forward bravely, with laughter brimming and falling over from the lips of the girl. . . . The laughter of the fulfilled.

And the waters swallowed them up. The mad, mud-coloured waters swirled and raged where they had disappeared. The gods of the waters fought their ancient battle. . . . The Eternal struggle and fighting and defeat went on. . . .

They were no more.

They had joined the great company. . . . And the sun rose higher.

It shone on the racing, churning waters. It shone on the cattle fled to the high ground. It showed a new world; new from yesterday; eternally the same.

Mercilessly it picked on a poor pile of garments on the bank of the stream. . . . A poor pile of a man's garments; the patched trousers and the sweat-stained shirt, and near them, touching them, the frayed, torn things of the girl.

Pitilessly the sun shone down on them . . . all that remained. . . . Everything . . . everything . . . waiting to be discovered . . . for the foul-minded to speculate over . . . to cast their mud . . . to leer. . . .

But the waters had closed over the Power and the Glory.

INNOCENCE

By H. E. Bates

A child had wandered from the security of his mother's potato-patch. The afternoon was a silent infinity of shimmering heat, but in the field beyond the garden the young grass had begun to grow sweet again after hay-time, making a cool lawn in the waste of July.

Nothing moved across the flat green face of the field except a few flickering butterflies electric with sunlight, odd scraps of turquoise and lemon, tortoiseshell and ivory, soft and light as flying flowers. The child regarded them with apathetic interest, his eyes vainly hunting them. Once he took off his broad white sun-hat and held it poised, but the shadow of it had scarcely fallen on the grass before there was a mocking flicker of yellow brilliance far away among the potato-flowers. He listlessly put on his hat again and solemnly advanced across the field, his hands deep in the pockets of his miniature trousers. The sun-hat, too large for him, made him look like a little old man walking across a vast bowling-green in meditation. The butterflies seemed no longer to interest him. It was too hot for him even to watch them.

At the far end of the field stood a house, half-hidden by a forest of flowerless lilacs, dim laurels, and clipped yew-trees. The faded yellow blinds of the house were drawn against the sun, and the doors stood shut and blistering, giving it a deserted air. The garden was a wilderness of trees and sweet-brier, untidy hollyhocks with shabby pink buttons just unfolding, blood-bright poppies that had sown themselves in thousands about

the flower-beds and the paths and on the front doorstep itself. The air seemed sleepy with poppy odour, though the brilliant scarlet heads blazed like signals of danger.

As the child approached the house he began to walk with a curious nonchalance. He squinted at something on a most distant horizon, and sometimes he appeared to be searching intently for something in the grass or the sky. The house might not have existed. The child walked towards it with perfect, aimless innocence.

Nevertheless, that innocence was suspicious, for he walked in a perfect line to a point where the garden fence had broken, making a gap large enough for a dog to squeeze through under cover of the lilacs and laurels. As he approached the gap his innocence became angelic. He stooped to pick a white clover-bloom. He sniffed it languidly, plucked another and sniffed that also. He wandered in beautiful rings in the grass, ostensibly searching. All the time his eyes were upon the house, wickedly furtive and longingly alert.

He presently sidled sleepily towards the gap. In his sleepiness he appeared to be not only innocent but blind. Nevertheless, his eyes in one swift flicker took in the safe emptiness of the field behind him and of the garden ahead.

He vanished suddenly through the hedge with a flash of white, like a rabbit. He crawled through the mass of trees and briar on his hands and knees and finally emerged into open sunlight, blinking like a man stepping out of a gloomy jungle.

There he staggered to his feet and stopped. His eyes had lost their look of suspiciously angelic innocence. They were filled with caution and wonder, with guilt

and pleasure. They gazed with a new unflickering intensity.

Before the child stretched a plantation of raspberries, row after row of green and red luxuriance. Seeing them, he had eyes for nothing else. He seemed for one moment paralysed by the crimson burden of the tall, thick canes. At home, side by side with the potatoes, his mother had also a plantation of raspberries, ripe, thick, and lovely as these.

To the child, however, the raspberries that his mother grew seemed suddenly despicable. Moreover, she had forbidden him fearfully to touch them. The fruit before him was larger and more luscious than his mother's could ever be, and as he caught all at once the strong fragrance of the fruit and leaves in the warm sun his mouth was tortured.

He plucked a raspberry. It melted swiftly in his mouth like snow. Once a great fish-net had covered the plantation, but the stakes had rotted away and the net had fallen into useless tangles among the canes. There was nothing to stop his progress into endless raspberry avenues. He walked at first furtively, stopping to listen, but the garden was silent and safe and deserted. Nothing but himself moved, and presently he walked more boldly, rustling the leaves carelessly with his eager limbs.

All the time he ate. He ate as though in a race against time or light. At first he swallowed, one by one, berries that were like great crimson thimbles filled with blood. Tiring of their very magnificence, he gathered smaller, sharper fruit and ate it by handfuls, tossing back his head and crimsoning his lips.

There came a moment when the taste of even the

loveliest fruit seemed curiously dead. He paused and sighed heavily and licked his lips, drunk with fruit. It occurred to him to take off his hat.

He began to walk up and down the avenues, filling it. There was still no sound or movement in the garden except his own rustlings among the leaves. The juice of many raspberries began to stain the whiteness of his sun-hat. He did not notice it. He was drunk with forbidden bliss.

It happened suddenly that he came to the end of an avenue and there looked up. Beyond him stretched an open lawn, deserted and poppy-sown. He regarded it with the brazen indifference of reckless confidence. He plucked a raspberry and ate it with loud and careless smacking of his lips, as though to defy the last dangers of the place.

He turned to pluck another and stopped. A pale object, like a menacing vision, had appeared over the raspberry canes behind him. It was a panama-hat. He gazed at it for one second with giddy astonishment. It moved. His heart leapt. A second later the panama-hat bore down upon him with noises of stentorian rage:

"By God, I'll skin you!"

The child fled. He darted down an avenue of canes with a wild terror in his heart, scratching himself and running blindly. All the time he was conscious of pursuit by the panama-hat. He was terrorised by cries of rage and threats of annihilation. He stumbled and dropped his hat and dared not stay to pick it up again.

Out in the field he paused for an agonised moment to take breath. Behind him a roar of rage was hurled like a cannon-shot from among the raspberries. Glancing back, he saw his white sun-hat picked up and brandished

angrily. He fled with frightened speed across the field.

The voice of the man pursued him. He dared not glance back. He ran with unresting desperation until he could pause behind his mother's fence with security again. But even there he could not rest. He was trembling and exhausted. Finally, however, he took a long breath, and with a great effort nonchalantly strolled past the potatoes and by the raspberries towards the house, trying to look angelically at the sky.

It happened that as he came from behind his mother's raspberry canes she herself emerged from the house. She was a wide, powerful woman, with arms like clubs and a black, suspicious gaze.

Seeing her, he stopped. That pause was fatal. She swooped down upon him instantly. He remembered in that moment all the warnings she had given him about her raspberries. How many times had she not warned him that if he laid a finger on them she would flay him? She bore down on him as the panama-hat had borne down on him in the other garden. He wriggled futilely to escape, but this time there was no escape. He made frantic signs of innocence.

"I'll learn you!" she shouted.

"I didn't—I never!" he moaned.

"Look at your mouth!" she cried.

She seized him mercilessly. His guilt was so vivid on his lips that she belaboured him until her arm whipped up and down like a threshing-flail.

The child, as he howled his innocence of a crime he had never committed, dismally observed across the field an approaching figure.

It was signalling terrible threats with a white hat.

A SUET PUDDING

By T. F. Powys

Sometimes it happens in country places, where lanes are lonely, that a wife is not always treated in the kindest manner. And often, though she may not be able to retaliate, owing to the strength of her oppressor, she waits her time, with revenge in her heart, until an opportunity occurs for her to assert herself.

If one leaves the main road to Stonebridge and takes the next turning to the right hand, that is very near to Farmer Wanley's old barn, one finds oneself in Deadman's Lane. This lane is very pleasant to walk in during the summer, but in the winter, when ways are miry and a solitary tree looks sad and forlorn, there is no more dismal place to take a turn in.

Deadman's Lane eventually leads to Dodderdown, but along it and about a mile from Mr. Wanley's barn, there is a small-holding, in front of which is a solitary fir-tree, rented from Mr. Roddy and occupied by John Brine.

It is a nice and a pleasant thing to see a little farm kept neat and pretty, and here it is nearly always the woman who does the work, for when the man is out of the way it is she who keeps the pigs clean, scrubs out the dairy and tends the ducks and hens.

Everyone in the neighbourhood, although all hadn't been down Deadman's Lane, knew John Brine by sight. Although a little lonely by nature, he rarely had a word spoken against him. He was a big man with a great black beard and huge fists, who travelled in the summer with a reaper, with which he cut and tied the corn of any neighbour who required his services.

Mr. Brine would be paid by the acre, but he expected his food as well, though when anything coarse or badly cooked was brought out to him he would never touch it. How a man eats and what he likes to eat is always a mark of his character, and every one who employed Mr. Brine knew that his appetite was nice and genteel, even though his beard gave him the appearance of a great bear.

Sometimes Mrs. Wanley, when Mr. Brine cut her husband's field of barley, would send her son Fred to him with a meat pudding, hoping to please as every woman should, but Mr. Brine would always refuse to taste of it, telling the boy that the only pudding he ever ate was a suet pudding, and the only woman in the world who could make one as he liked it was his wife, Alice Brine.

During harvest Mr. Brine was very busy, and he cut the corn so cleanly and well that he was always made welcome, and was given the best white bread and cheese, which he ate so carefully that he never appeared to drop a crumb.

Though Mr. Brine would often stay so long in the fields with only his horses to talk to—and he never urged them forward with any unpleasant words—yet if any neighbour came to him in a wet hour when he sat under an ash-tree in the large hedge, with his horses and reaper drawn near to him, he would be willing enough to talk upon a subject that interested him.

Beside his nice manners and clean ways, Mr. Brine was known to have strong opinions about women, whose place, he would say with a kindly smile, should be the home. He would tell Mr. Wanley so, whose wife was a merry chatter-box as well as a gadder, and would say, too, that no woman should be allowed her own way—" for all they do is to walk the streets at any market or fair when

they should be tending the pigs and washing the clothes at home."

Mr. Wanley would often stay beside Mr. Brine, whose manners he admired, and once the farmer said with a sigh—

"I do know that your wife bain't a gadder, and when thee do go home 'tis to find one of they suet puddings for tea, that folk do hear about."

Mr. Brine smiled. He liked to hear his wife's cooking praised, and he liked Mr. Wanley too, for he always saw to it that Mr. Brine was given the whitest and newest bread that Mr. Pople, the village baker, had to sell.

Although Mr. Brine cut the corn in the autumn, he would never send in his account or receive the payment for his work until the winter, for it was then that he liked his summer earnings to come in, so that he could pay his rent.

It was December when Mr. Wanley received his account, for Mr. Brine had been cutting the farmer's barley when he talked to him about the pudding, and, having nothing better to do one dismal afternoon, Mr. Wanley decided to pay the money himself.

Mr. Wanley hadn't gone far along Deadman's Lane before he began to notice the brambles. These brambles appeared to grow out of the hedge in a nasty manner, as if they meant to trip him up and then scratch his face when he was fallen. The way was dreary and the afternoon darkened quicker than Mr. Wanley thought it should, and the remembrance that a man was once found hanging there did not tend to make Mr. Wanley's thoughts happy ones.

He wished to change them, and bethought him that he had once met, years ago when he walked there in the summer, two lovers. Mr. Wanley liked a pretty girl

and he thought of this one now. She was a pretty meek thing with fair hair and eyes that were gentle and cow-like, and she was none other than Alice Amey, who married her lover, John Brine.

Mr. Wanley hadn't seen Alice since that day when he caught her holding up her lips, that were pretty and pouting, to be kissed by a great beard. From what Mr. Wanley had heard, Alice had pleased her husband more in the making of her suet puddings than in other family matters, for though she had borne him six children, they had all, in some way or other, been injured or deformed in the womb and were all born dead.

" Perhaps it's the fir-tree that frightens her," the nurse had said.

Mr. Wanley quickened his pace. The night was coming and, although he liked a young girl best, he had no objection to seeing a married woman whom he hoped would be both buxom and merry, even though she had lost her children.

He reached the farm, that was always so much admired by those who passed that way for its tidy neatness. But Mr. Wanley did not go to the gate at once; he stopped by the tree.

This tree was an old Scotch fir that had seen better days. Its great gnarled trunk went high upwards and then leaned above in an unpleasant manner, as if it wanted to fall. Mr. Wanley looked at the tree with interest because it was said that it had killed those babies.

Mr. Wanley was on the point of leaving the dark tree and going to the gate when, from the farm, he heard sounds that made him wait for a moment. These sounds were most unmistakably blows, and after each one of them there came low moans.

Mr. Wanley shivered, but he soon recollected how kind Mr. Brine was to animals, and, the sounds ceasing, he supposed that they could only have been the wind in the tree.

Mr. Wanley opened the gate and walked to the farm, admiring the tidiness of all he saw, that was so different from his own muddle at home. He knocked gently, and Mr. Brine opened the door.

He was exactly as usual, with his clothes as neat and brushed as a woman's untiring attention could make them. Mr. Brine's large form in the doorway looked genial and kindly, and Mr. Wanley, who was invited at once to enter, felt more sure than ever that those sounds he had heard beside the tree must have been mere imagination.

As soon as Mr. Wanley had paid his bill, Mr. Brine invited him to stay to supper in order to taste the farmer's suet pudding that Alice made so well.

Mr. Wanley sat down and admired the neatness of the room, where everything was in its right place and no speck of dust was to be seen.

"But how do she manage to do it all so nice?" inquired Mr. Wanley, "for me wife do say that it's impossible for one pair of hands to do so much."

"Oh," replied Mr. Brine, rubbing one great fist against the other, "I do keep something behind door that be a good foreman over she." Mr. Brine rubbed his fists again and again.

Mr. Wanley joined in the laugh, supposing that Mr. Brine meant some country jest or other that was a harmless one.

The evening being damp and a small rain that had been falling having wetted Mr. Wanley's overcoat, that gentleman took it off, and as soon as Mr. Brine went out

to the stable to feed his horses, he carried the coat to the outer door, intending to hang it there.

He was doing so, but stepped back in horror, for something else hung there. This was a thick leather strap that had upon it dark stains and also redder ones—blood.

Mr. Wanley carried his coat back in a hurry and laid it upon a chair.

Presently Alice Brine came in to lay the supper. She never spoke nor looked at Mr. Wanley, and she certainly wasn't the same Alice who had lifted up her red pouting lips to that bearded mouth in Deadman's Lane. She moved and shuddered, but made no sound, and Mr. Wanley could see from her shape that she was soon to bear another of those dead children.

Mr. Wanley watched her nervously until Mr. Brine returned and the famous suet pudding was set upon the table.

Mr. Brine ate in the same nice manner that he did in the fields. He conveyed little pieces of the pudding into his bearded mouth, talking, meanwhile, and advising Mr. Wanley to keep something behind his door if his wife turned lazy.

As soon as supper was over and the pudding heartily praised by genial Mr. Brine, Mr. Wanley took his coat and departed, being glad enough when he reached the lane that the clouds were gone and the moon risen.

But even with the moon as a companion, he was still nervous, and waited for a few moments beside the fir-tree to obtain confidence.

For a while all was quiet, except for the wind that moaned in the tree. But in a moment or two ugly sounds came from the farm, that was but thirty paces from the tree,

and the same horrid groans that Mr. Wanley had heard before. Mr. Wanley hurried away, but before he had gone a hundred yards along Deadman's Lane he turned and looked back. Someone was come out of the door who appeared but scantily clothed, who twisted and rolled upon the path in agony.

The next morning Mr. Wanley heard from his wife that Alice had given birth to another dead child.

" 'E do bury they all under thik fir-tree," the village nurse had said.

The evening after the dead child came Mr. Brine dug carefully under the tree, putting the mould upon the little still body with kindly gentleness.

The wind was wild and boisterous, and a gust rushed along Deadman's Lane and uprooted the fir-tree, that fell upon and crushed Mr. Brine. At first it was supposed that he wasn't too much injured to recover, but in a fortnight's time the doctor said that the worst must be expected.

Mr. Wanley and Mr. Pople, who were invited to witness Mr. Brine's will, reached the house as Dr. Hawkins happened to be leaving it.

" Ah, yes," the doctor said to Mrs. Brine, " he may eat anything he wishes now."

" I have made a suet pudding," said Mrs. Brine, looking down, " and he wants to eat it—he eats so nicely, you know——"

As soon as the two witnesses were in the bedroom, Mrs. Brine brought in the pudding and, putting pillows behind her husband, she bade him eat.

Mr. Brine took a piece into his mouth and then another, in his usual polite manner. But, upon chewing for a moment, he threw out what he had in his mouth.

" The suet's not cooked," he said fiercely, " it's as hard as leather. Go down, Farmer Wanley, and bring me what's hung behind the door."

He turned viciously to Alice.

" Strip yourself bare," he shouted.

Alice Brine smiled upon him.

" The strap's in the pudding," she said meekly, " you've been eating it."

Mr. Brine gasped, his rage convulsed him—but not his rage alone, for another unseen hand held him and he lay still.

ABOVE THE RIVER

By John Gawsworth

"Above the voiceful windings of a river."—Sassoon

The body lay face downwards in the long, dewy grass, undisturbed, twisted and horribly silent. Once it had been discovered that the man was dead he had been left asprawl. There was a suggestion of something inhuman in the distorted position of the limbs stiffened in death, the face and knees part buried in the turf; one of the arms stretched far before the head, the other with crooked elbow lying level with the breast.

"It's a case for the mortuary, sure enough," said the doctor; "help me with him to the gig and I'll get along to Newport. . . . Stowed him away? . . . All comfortable?" A switch of a rug, a gathering of reins, and he was gone. The onlookers dispersed slowly.

Left alone in the silence, the hillbrow frowned upon the blackness of the day.

* * * * * *

Alone in the morning stillness. . . . He moved alone. The glow of his set purpose consumed him. He was to write a great poem here, far from men; a poem destined to return him that self-respect he had lost for so long amid the petty miseries of a City office. Here he could breathe again, here was freedom, the very freshness of the day, a balm of redemption.

The Roman road before him stretched interminably, white with a dust heat, silver by the ditches. High above loomed the ridge of Wentwood, venerably forested, with here and there a whitewashed farm nestling on the

slope, orchard-ringed and outhoused, strangely silent and deserted in the cessation of noon. The Usk, lapping among reeds that murmured secrets to the breeze, swirled far below. In the shifting river-haze the hum of insects mellowed the air.

He tramped on. Kemys and the broken tower were long past, Goat's Ash but a memory. The meadows by Newbridge spread velvet to the eye, lone save for one scampering lamb and a few dispassionately ruminative cattle. The summer air oppressed with a tingling richness, pleasant to one's nostrils, odorous and sultry. He had reached the forest fringe: the mysterious now lay beyond.

The trees, in hospitable but silent ovation, bent here towards the road, as citizens welcoming the traveller before their town; branches extended in wide, arm-like invitation. It was a city populated by the inanimate; only the quivering sheen of the river, of which he occasionally caught a glimpse, proclaimed the alertness of life.

He turned with a strange confidence up the great chestnut way that led to smoke-blackened Bertholly. This mansion fire-gutted some years before was a very Juan Fernandez of isolation. Once he passed the lodge gates he entered another world, and unaccountably his heart sank. A remorseful feeling, for what he could not tell, possessed him. The more he hastened, striving to dispel this unoccasioned and acute sense of conscience, the more agitated he became. A moment ago, basking in the sun of the highroad, he had been thankful for the fulness of life; now he felt himself a prey to suspicions, knew himself to be eyed by a hidden watcher, whom he recognised instinctively as Death. The shadows of the chestnuts menaced him; their trunks were grim with foreboding;

it seemed as if he were Christian in some vale of horror. Fear, chill fear, was unreasonably yet unmistakably within his heart.

He broke into a run; twigs snapping beneath his feet goaded him on. A dog barked in the valley he had just left. The avenue seemed endless. His breath came in quick, sobbing gasps: he half-closed his eyes as if to hide from his sight these nameless terrors that so worked upon his mind.

Spurred on by the vibratory thud of a rotten branch falling, and by the scuffle of bird-life among the brackened undergrowth, impulsively he flung himself out of the trees, to find before him a glade, wooded on all its boundaries. His relief was short-lived, whichever way he went he must traverse the perils of forest-land again. He crossed to the centre and sat down to review his position. He was now half-way up the great ridge; below, masking the road, lay the terrifying wood from which he had fled.

The day was sparkling clear with speeding clouds, pufflets that floated with the grace of swans. The sun's warmth revived him; he began to blame himself for having admitted the nursery terror of blackness. The world seemed too glorious now to harbour evil. On the horizon the mountain from Twyn Barlwm to Pontypool lay a sapphire blue under the sky and sun, the Usk a trickle of darting quicksilver on green velvet brocade. He had emerged to find a world transformed, and his incapacity to laud its glories fell heavy upon him. As minute as dust specks, a man and a horse crossed the bridge at Newbridge. He rose to go, he was not alone even yet.

Traversing the glade to the further side, he re-entered

the forest. Its gloom dripped wet; the path by turns rivulet and torrent. It recorded, he could see, the usual tale of a Gwentian tempest, the sudden thunder and flood before the dawn. He leapt from boulder to boulder, vainly attempting to keep dry. On one side the path dropped sheer for thirty or forty feet: on the other cragged rocks offered no foothold. These dripped incessantly, sombrely, monotonous.

So impeded had his progress become, that he now loathed the loneliness he had craved. He began to sing, loudly, wildly. At first songs with intelligible words, then guttural, meaningless sounds. Still the path swirled down against him, still the rocks splashed their deliberate showers upon him.

He often floundered, slipped, and would have fallen, gaining but unsure purchase upon the submerged mossed pathway, but unaccountable Providence in the guise of saplings or bushes saved him from hurtling to the crags below.

At last, when he thought he could endure his miseries no longer, he reached the brow and burst from the tree-fringe into a wild meadow, to sink, damp, weary and despondent, under a hedgerow. He fumbled in a trouser pocket for a pencil stub. Thoughts were at last racing through his head: movement might synthesise them. He rose to his feet, lurching, bent on going forward. A flush tinged his cheek. As in a dream he surveyed the whole valley, a radiant expanse, placid in sunbathed repose. He started off; if he had seen the view at all, it conveyed no impression.

He was singing to himself again, but now silently. Words jingled inaudibly in his mind, unintelligible, chaotic. His eyes were sparkling. He was swinging his

arms. There was a rhythm in his blood, a melody in his veins; it was as though he were in tune with Nature, fiddling madly to the orchestration of the forest. He was alive, for the first time since his birth. Undefinable emotions possessed him: he felt tremendous, reborn. He was a native of this land, he knew it, though he had never consciously been here before. Nothing surprised him. Everything was where he expected it to be; he viewed all without doubt or expression of strangeness. He had returned at last to his own country, and was muttering long-dead tongues—if they were tongues at all—knowing not what they meant; but they, too, were natural, and somehow the forest responded. Forces, unknown forces, were driving him onward. He began to lollop along, padding with the swiftness of the panther. Swaying, the boughs acclaimed him as a victor returned. He threw off his coat, waistcoat and shoes; his hair flew stiff behind him in the running.

All outer semblances of civilisation he cast aside. Emptying his pockets, he scattered their contents left and right: a ticket to London, a denuded wallet, some loose change, a latch-key. The Gray Hills lay beyond and the courts of the morning—*Los patios de la Mañana*—what novel had that been in? Author and title escaped his memory. What matter? He was a lost king returned. He shouted for very triumph. His friends, how could they understand? Small-minded folk that they were, with pygmy comprehensions.

And there before him rose Twyn Ceth, last slope of the great Wentwood Ridge, one side cloven clear and deep, blood-warm with purple loam, its summit mist-crowned and inviting. Let him but scale it and the world was

truly his to view: the world, the Usk valley, the Gray Hills, Somerset and the blest isles of the West.

Up, up, slate sliding beneath his feet. The whole earth nimbused in the glow of the sun. Up, up; inspiration was his. London and its misery was at last utterly forgotten. His poem was flooding from his lips as the rich crimson of the pressed grape wells from a wine-skin. Up, up; the summit, only the vaporous summit, now, and he could pause and write it down. His face was aglow, his lungs bursting—a yard, two yards, into the mist. The world was his. O the world was his! The cliff gaped sheer beneath. He drew the crumpled pad from his pocket; all that it contained save the precious pencil stub. It was steep here, steep. The brow but a step. The mist enfolded him lovingly—suddenly it parted and for one ecstatic moment he was vouchsafed with blinding clarity of vision the hidden secret of his heart.

A rapturous cry.

A lurch.

Silence.

* * * * * *

Wheeling, a flight of gulls winged down hard through the mist.

A POSTSCRIPT TO "ABOVE THE RIVER"

By Arthur Machen

"These nameless terrors that so worked upon his mind." The phrase caught my attention as I was looking through "Above the River"; and sent me back to certain meditations that were engaging a good deal of my attention thirty odd years ago, when I was thinking over an unwritten book that turned into *Hieroglyphics*.

These meditations referred to the very curious problem of the writer's understanding of the thing that he has written. A simple matter enough, it seems, on the face of it; if the author of the book, one would say, doesn't know what he is writing about: who does? Or again: how can a man invent, or make, or tell, if he does not clearly understand the affair he is inventing, or making, or telling?

It seems so simple: but it isn't simple at all.

My curiosity was first directed to the matter by reading Tennyson's account of his Arthurian poems. I saw that the great poet was under the impression that by the Round Table he had symbolised "liberal institutions," and I saw also that he was grossly mistaken. Liberal institutions—or some of them—are very nice: vote by ballot; primary, secondary education, leading possibly to the University of Wales; parliamentary government; taxation of ground values; the South Kensington Museum; excellent, excellent, I am sure. But he who is intent on these things will never see Galahad crowned King, far in the spiritual city. You cannot mix up a doubtful seat in the House of Commons with the Siege Perilous.

Consequently, and quite certainly, Tennyson did not understand what he was writing.

And, the point once taken, example followed example. Here was Rabelais, author of one of the most tremendous, deep-searching books ever written; he, it is clear, was fully convinced that he had set the houses of the friars and of the lawyers famously in order for them; that this was the great work that he had done. So Bunyan knew that the *Pilgrim's Progress* was a work of morality and piety, with certain fierce glances at the Clarendon Code and the men who administered it. He was quite unaware, I am sure, that he had written one of the noblest of *Picaro* romances; that before his allegory could be enjoyed it was necessary to forget that it was an allegory. And we know that we can never praise *Don Quixote* as it deserves; that task is beyond us for ever. But Cervantes thought he had written a satire on the romances of chivalry, brightened with a good deal of broad and low comedy. And finally, if you want to find out what Dickens thought of *Pickwick*, you have only to read his Preface. It is a grave document, and speaks of the reform of many abuses mentioned in that moral and informing work.

So there you are. It is queer, but it is true that the makers of fine literature have often failed to comprehend the operation of their own works.

They think that they comprehend; but that is another matter. I have no doubt that John Gawsworth thinks that he knows all about this story of his, "Above the River." He sees it as a story of release, of a man set free at last from the weary, senseless burden of the City office, set free in a wonderful, enchanted land to find there the poem for which his heart is burning. And then; the slip of a foot, ugly, violent death, and the end of all desire.

But the story is not really concerned, not chiefly concerned, with this affair. The words which I quoted at the beginning of this postscript, and many other phrases in the text of the tale; these tell the real story. "Nameless terrors," the trunks of the trees in the wood "grim with foreboding," "it seemed as if he were Christian in some vale of horror," the rocks that dripped "incessantly, sombrely"—in these sentences the secret meaning of the story is delivered.

And that is?

It is the terror that awaits all those who seek initiation into the mysteries, who require the knowledge of the secrets. Dread and fear are presented to them, the serpent of Cos awaits them on the path, and if they stumble, affrighted, their feet may go down to destruction.

Si jeunesse savait. "If only youth understood . . ." It is not true, and I hope it may be long before our author understands.

OTHER WORKS BY CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS VOLUME

H. E. BATES

The Last Bread
The Two Sisters
The Seekers.
The Spring Song
Day's End
Seven Tales and Alexander
Catherine Foster
A Threshing Day
Charlotte's Row
Mrs. Esmond's Life
The Black Boxer
Sally Go Round the Moon
A German Idyll
The Fallow Land

FREDERICK CARTER

London at Night
The Comedy of Masks
The Dragon of the Alchemists
Manfred
The Dragon of Revelation
D. H. Lawrence and the Body Mystical

RHYS DAVIES

Song of Songs
The Withered Root
Aaron
A Bed of Feathers
Rings on her Fingers
Tale
The Stars, the World and the Women
Arfon
A Pig in a Poke
A Woman
Count your Blessings
The Red Hills

CHARLES DUFF

Quevedo
This Human Nature
A Handbook on Hanging
Handrail and Wampus
James Joyce and the Plain Reader
Mind Products Limited

WILFRID EWART

Way of Revelation
Journey in Ireland

CARADOC EVANS

My People
Capel Sion
My Neighbours
Taffy
Nothing to Pay
Wasps

JOHN GAWSWORTH

Confession
Fifteen Poems, Three Friends
Backwaters
Ten Contemporaries
Lyrics to Kingcup
Apes, Japes and Hitlerism
Strange Assembly
Known Signatures
Mishka and Madeleine
Ten Contemporaries (second series)

LOUIS GOLDING

Sorrows of War
Forward from Babylon
Seacoast of Bohemia
Sunward
Day of Atonement
Sicilian Noon
The Miracle Boy
Store of Ladies
Those Ancient Lands
The Prince or Somebody
Give up your Lovers
Magnolia Street

STEPHEN GRAHAM

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Undiscovered Russia
A Tramp's Sketches
Changing Russia
With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem
With the Poor Emigrants to America
Russia and the World
The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary
Through Russian Central Asia
Russia in 1916
Priest of the Ideal
The Quest of the Face
A Private in the Guards
Children of the Slaves
Challenge of the Dead
Europe Whither Bound ?
Tramping with a Poet in the Rockies
Under-London
In Quest of Eldorado
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Russia in Division
London Nights
Midsummer Music
New York Nights
Peter the Great
The Lay Confessor
Death of Yesterday
Saint Vitus' Day
Modern Vanity Fair
Stalin
Everybody Pays
Ivan the Terrible

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Some Chinese Ghosts
Chita
Youma
Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan
Out of the East
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Exotics and Retrospectives
In Ghostly Japan
Gleanings in Buddha Fields
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Stricken Gods
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Hieroglyphics
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The Hill of Dreams
The Bowmen
The Great Return
The Terror
War and the Christian Faith
The Secret Glory
Far off Things
Things Near and Far
Strange Roads
Precious Balms
Dog and Duck
The London Adventure
Ornaments in Jade
The Glorious Mystery
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Focus of Life

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Fables
The Key of the Field
Christ in the Cupboard
The Dew Pond
Kindness in a Corner
The White Paternoster
Uncle Dottery
Uriah on the Hill
The Only Penitent
When Thou Wast Naked
Unclay
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The Rajah's Sapphire
Shapes in the Fire
The Yellow Danger
Cold Steel
Contraband of War
The Man-Stealers
The Lord of the Sea
The Purple Cloud
The Weird o' it
Unto the Third Generation
The Evil that Men Do
The Lost Viol
The Yellow Wave
The Last Miracle
The White Wedding
The Isle of Lies
This Knot of Life
The Pale Ape
The Dragon
Children of the Wind
How the Old Woman got Home
Here Comes the Lady
About Myself
Dr. Krasinski's Secret
The Black Box

ARNOLD WAREHAM

In Bondage
To-morrow

MALACHI WHITAKER

Frost in April
No Luggage
Five for Silver

FULL SCORE

FYTTON ARMSTRONG

RICH & COWAN