PENGUIN PARADE
NEW STORIES, POEMS, ETC., BY CONTEMPORARY WRITERS
FIRST ENGLISH PUBLICATION

6

HIS FORTIETH BIRTHDAY.......................... T. O. Beachcroft
BROWN FLOOD.................................................. Dorothy Carus
SELF-TRIMMER............................................. Richard Armstrong
THE WATERFALL............................................... J. Wood Palmer
"I KILLED MY GRANNY!".............................. Reyner Barton
FIRST AND ONLY........................................... Caroline Lee
THE BOULDER.................................................. Francis Munro
THE TREE...................................................... Christina Hole
THE MIGRANT................................................... Benn Sowerby
DEATH OF A POLITICIAN............................... Meta Mayne Reid
THE EXTRAORDINARILY HORRIBLE DUMMY............ Gerald Kersh
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SICILIAN SUN.................................................. Dora Birtles
LITERARY SHRINE........................................... Faith Baldwin
DEATH IN TIFLIS............................................. Martha Dodd
COME, FOLLOW................................................. Dacre Balsdon

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PENGUIN PARADE

new stories, poems, etc., by contemporary writers

6

EDITED BY
DENYS KILHAM ROBERTS

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Contributions

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The large quantity of material received makes it impossible for the Editor to provide criticisms of rejected contributions or to give reasons for their rejection.

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His Fortieth Birthday

BY T. O. BEACHCROFT

DAVID RETFORD stood by his bedroom window in the doubtful sunshine of an early June morning. It was about seven o'clock. It looked as if it was going to be a cool, grey day, neither wet nor fine.

He strolled over to his wife’s bedside and smiled down at her. His blue eyes looked out of a face that was ageing yet still rather boyish. His fair hair was now going a little grey—so was his neat moustache. He was slightly built—rather too slightly built; with a little more bulk and height he might have been handsome.

“Don’t forget,” he said to Isabel, who put her hands behind her head and looked up at him from the pillow. “We’re going down to Bill’s school to-day. There are the Sports, and then he’s got into the final of this reading prize.”

“I know,” said Isabel. She sat up, swung her legs out of bed, stretched out her arms and yawned. “I’m quite excited about it. I do hope he wins it. I wish he could.”

“Perhaps he will.”

“My trouble,” she said, throwing back her hair, “is the usual trouble. What am I going to wear? Tell me.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said David. “I leave it to you. You know I shall think you look nice, whatever you wear.”

She frowned.

“David, do try and take a little interest. If you took any real interest in me you’d take the trouble to
help me. Oh, all right, I know I'm simply boring you."

"Of course you aren't boring me, sweetheart; and of course I take an interest in you."

"Well, what am I to wear? I know you can't take any real interest. I always look frightful nowadays. I'm an old hag. How can I look nice?"

"But you do look nice."

Isabel was now out of bed. She stood in front of the mirror in a crumpled nightgown, looking at her face and frowning. She, also, was fair and of slight build; and she, also, had not altered very greatly since her early twenties. However, her hair, which had been blonde, or rather sandy, was now freely speckled with grey. At the present moment it stood out untidily round her head. She had never been beautiful: but she had a wide mouth that was appealing, and a pair of grey eyes that told of quick and eager emotions, and made her whole face full of expression.

David stood behind his wife and smiled over her shoulder into the mirror.

"To me, you look nice, darling," he said. "Of course you do."

"Oh, David, don't!" she said. "You just irritate me. I look awful. Look at this hateful, hateful, wrinkle. I hate it. I loathe it. Go away, you beast. Oh, if only I had more money to look after myself. Look at my hair. It looks just like straw. I look an old hag. All the other parents at Bill's school will be so smart. Poor Bill, how awful his mother will look."

"Now, sweetheart," said David, putting his hands round her shoulders. You're just working yourself up. Don't get fussed. There's one thing which is perfectly certain, and it's this—We're going to see nobody but the parents of preparatory school boys, and they'll all be our own age."

"How awful! What a show of old hags!"
“Now cheer up. Don’t be naughty. The sun’s almost shining. And it’s my birthday.”

“David,” said Isabel in a totally different, and rather breathless voice, turning round and looking at him. “Your birthday. And I’ve never kissed you, or said ‘happy returns,’ or anything. Let me take a good look at you now you’re forty.”

She kissed him suddenly on the lips and strained him to her and said, “You’re the best husband any woman ever had, anywhere, at any time. I mean that. And now I’ll give you my silly present.”

She gave him the present. It was a leather collar box. The idea was to keep his stiff collars tidy in a corner of the sock drawer; there was never room to keep his things properly in separate places, and they were always being muddled up together.

“The present is splendid,” said David. “Uncle Mark always used to have a collar box. It was green shagreen, with his initials on. I always thought that to have a collar box was the last word in grown-up opulence. Now I’ve got one.”

As he spoke, his mind went back to another June morning—exactly thirty years ago—his tenth birthday morning. Uncle Mark was standing in a red silk brocaded dressing-gown shaving by an open window. There was a brilliant blue sky outside; the window was framed with creeper and the scent of June roses and the air of a country garden came in. On the floor against one wall was a row of perfectly polished shoes, boots, and hunting tops.

Uncle Mark talked about dogs and fishing and horses, treating him as if he were almost grown up already.

“We’ll soon be making a man of you now, David, old boy,” said Uncle Mark. “You’re in your double figures now.”

By God, that was thirty years ago. Thirty years since that small boy, who was, somehow, still David, had
heard those words, and breathed that gorgeous air and stared at that row of polished boots. He smiled to himself and went to shave in his own bathroom, drawing hot water from the geyser, and dodging from side to side as Isabel came by to sponge her face and hands at the cold tap. The imagery of many years long past ran on and on in his mind.

At the breakfast table Isabel broke into his silence by saying,

"You still haven't told me what to wear."

"Well," said David, "what's wrong with your black coat and skirt?"

"It needs a silver fox to make it look anything."

"Not in summer."

"I'm sure it wouldn't be dressy enough. Everybody'll be in summer frocks and things."

"You can't go wrong with that coat and skirt," said David. "That was the whole point of getting such an expensive one, wasn't it?"

Isabel shook her head and sighed.

"No," she said. "The coat and skirt is five years old. The skirt's been let down twice and taken up once."

"Well, wear that new blue silk summer frock."

"I don't like it a bit. It's cheap."

"Well, I'm sure it'll be all right. It isn't such a fearfully smart affair after all."

Isabel pouted gloomily, and sighed.

"It's so easy for a man," she said. "That's what's always so unfair."

David smiled and stood up.

"I'm afraid it's getting late," he said. "I must be running along to the office."

"What?" she said. "To-day? It's Saturday, and your birthday: surely you needn't go to-day?"

"I'm sorry," said David. "I really must go; there are one or two things that I've just got to see to."
“Can’t they wait till Monday?”
“No, they must go to-day—otherwise the customers will think they aren’t getting attention.”

Isabel looked still more discontented, and began arranging the salt cellar and tea spoons mechanically in a row.

“David,” she said, “I’m sure you’re much too conscientious in your job. Why should you always be slaving for that beastly firm—and for such a miserable salary? They ought to pay you at least fifteen hundred a year. They’re simply robbing you. Why don’t you make them pay you more?”

“They think my six hundred is pretty lavish,” said David. “Besides the job really doesn’t run to more. The money simply isn’t there to pay me more. I don’t earn it.”

“I’m sure you do really,” said Isabel. “You bet all the directors are taking three or four thousand. It is hopeless trying to get through on six hundred. If it wasn’t for my extra two fifty we simply couldn’t do it: and that just gets swallowed up. Everything is getting so fearfully shabby. Do you know we haven’t bought anything new for our home for years.”

“What about those sitting-room curtains?”

“I don’t count those. They’re only cheap, common little cretonnes, just suburban. And do you know all the carpets are wearing out? What are we going to do about them?”

“My pants are hanging round me in festoons, if it comes to that,” said David, laughing.

“I’ve mended them a million times,”

“Now look here,” said David. “Stop grumbling and cheer up. I’ve got a piece of news. It might be good news. I’ve been keeping it absolutely under my own hat, as it’s all been so vague.”

Isabel at once leaned forward eagerly, her eyes shining.
“Go on,” she said. “What is it? Tell me all about it?”

“Well, there’s a new job, all quite in the offing at present. It’s some new business research bureau which is going to be run with a Government grant—under the wing of the Home Office.”

“Why, David, it’s just made for you. Are you going to be head of it? How much is it?”

“Well there’s a job at £900—and for once I’ve got a little personal pull. Old Lord Trevithick has got his finger in it: and you know he’s always been a good friend to me. He knew Uncle Mark very well. He thinks he can work it for me.”

“David!” said Isabel enthusiastically. “It’s lovely. Of course you’ll get it, and you’ll get out of that beastly business job which you’ve always loathed. You oughtn’t to be in business at all, David.”

“Now darling,” said David. “Please—please don’t get excited about it. You know what my luck’s like.”

“But this time, David, you’re going to be lucky. You know how psychic I am.”

David laughed and kissed her on the forehead and left for his office.

The office was quiet and not unpleasant on Saturday mornings. There was pale sunshine coming in, which made the old piece of carpet in his room look almost bright. He opened his post and dictated half a dozen letters. Then he was able to give some careful thought to a sheet of sales statistics, and to make notes for a report he was going to write. All this was peaceful and in a way reassuring. He was doing his job. There were no telephone interruptions: no awful mistakes to look into: no sudden summonses from his chief.

After an hour’s quiet work he heard the clocks striking eleven; he sat back in his chair and the office boy came in with a personal letter that had just come in by the mid-morning post. He saw on it the crest
of a senior West End club—and he knew, before he opened it, that the letter came from Lord Trevithick. He felt a pulse beating in his throat. He opened it and read.

"My dear Retford,

"I am sorry to give you disappointing news about the proposed new Research Bureau, but I have just heard that a man already in the Home Office has asked if he can apply.

"He is a man with a distinguished record, well known to all the committee, and he is seeking a change of experience. Under the circumstances, I think he's bound to be appointed.

"Till this happened I had high hopes about your candidature."

David folded the letter up very slowly and carefully and put it in his pocket. One took this sort of thing pretty calmly at forty, he told himself. There'd be other chances for other jobs yet. After all he was only forty. Yet it was a nice little smack in the face for a birthday present. Damnation—why had he told Isabel?

At this moment the door opened and two younger men came in. One was Schofield. Schofield was the boss's nephew, and he was supposed to be learning the business. He was a big, handsome fellow of about twenty-five or six. He had dark hair which was very sleekly oiled and brushed, and at the moment he was very smartly dressed for an afternoon in the country.

The other young man, Peters, was doing a five pound a week job as a clerk. This morning they had come in simply to talk and soon they were sitting on David's desk and arguing about communism and capitalism. Peters was strongly left wing, and became very heated. Schofield poured suave and amused scorn on communists, capitalists, socialists, dictators and bourgeois, alike.
“Of course,” David heard him saying, “Old Retford here is an interesting case, and very typical. He is one of the old-fashioned bourgeois who are just getting squeezed out. His sort have owed their position and way of life to large private incomes for generations. When they have to face the world with nothing but their own abilities very few of them can really stand the pace. Retford here, has a son at an expensive prep. school; he knows county people in country houses; and other people in town houses. But if only he’d once make up his mind to go and live in the suburbs and do the suburban things and let his little boy talk with an accent, he’d be much happier. Wouldn’t you, Retford?”

David laughed. He was giving the conversation just enough surface attention to be dimly aware of what was being said. Schofield was wonderfully self-assured.

“The real trouble with the whole of that class,” said Peters dogmatically, “is that they won’t fight. So many of them have the right point of view intellectually. But will they risk one atom of their social position to fight for what they really know to be right and true? They simply won’t fight. Why is it, Retford?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Retford. “I’ve fought a bit in my time you know, Peters. I fought in a war once. That’s how I got this arm of mine all messed up.”

“Yes,” said Peters. “But then you were just doing what you were told. That’s not what I mean by fighting.”

For a few minutes David lost the sense of their remarks completely. He heard the sound of their voices, but he did not know what they were saying. There was a time, after he first came back from the front, when he used to see mutilated corpses in khaki lying on the pavements of London. They were so real and horrible he used to try and step over them, and hide his eyes from them.

The others went on talking. Presently a clock struck twelve and David stood up to go.
"Come and have a beer," said Schofield.
"Yes, come on," said Peters.
"No, thanks," said David, "I must get along."
He went off to the tube station.
"Do you think he was offended?" said Schofield over the beer.
"Can't be helped," said Peters. "People have to face facts."

At about half past three David parked his car, among the cars of the other parents, in a field near to David's school. The field had been set aside specially for the purpose, and an attendant in a white coat and peaked cap gave them a ticket.

This was a touch of lavishness that was typical of Borland's School. There was a feeling of lavishness about the whole place. The main building was a large, nineteenth century house with a long, irregular red bricked and gabled front, built more or less in the Jacobean style. To this had been added the School's own small chapel, swimming pool, gymnasium and speech hall. The speech hall would be in use later on in the afternoon, for the reading prize.

The buildings stood on a wooded hillside which sloped down to a small valley—a flat stretch of meadowland enclosed by woods all round. Here the playing fields had been made. Borland had taken over the school from his father—and succeeded in thirty years in turning it from an ordinary preparatory school into one that was famous. He was a tall and rugged man with a mop of grey and white hair and a loud voice. He was less like a schoolmaster than an old political warhorse, whom time has mellowed into geniality.

Everybody agreed that there was touch of genius about Mr. Borland. David and Isabel had been thankful, after much searching, to find a school for Bill that seemed
fairly free and easy, where they felt Bill would be happy. Yet it was not in any way open to the charge of being a crank school.

This middle course was Borland’s particular skill. He appealed to parents with progressive ideas about education: but he appealed also to parents who would sooner have sacrificed their children to Moloch than have done anything unconventional. The only thing wrong with the school from the point of view of David and Isabel was that they had never realised quite how expensive it was going to be till Bill was well settled in to it.

They left the car, and as they strolled down the hill and entered the crowded playing field they felt slightly as if they were walking into a native village which they had found in the middle of a jungle.

As soon as they entered the arena David realised that Isabel would regret that she had not put on her coat and skirt. The sky was still grey and overcast. The crowd was tweed-clad, and everyone’s clothes were most expensively unobtrusive. Isabel in her light coloured coat and flowered frock was not quite right.

In the midst of the crowd they found Mr. Borland and shook him by the hand. He greeted them a little vaguely and was caught up at once by some other parents. A few minutes later Bill had seen them; he was fair, blue-eyed, and slight, like his father. He was now in his last year at Borland’s.

“Hullo!” said Bill.

“Hullo, Bill!” they answered. They felt strangers to each other in the school surroundings.

“The sports will be over fairly soon,” said Bill. “I’m an awful ass not to have got into any of the finals. I’m no good at sprints at all, but I almost got into the final of the half mile.”

“Bad luck,” said David. “Still, you had a good try.”
They walked towards the track that had been marked out on the grass with white pegs. Chairs were drawn up beside the finishing straight.

"The half mile will be starting in a few minutes," said Bill. "Let's watch it."

They sat down; the parents on chairs, Bill on the grass beside them.

"Why don't you sit on a chair?" said Isabel. "There are plenty about."

"No, I won't, thanks," said Bill. "People would see me."

David nodded and understood.

"But there's no rule against it, is there?" said Isabel.

"Of course not, mother."

"Well, you needn't worry so much what other people are going to think: besides, the grass may be wet."

"Dry as a chip," said Bill. "I'd sooner stop here."

"Tell us about this reading prize that's coming after tea," said David. "Do you think you'll win it?"

"Shouldn't think so," said Bill. "It's rather silly, really."

"But you've got into the final of that," said his mother. "That's good isn't it?"

"Oh, I dunno," said Bill, and tearing up a piece of grass, he began to chew it, and turned away from his parents.

"Oh, Bill," said Isabel. "Don't be such a little oyster. Dad and I want to hear about it. We really do."

Bill, making an effort, answered them; but he kept the blade of grass between his teeth as he talked.

"Oh, well," he said, "it's like this. There's a boy here called Raymond Martin. Old Borland is a friend of his grandfather, Sir Philip Martin: and he's supposed to be a great Shakespearean actor, or something. Anyhow, Sir Philip Martin's put up this prize for reading aloud. I just thought I'd go in. We had a sort of try-out
two days ago, and they picked me and two other chaps to do it in public to-day: worse luck.”

“But, Bill,” said Isabel, “how lovely. And how good of you to have been picked. Do you feel nervous?”

“Why should I feel nervous?” said Bill, between clenched teeth. “I’m not going to be hurt.” He scowled at the grass.

“That’s the right idea, old boy,” said David. “Just do your best, and hope for the best.”

“I expect you’ll win,” said Isabel.

“No,” said Bill. “Horsley is bound to win.”

“Who is Horsley?”

“Don’t be silly, Mum; you know Horsley. He’s captain of cricket. He won the quarter mile yesterday; and you’ll see him win the half in a few minutes. He’s jolly good at everything.”

At this moment a young master came along and said cheerily, “Hullo, Bill! I’ve been looking for you all over the shop. Would you like to run in the final of the half mile?”

Bill began to get on his feet, but stopped on his knees and said,

“Has any one fallen out then?”

“Yes, Turner’s twisted his ankle in the high jump.”

“Not much use is it?” said Bill.

“Yes, run of course,” said the young man. “Always go for things if you get the chance. Come along, I’m collecting the runners now.”

Bill got up. David could see a pulse beating in his neck. He knew just the curious weak feeling which Bill had suddenly begun to feel in his stomach. Bill turned round, made a grimace at his parents, and dashed off. Presently they saw the eight runners lined up at the start. All the boys wore white singlets and shorts, and had bare legs. David watched Bill standing ready at one end of the line, while at the other was Horsley. Horsley was a brown-skinned boy with dark,
curly hair and an attractive smile. They all stood silent, with intent, serious faces. Then the pistol banged, and they were off.

It was two laps of the grass track; and as half a mile is a long race for boys under fourteen they went round at a slow pace. Bill seemed to be running quite easily with the others.

Now they went away from the crowd over to the far side of the ground. David filled his lungs with a deep breath as he watched them running. The scene became suddenly a jewel-like cameo—held, as it seemed, minute and far away in the dark brilliance of a lens; there was the wide stretch of green grass with the trees beyond, under the cool grey summer sky; and poised at a corner were the white-clothed runners. As David watched, he seemed to see a glimpse of the whole course and purpose of these boys' lives; and his vision seemed to take Bill and these other boys out of boyhood, to a time when they would be young men struggling with the problems of life; and then men with wives and children of their own. And for a moment David hardly knew whether all his life since the time when he had been at school himself had not been a dream.

Then the boys came round again to the seats. He heard again the sound of their running feet, the murmur of the talking voices all round him. He let out his breath in a long sigh. Isabel whispered, "Perhaps Bill will win after all."

But as she said it Horsley moved up to the front and began to increase his pace. Soon the boys were tailing out, all struggling, and all losing ground to Horsley. Then Horsley came round into the finishing straight and broke the tape, running strongly and easily; the others struggled home, and Bill, desperately-winded, finished last but one.

The parents clapped, the boys shouted, and then there was a general move towards the tea tent. Bill
went off to change his clothes. And after tea everyone strolled up to the school buildings and took their seats in the speech room, the parents in front, and the boys behind. It was a small hall panelled in new oak which held the whole school of about eighty boys and a hundred or more visitors. Mr. Borland, Sir Philip Martin, and the three boys who were competing in the reading prize took their places on the platform.

Mr. Borland made an introductory speech. All the time David felt a mounting tension and nervousness, and wondered how Bill was feeling up on the platform. The three boys, who were now clothed in grey flannel suits, looked very solemn.

Bill had to read second and Horsley last: the other boy led off. Three pieces had been chosen by Sir Philip, and each boy had to read the same three pieces, in the same order. It was explained that they had been given no coaching or advice of any kind. The pieces were varied, and David thought well chosen for boys’ voices.

The first passage came from the Elizabethan poet Ford, and it described a musical duel between a boy flute player and a nightingale. There followed the story of David and Goliath from the Bible, beginning with the words “And Saul armed David with his armour and put a helmet of brass upon his head.” Lastly came a breezy naval scene from Captain Marryat.

The first boy who read was rather wooden. He read well, but without any particular interest. Now came Bill’s turn. He walked to the front of the platform, announced his passage, as the boys had been asked to do. His voice was slightly husky, and he evidently felt very nervous.

However, as soon as he began to read, his nervousness seemed to go, and David saw, with a thrill of pleasure, a Bill whom he had never known before.

His voice was clear and musical. He soon put down the book and repeated Ford’s lines by heart, fixing his
eyes on the back of the room as if he could see there the images he was describing. There was nothing showy, no attempt at acting; yet he lost himself completely in what he was doing; and his voice and spontaneous feeling for the poetry quickened an emotion in the lines that went far beyond their surface quaintness; an emotion that the poet may have felt himself in writing these words, and that the boy now brought to life again.

A nightingale
Nature's best skilled musician undertakes
The challenge, and for every several strain
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sang her own.
He could not run division with more art
Upon his quaking instrument, than she,
The nightingale, did with her various notes.

When Bill had finished the whole passage there was a silence; then no clapping, but a murmur of appreciation and pleasure among the parents. Isabel caught David's hand and gave it a squeeze. He heard a white-haired lady next saying "Charming, charming—that boy's an artist."

Bill went on with David and Goliath; and then the scene from Marryat; both of which David thought he did well. At the end he received a generous burst of applause.

Then it was Horsley's turn. He came to the front of the platform, and began the nightingale passage with perfect self-confidence. He read the verse well, but, David felt, without any of that unexpected inner emotion that Bill had found in the lines. David and Goliath, and the Marryat passage, he felt, were over-done by Horsley. The boy was clever and perfectly himself, but David thought he was a little cheap. He, too, received plenty of applause, especially from the other boys.
Now the aged Sir Philip Martin got up to announce his verdict. It was some years since he had retired from acting. He was silver-haired and slightly senile. No sooner had he begun his speech than David had an uneasy feeling that he meant to award the prize to Horsley: he listened to Sir Philip's words, gritting his teeth and with a sinking heart.

"Now all three did very well," said Sir Philip in his ageing voice, "but the first boy, and I'm sure he will not mind my saying so, was a little lifeless and wooden; the second boy," he glanced down at his notes "—the second boy, Retford his name is, read very nicely. I should like to congratulate you, Retford, on the very clear, smooth way in which you read, or rather recited the lines from Ford. But again I thought in the two other passages there was a little lack of feeling in Retford. He did not seem to find the stories very exciting. Supposing it was one of you boys who had killed Goliath, he would hardly have told us about it so calmly. I think he had not ever really seen that David was just a real boy—little older than some of you."

"Therefore I think you will all agree with me that the prize ought to go to Horsley. He not only read well, but he read with feeling. He read as if these things really mattered to him. He read with eagerness, in fact with something of that very same spirit that helped him to win that half mile, so splendidly, earlier this afternoon."

At these words David groaned inwardly, and while everybody was clapping, a cold, leaden weight descended on his heart.

"What a hopeless old idiotic fool," Isabel whispered to him. "He's so old he's gone childish." And as they went out of the hall David heard the white-haired lady saying, "Well, I don't really agree with Sir Philip. I, myself, should have given the prize to that second boy."
When they were outside Isabel went to find Bill; but David went to speak to Borland, the head master. After standing in the crowd for some minutes, he managed to isolate him.

“Well,” said David to Borland, “I’m sorry Bill didn’t pull off the prize. Bad luck wasn’t it?”

“Yes—yes,” said Borland. “Still he did very well, I thought. He read very nicely indeed. And he did quite well to run in the final of that race too.”

David nodded. Mr. Borland was slightly preoccupied in smiling and nodding to the other parents. “Goodbye,” he kept saying. “I hope you’ve enjoyed it.”

“About Bill,” said David. “Don’t you think it would be rather good for him to win sometimes. I mean he’s always doing fairly well, coming in second and so on. I sometimes feel if he could once win it might start him being much more successful.”

“Possibly,” said Borland. “But still I shouldn’t worry about that, Mr. Retford. There’s heaps of room in this world for people like Bill, isn’t there? He’s a bit quiet, but he’s always trying. He’s always trying hard. The world doesn’t need brilliant people only.”

“I suppose not,” said David. “And how about his school work? Any use his trying for a scholarship.”

“Well, there’s no harm in trying,” said Mr. Borland. “But——”

At this moment Horsley’s mother and father came up, and with them old Sir Philip Martin. Borland turned to them, greeting Mr. and Mrs. Horsley heartily. Mrs. Horsley had on an immaculate black coat and skirt edged with braid. She wore a double silver fox fur. Horsley’s father was six foot two and broad. He had a handsome, florid face, and he wore a red carnation in his buttonhole.

They began talking to Borland in loud, cheerful voices. “Well,” said Mr. Horsley, “the kid hasn’t done so badly to-day has he? I must say this reading business
is a new one on me. He told me he only went in for it on the spur of the moment—partly as a joke—just to see if he could do it."

Horsley’s father laughed. David hung about for a minute or two thinking Borland would introduce him as the father of the boy who had been second in the reading prize. But Borland was quite taken up with the Horsleys and Sir Philip. After a while it seemed undignified to wait any longer, so David went to find his family and to say good-bye to Bill, and to try and cheer him up about the reading prize.

"Oh, hell!" he thought. "To hell with that thrice damned and doddering old fool of an actor. Why should he have done this to Bill?" Why should he have given the prize to something that was showy and second best? "Bad luck, Bill," he would have to say. "You did jolly well, old man—just keep on trying. That’s the idea; keep on trying. That’s the thing that really matters in this life—keep on trying. It doesn’t really matter about the prizes. Just keep on trying."
Brown Flood

By Dorothy Carus

I

It was a curious turn of events that sent Hans Bergner back to Salzburg. He had left it in September after a month's holiday. Sometimes in his mind he saw vivid pictures, usually just as he was on the edge of sleep or emerging from an uneasy tangle of dreams. Then he was taken unawares, and forced to re-live what he repudiated. They were so vivid, these pictures, perfect in detail even to the faint warm scent of the crushed flowers among which he had lain on the mountainside with Greta Weissmann.

He had not seemed to notice the flowers then. What man would look at flowers who had her before him? Yet in these memories that broke upon him with searching vision, he saw the flowers, the bright carmine of the little wild pinks, the purple autumn gentian, and the pale mauve cups of the autumn crocus scattered in the bright green grass under the apple trees.

Under the apple trees they had walked that day when the fruit was red and the boughs so heavy laden that they drooped and seemed near to breaking. He had thought only of her and of what the day might bring when they had gained the mountain solitude. He had seemed to see only her face, her form, the blue handkerchief tied over her fair hair, and her shoes, those silly little shoes at which he had laughed and with which he had compared his own huge mountain boots. He had seemed to be aware only of Greta, yet
in his mind's vision everything was clearly remembered; the flowers and the ripe apples, the larch wood touched yellow with the first early frost, and the alpine meadow where they had rested and he had brought bread and cheese and fruit out of his rucksack and laid them before her on the white stump of a felled birch.

The high mountain peaks rose up blue across the valley and the sunshine glittered on the golden weather vanes of Salzburg and turned the curving river silver. Like the shining blade of a sickle the river had appeared that day from the high nest of warm, sweet-scented grass where he and Greta had lain; a giant sickle lying on the green plain, holding within the bended blade the domes and turrets, towers and bastions of Salzburg's old grey citadel. The sound of bells had come to them as they ate at midday.

All these things he could see and hear again in memory. But sometimes her face was dim in his vision, all but the brown eyes and the long red-brown lashes clotted together with tears. They had not been unhappy tears, and he had kissed them away. Sometimes he fancied he could still taste the salt bitterness of her tears on his lips. Bitter, yes, well might there be bitterness in such kisses. Six months had put a very different aspect on that regrettable affair.

In Vienna the station was crammed with Jews. They were all trying to escape, trying to take with them everything on which they could lay their hands, trying to rob still further the country whose blood they had sucked for years. Filthy swine! he muttered as he pushed his way to the crowded train. There was no difficulty about a seat for him. His new brown uniform and his arm-band ensured him a good place.

Above the noise of the station he could hear the roar of hundreds of aeroplanes. For a week now they had flown daily over the city. The air pulsed with the power and might that shook the sky above. The
city throbbed with the tramp of marching feet and
the hoarse cries of exulting crowds. What an age to
live in, thought Hans. What glory to be one with that
power that shook the air with triumphant noise. Well
might the enemies of Germany tremble and be afraid;
well might the Jewish swine seek frantically to escape.
He wondered whether old Papa Weissmann was making
ready to depart, and as he thought of the Weissmann's
house he saw himself sitting there, eating with them,
a welcome guest, walking in the garden among the
roses that were Dr. Weissmann's pride.

"See, Hans," he could hear the doctor saying, "see
how they bloom, as if they would snatch all they can
of life before the winter."

They were dead now, those roses, and the Hans
Bergner who had walked among them, listening politely
to his host and looking with longing on his host's
daughter, that Hans Bergner might be dead too, so alien
did he seem now to the brown-shirted Hans Bergner
on his way again to Salzburg.

He was on duty now. Many of the S.A. men were
being drafted out of Vienna, to make room perhaps for
the German army that had been marching into Austria
all that week. Thousands of grey-uniformed men had
come marching with tanks and guns and armoured cars,
and the women who could get flowers at that time of year
had pressed them into the hands of the soldiers, violets
and narcissi, sweet smelling spring flowers. Had it been
summer when the German troops came marching into
Vienna, they must have waded ankle deep in flowers.

Hans was not sorry for the inaction that a train
journey forced upon him. His feet ached from tramping
over the cobble stones of Vienna. His head ached a bit
too for that matter. The sound of the smoothly-running
train was soothing and seemed almost like silence after
the shattering tumult of four hundred 'planes, after the
 clamour of many thousand voices at the screaming
pitch of frantic emotion. But what a time to have lived through. The sights and the sounds of that week were unforgettable, but he was glad of the quiet now. He had had little sleep the last few days. Strange that he should be going again to Salzburg.

II

The sky against which the purpling mountains reared themselves was clear green when Hans Bergner came out of the station at Salzburg. He stood a moment on the steps, his suitcase in one hand, his rucksack hanging from one shoulder. He had more than an hour before he need report his arrival. He turned back again into the station hall and left his luggage, and with it his heavy, military-looking overcoat. He buttoned the grey loden he had had ever since his last term at school up to his chin, and as he left the station once more he took off his uniform cap and thrust it into his pocket.

The road was almost deserted. The station lay outside the town, and those who had travelled with him on the train had already disappeared towards their destination by taxi or by tram. The young men who, brown-clad like himself, had travelled noisily with song and jest and shouted slogan, had marched off into the failing light. He could still hear the tramp of their feet and the rhythmic chant of their voices, hoarse and raucous with a week of shouting “Ein Folk, ein Reich, ein Führer!” These men would be his companions during the next months. Presently his heart would warm to them. Some of them would become his friends. Already he was one with them in spirit and in blood, one with them under the one leader in a united fatherland. It was inspiring, that rhythmic chant. He half wished that he had gone with them. There would have been no question then of deciding what to do during the next hour. He ought to have gone with them. Now he felt lost and alone. For ten days he had not once
been alone; he had not once eaten or slept or acted or thought apart from a body of people whose actions and even thoughts were the same, born of the same power. They had been freed from individual responsibility, from the burden of individual action, from the strain of individual thought. Now for an hour he had the ordering of his own actions. He was out of gear with the machine that made life an ordered united force.

He felt lost in the silent and deserted roadway, and stood under a bare linden tree looking about him as if he were a stranger. From the town came gusts of music and the sound of fitful cheers and shouts. His comrades were being welcomed by the loyal citizens of Salzburg. From nearer at hand came another sound.

The weather had been unusually fine and warm for March. The river was in flood. He could hear the water swirling and rushing, and the backwash lapping under the bank. He crossed the road and took a footpath that in a few moments brought him beside the swollen Salzach. The sudden melting of snow in the mountains had sullied the clear stream that he had walked by in September. It was still light enough to see the tawny tea-coloured torrent, full of flotsam that tossed and turned and was carried away before the eye had time to distinguish the shape of the floating objects.

He went on along the river bank, and presently knew where he was going, and why he went that way. The path led to the modern suburbs of the city, where among pleasant gardens the more well-to-do citizens had made their homes. It was there that the Weissmanns lived, or had lived. He felt sure that they had gone, for he remembered that they had Swiss relations, wealthy people, in Zurich. It was more than likely that they had left during the days of tension before the triumph of Greater Germany. He hoped that they had gone. He was anxious to see the smokeless chimney, the shuttered window, the neglected garden, and the brass plate uncleaned on the door.
He hastened his steps and soon came to a bridge. There he could not help remembering for a moment the day that he had leaned for two hours on the parapet waiting on the chance that Greta Weissmann would take that short cut from the town to her home. Better for him had he not waited or had she not come. She could do the waiting now if she meant all that she had said in her last letter. She could wait and wait for ever, before he would come again to her. As like as not, she had had another sweetheart before he was well out of the town. As like as not, she made a game of it, leading men on with her modest ways and those brown eyes of hers. Oh, God! those eyes of hers with their soft tenderness, and their tears and gentle reproach. The thought of them made him furious. He was glad, for he felt more of a man now that he was angry, less lost and undecided and young. Yes, it was his youth that had been at fault, that had misled him into folly. Now he had attained his manhood, his German manhood.

Having crossed the bridge and ascended from the river, he came suddenly into a quiet street of detached houses, and turned towards the town. He could see the castle rising over the trees and the roofs. It was floodlit, and a red flag flickered like a flame on one of the grey towers. A few minutes more brought him to what he had already seen in his mind’s eye as he walked by the river, a corner house with shuttered windows. The brass knocker, the letter-box and the plate on the door were stained and tarnished. Hans Bergner stood and looked at the front of the house. No smoke came from the chimney within his view. There were pieces of broken glass on the pavement. So, they had gone. But still he was not satisfied, not wholly satisfied.

He turned the corner and went along by the garden fence towards the gate. But no gate was necessary now, for the wooden fence was chopped and broken and pulled down in many places. Good firewood for some-
body, thought Hans. He stepped through one of the gaps and pushed his way between the bushes. He was on the lawn, where six months earlier he had walked with Dr. Weissmann among the roses. "See, Hans, how lavishly they bloom, as if they would snatch all they can of life before the winter." He looked about him, half expecting to see the flowers. They were dead. He was alone in the garden. The lawn was trampled, some of the rose trees were broken. It was very quiet. The trees along the border hid the house next door. The blue March dusk and the creeping cold of the oncoming night pressed in on him. He walked up a gravel path towards the house. It looked quite deserted, but not all the windows were shuttered on this side. The French window of the dining room was uncovered and reflected the mauve grey sheen of the western sky. He walked up the brick steps at the end of the path and peered into the room. The furniture was still there. He could see the end of the big table and the pale outline of the gilt frames on the walls. He rested his forehead against the cold glass.

Suddenly the whole room leaped into sight. Someone had turned on the electric light. It was Greta. She stood by the door, her hand on the switch, then ran forward to the window. He walked in when it was opened to him. He felt her hands clutch at his coat, saw her face white and strained but full of radiance. He heard her speak. "Hans! Oh, Hans! God forgive me, I had begun to doubt! But I knew really, yes, I knew all the time really, that you would come. I was waiting for you. Oh, my love!" She hid her face against him, clutching still at the loose folds of his loden coat. Her voice came to him muffled but distinct. "I knew that love was stranger than this idea, this awful blood and race idea. Oh, my Hans!"

He pushed her away from him. "Sit down," he said as she stood looking at him, her face blank, her eyes
alight with a curious look of animal terror. She sat in a red plush chair by the stove, a hideous chair. He remembered that it had belonged to her grandmother and was honoured in the household. He began to walk up and down. The movement seemed to bring him words. He felt that he was marching, marching with his comrades. He spoke loudly, in smooth flowing rhetoric.

"You are wrong. Blood and race are not ideas. They are fact. They are the supreme fact. Blood and race unite a whole people in a bond stronger than the love you speak of, stronger than the love of life, stronger than the fear of death. Blood, German blood in whomsoever it flows, flows also in the body of the whole race. We are one. The soil that belongs to one belongs to all. It is German soil that has received the care of German hands, embraced the dust of German bodies. No matter where it may be, it is ours, it will come back to us. It is blood and race that makes us one folk, one realm, under one leader. It is our greatest heritage, our greatest pride, our blood, our German blood!"

The room had vanished; he saw instead wide fields and people marching. The sky was dark and lowering. He could not see the faces of the marchers, but he knew that they were happy, full of hope and courage, for they sang as they went, and the world shook with the sound of their voice and the unified tramp of their feet. "Sieg Heil!" He found that he was standing before the red plush chair. Greta's eyes were fixed on him. She was wearing some light-coloured stuff. She looked like a waxen figure, pale hair, pale face, a wax figure in a red plush case. Only her eyes were alive, and they stared at him. To him it seemed an endless time before she spoke quietly in the quiet room. "Yet you do not believe that, Hans." It was a statement, not a question, that she uttered. He could have killed her then; he hated her so. But the very violence of his emotion kept him standing there motionless. Her eyes
never left his face. Dark, Jewish eyes for all the fairness of skin and hair. Treacherous, alien eyes!

"Jezebel!" His lips spat the name at her. He saw her flinch, but still she looked at him as she said again: "You do not believe that either, Hans."

Then at last her eyes freed him. She looked down at her hands for a few moments, then without glancing at him again, she got up, went to the window, drew back the curtain and opened the glass door. He went out without a word.

III

As he walked along the road towards the town where now lights shone and the floodlit castle stood out boldly against the black sky, Hans Bergner had only one thought. How fortunate that his brown clothes were entirely hidden by his old school coat. He could not have dishonoured the Party by entering a Jewish household in his uniform, neither could he have taken the risk of being seen leaving the house where, as most of the Salzburg folk knew, a beautiful Jewess lived. Fortunately it was now dark and there was nothing visible in his clothing to mark him as an S.A. man. Was that why he had changed his coat? Was that why he had thrust his cap into the big inside pocket on leaving the station? Had he intended all along to go to the Weissmanns’ house? He had felt so undecided as he had stood in the street before taking the river path, yet already he had prepared himself for what was to come. Why had he not been satisfied by the deserted look of the house? What had possessed him to go into the garden, to look in at that unshuttered window?

He shuddered and felt suddenly cold, then squared his shoulders and walked onwards with a more swinging stride. It was behind him now, that adventure that had started in September. It was over. He could march forward now to join his comrades. The thought
of them cheered him and filled him with a sense of security and warmth. The road between gardens and shuttered houses had been deserted, but now on approaching a bend he heard the sound of shouts and laughter. Four young men in brown shirts were having some fun. Their plaything was an elderly man with his arms full of parcels. As Hans came on the scene which was illumined by a street lamp, one of the young men with a neatly placed kick sent a loaf of bread flying from under the older man's arm. It was a round loaf and went bowling down the pavement. Its owner pursued it, but as he stooped, another well placed kick sent him sprawling after it into the muddy gutter. His eye-glasses flew off. He knelt up, muddy and muddled, fumbling for his parcels, peering about for his spectacles.

"Gentlemen, please!" he cried in distress. Without his glasses he was almost blind. Hans knew that, for he had recognised Dr. Weissmann. The largest of the young men, a brown giant, saw the glasses gleaming on the kerb and smashed them with his heel.

"Let the Jew smell his way home!"

"Yes, let him use his long nose!"

"Give it a twist first!"

A huge fist shot into the old man's face, but it was the owner's own nose that suffered. Hans' knuckles tingled with the impact.

"Ho! a young Jew to the rescue!" cried someone. "Let him have it!" "Trounce him!" "Come on, comrades!" "He dares to fight! The swine-Jew!"

Blows rained on Hans Bergner. The giant struck him a fierce blow on the head. For a moment everything spun round and he staggered. Then he regained his balance, and with it a sense of strength that he had never known before. He fought steadily. He fought four men, sometimes singly, sometimes all together. They were different sizes, but they all wore brown shirts. They had different voices, but they all had the same
face. It was no strange face, but the face of Hans Bergner. Were they not all one, one folk, one realm, one Hans Bergner? He was fighting Hans Bergner. It was a matter of life and death.

"Herr gott! How the Jew fights!" cried someone. "Let him have it!" "Punish him, Fritz!" "The swine! He's gone mad!" "Cool him in the river!" "Cool his head, comrades." "Into him now!" "This way!" "Drag him along." "Never mind the old man." "He's gone, anyway." "This way. That's right, bring him along!" "Give the young Jew a good ducking."

Hans felt the swirl of icy cold water round his legs. They were pushing him to keep him down in a muddy flow of brown water. Was it brown water or brown shirts that hemmed him in? He struggled. It seemed to be night and icy cold. He was being choked. He struggled. He had to struggle. Beyond the darkness and the cold and the wet brown swirling shirts, he knew that there was a path under the apple trees, a warm, sweet-scented nest of grass—and Greta.

**IV**

Four dark figures stood on the bank of the River Salzach. One was Fritz Breitinger. His mother had been a dancing girl in a cabaret run by Jews in Vienna. She had been forced to be something else as well till the devoted, and "Aryan" Herr Breitinger had married her. Fritz was their first-born. Sometimes at night when he could not sleep, he would light a candle and go to the looking-glass. In the hard, tense face that looked at him then with horrified eyes, he would search and search again for some likeness to Herr Breitinger.

Another was Karl Glatzl. His father had kept a store at Semmering. One afternoon when he was ten he had come from school and heard a queer noise in the kitchen. Something was clambering about on the
kitchen floor, making horrible sounds. It was dark. Terrified, he had screamed for his mother, who had brought a light. His father had taken poison. He had been ruined by Jewish money-lenders.

The third, Willi Beck, was an orphan. He had never known the happiness of a home till he had married at the age of twenty. They had been terribly poor. He had starved himself to give his wife small comforts. After a year she had left him, to live with a wealthy banker; a Jew.

The fourth figure made a slight, boyish silhouette against the palely gleaming water. He was called “Buschi” by the others. Fritz Breitinger was his god.

“He’ll drown!” said Karl.

Fritz shrugged his heavy shoulders. “So much the better. One filthy Jew less. My God! I wish I could drown the lot. The swine!”

“What was it he cried out as he went under?” asked Willi.

“It sounded like ‘Redemption.’”

“I suppose he was a Christian then.”

“Like us,” said Buschi.

Fritz turned on him. “Like us! What d’you mean like us? Being a Christian wouldn’t make him any less a Jew, you fool. Like us, indeed! You’ll be saying I’m like a Jew in a minute.”

“I didn’t mean anything, Fritz, I only said——”

“Then stop your mouth, you little dunderhead. Come on, you fellows. Unless you want to fish the Jew up again. He’s miles from here, anyway, by now. Come on!”

They marched off into the darkness chanting a slogan, all except Buschi. He stood by the river for a few minutes watching the flotsam carried rapidly past him by the brown flood. But it was awful to be there alone. Whimpering like a child, he turned and ran after the sound of tramping feet.
BAVARIAN CAFÉ

Wood-engraving by Nina Gifford
Self-Trimmer

BY RICHARD ARMSTRONG

We sailed from the Humber at four p.m. on a day late in November.

She was a self-trimming collier—a ship that could be loaded and discharged with the barest minimum of shovelling. To effect this her hatches were enormous and her deck space negligible. Two feet six inside each bulwark was the extent of the ironwork along the length of both fore and after wells. The rest was hatch—gaping maws closed by two and a half inch pine boards laid on steel girders and covered with three tarpaulins batted and wedged into cleats along the coamings.

She carried roughly three thousand tons on a draught of nineteen feet. At that her freeboard was about fourteen inches. She was wet in choppy weather, awash in a heavy swell and smothered in anything like a seaway.

The day had been still and cold, and we dropped the pilot at the Humber Lightship under a leaden sky that seemed to sit down on the mastheads of the cutter. The air was oppressive despite its chill, and the disc of the world in which we floated was small.

Everything hinted at snow.

We were bound for Hamburg—washed coal for the Vedel gasworks—and we headed out past the Dudgeon and laid a course for Borkum Reef.

I turned in at midnight and lay for a while listening to the steady pant of the engines and the sullen swish
of spent water in the well-decks. She was rolling slowly; easily.

Then I slept.

At four a.m. the weather broke.

It came out of the north-west at first—in blind snow-squalls. Huge, heavy, wet flakes that whirled out of the darkness and blotted, blanketed with a fiendish persistence and a weird, ever-increasing tempo that seemed to do queer things to one's heart-beats.

We were then one hundred miles east by south from the Humber Lightship—on the edge of the Dogger Bank. Except for a few miles drift, this was as far as we got that day, for the weight of wind pressing on the shallow water ripped it up from the very sand bed beneath and inside an hour a huge sea was running. Short and high and true as lines drawn with a ruler it marched down, rank on rank, and the troughs were like canyons between rows of high houses.

The "Old Man" hove her to.

Then just before dawn the wind hauled north-east and blew drier, colder and harder. The snow changed to a fine powder that drove horizontally and cut into the face like grains of quartz. It was impossible to look into the wind and breathe.

Day came reluctantly—night not breaking, but slowly lightening from blackness into a murky grey gloom. Our world was very small; the horizons were just beyond arm's reach, and out of them the sand-stained seas leaped and surged past us into oblivion over the south-western rim.

We collected in the galley after breakfast. It was warm there, and one could be out of the tearing wind and still see the sky. Out of the bite of it, but not the sound.

It was that sound—a low moan under the high scream—that caught us. A cold hand seemed to have reached inside me and taken my vitals and squeezed
and squeezed and squeezed until all I had below my breastbone was a small ball of frozen fear and a pair of legs.

It was incomprehensible—that fear. With the exception of the two deck-boys, every man aboard had been seafaring for at least a dozen years, and we'd all seen weather in great variety, from West Indian hurricanes and North Atlantic gales to the special type of viciousness that runs south of Agulhas and the Horn. We'd never felt like this about it. It seemed like foreboding.

It was.

The sea was too short for her to ride. She would topple over the crest of one comber and plunge into the trough, and before she could lift, the next would break flat aboard her from jackstaff to bridge.

At one p.m. she took a sea which tore a steel reel carrying sixty fathom of inch-and-a-half mooring wire, off the fo'csle head. It landed with terrific force on the port side of number two hatch; sheared through the tarpaulins, smashed two hatch boards to splinters and disappeared into the coal. She lifted crazily, shivered, plunged again, and the next sea swept the torn tarpaulins into the starboard scuppers and hurtled the whole forrad fleet of hatch-covers over the side.

She was wide open and the seas pouring into her.

The "Old Man" decided to put her stern to the sea and run, hoping thus to keep the heavy water off the broken hatch.

He got her round cleverly—an amazing feat in such a sea—but his hope was vain. She was too narrow and clumsy in the counter to run. She squatttered over a couple of seas, then failed to lift to the third. She pooped. Stern down in the trough she sat, and the sea curled over and engulfed her. It tore the scuttle off the poop and filled the saloon and accommodation aft to the deck beams; it lifted the port lifeboat, wrenching
the gripes out of the skids, washed the chocks from under it and set it down again stow in on both sides of the keel; it bent the starboard davits inboard like bits of solder; it shore away the port wing of the bridge as if it had been a mighty axe; it drove in the heavy teak doors of the fo’csles and made twisted scrap of the metal bunks inside.

As it swept forrard it carried on its crest a forty-gallon cask of engine oil, lifted out of lashings under the bulwark on the after deck. I saw this cask descend vertically from God knows what height, and land on the head of the starboard bridge ladder. End on it dropped, and every hoop broke with the impact; the staves opened with a weird deliberateness and symmetry like the petals of some magic flower of which the oil, spurting upwards, was the stamens.

It was obvious then that she would not run in such a sea. The only thing to do was to get her round head on again and try to cover up between the seas.

The “Old Man” got her round again safely. He was a splendid seaman—a little man, with a wry neck. cool, steady nerves and a quiet confidence in himself. He called the two deck-boys up on to the bridge, fastened life-belts on them and stuck them out of the way in the wheelhouse. One of them was stiff with fear. I’d often heard the phrase, but never visualised the condition. I saw it now. His limbs were rigid; it was like rigor mortis. The other boy—a youngster under sixteen—was fighting-mad at being stowed away in safety.

The rest of us, two mates, wireless operator, steward, six sailors and the donkeyman, stripped to shirt and trousers, and got into the welter of wreckage on the forlard well. The “Old Man” kept the bridge with his whistle in his mouth, and watched the seas. There was no chance of getting out of the well-deck in time to avoid them, but he could give us a signal that would
enable us to get a grip on a derrick guy or piece of rigging before each sea broke, and save ourselves from going overboard.

It was heart-breaking.

Time and time again we got the tarpaulin stretched and almost into the battens only to hear the "Old Man's" warning whistle and be compelled to drop everything and hang on through another boarding sea. We were stiff and blue with cold, our fingers torn and nails broken, our clothes in rags.

Still we struggled on.

Meanwhile down below, the engineers had punched rivets out of the stokehold bulkhead to make holes through which the water might run from the flooded hold. The pumps were going, and an engineer in the cold blackness of the bilges kept the strumms clear so they could suck. That helped; but more was coming in through the broken hatch than the pumps could get out via the stokehold.

About three o'clock one of the A.B.'s was smashed against the bridge house. We carted him into the wheelhouse and went back to try again. A few minutes later another man miscalculated in his leap for safety and we hauled him into the wheelhouse with his ribs stove in.

This reduction in our numbers did not simplify our task, and we were cold now—chilled to the bone—and tired; so tired.

At three-forty another man missed his snatch at a derrick guy. We saw him go, and somehow we were able to grab him before he went overboard, but he screamed in agony as we dragged him up the bridge-deck ladder. His leg was broken.

That scream finished us. It went into us like a knife, and the strength and courage oozed away from us like grain out of slashed sacks.

It was then the "Old Man's" cool nerve fulfilled itself. He spoke to us softly. He grinned. The Arab
firemen swarmed on to the boat-skids and began clearing away the useless port life-boat. We drove them back. We convinced them of the folly of trying a small boat in that sea. They retreated to the galley and closed both doors. The next sea took the skylight and filled the galley full. Nine men in a metal box full of water! The door burst outward just in time to save them all from drowning.

But we were finished.

The "Old Man" gave orders to send out distress messages.

"One hundred miles east by south of Humber Lightship; hatches stove; require immediate assistance."

A number of ships answered. The nearest—a railway boat bound in to Grimsby—was thirty-two miles from us and hove to. He headed up for us, but could only make a bare two knots. Sixteen hours before he could reach our position!

"Tell the hands she's standing by and can get to us any time we want her," said the "Old Man." We did, and then, exhausted as we were with cold and labour, all we could do was wait.

We gathered in the engine-room on the yet warm cylinder-tops, and there emerged another man—the steward.

Somehow—God knows how—he got aft and into the flooded saloon. He dived for the "Old Man's" whisky locker and got back amidships with some tins of cigarettes and three bottles of whisky. He dished out the liquor to us. We drank it neat and never tasted it, but it probably went a long way towards keeping us alive.

He wasn't finished yet. The galley was swept clean and the seas washing through it. There was neither a pot, nor a fire on which to boil one. He went below, found a tin of some kind; pulled a shovelful of fire out of the furnaces and made us cocoa.
I went up into the wireless room. It was on the boat-skids abaft the engine-room skylight and, barring the wheelhouse and funnel, the highest part of the ship. It had a port facing forward. I stood hanging on to the table and looked through this port. Each time she plunged there was green water over it.

Hour after hour, I watched.

Night came.

I had no more hope. I was completely resigned. My fear had gone and in its place was a queer little fluttering excitement and a deliberate curiosity.

I stood there and felt for her; felt her go down by the head; down, down, then stop; then quiver; shake herself free; lift again. Each time she plunged and came to that quivering pause I held my breath... this time?... not this time... then sighed as she lifted.

Hour after hour and every hour saw her lying deeper, every lift was slower and more sodden...

At midnight I went back into the engine-room.

The "Old Man" still kept the bridge and watched her fight.

And then...

At 2 a.m. he came to us, haggard and weary but with a gleam in his bloodshot eyes. The wind had backed to north.

"I think it's easing," he said. "Get the men together and have one more try to cover up."

We went reluctantly—groaning over stiff limbs and bruised muscles.

The original tarpaulins were in a hopeless condition. There was a spare one in the forepeak.

We got forward into the wrecked fo'c'sle and set the men on chopping wedges out of the tables and forms.

Access to the forepeak store was obtained through a small hatch in the narrow eyes of the fo'c'sle. We lifted it. Out of the blackness came the eerie swish of
water. I looked at the second mate and then at the men. They were watching us curiously. We could hear the crump of the seas overhead and the steep pitch of the deck made one feel she was sliding down, sliding down. I felt fear returning. Wildly I pushed it back, grabbed a hurricane lamp and jumped into the square of blackness.

I landed on the very tarpaulin we were looking for.

We got it out. We rolled it up from both sides into the centre and put light stops of rope-yarns round it. We got it on to our shoulders—eight of us in a line—then waited at the wrecked fo’csle door in a terrific squall of hail out of the north-west.

The wind was still backing.

Presently the “Old Man’s” whistle shrilled, and we dashed out like a suddenly animated nightmare centipede—up over number one hatch, on to number two; dropped our load; slashed the stops; whipped it open and had it inside the battens with sufficient make-shift wedges to hold it hammered in before the next sea came aboard.

We’d managed it.

Climbing the well-deck ladder I leaned back wearily and over my head I saw the stars.

I knew then we were safe, and from the bridge a moment later, I saw the white lights of a trawler on either bow.

The cracked bell in the wheelhouse clanged eight times. It was four a.m. again—twenty-four hours since the first squall broke.
The Waterfall

By J. WOOD PALMER

It was Ella’s idea to go back to that place. She was the first to think of it and to reject all alternatives. The psycho-analyst had said, “It isn’t enough to take your husband away for a change of scene. In his state of nerves change for its own sake isn’t what he needs. He ought to go somewhere familiar to him a long time ago—perhaps where he was born and brought-up. It will give him an interest, and a feeling of solidity that is very essential after the breakdown he’s had.”

And Ella had understood perfectly. She always understood everything in connection with John. It was a renewed sense of security that he needed. Somehow, at this moment, faced by the shattered condition of his nerves, she felt herself inadequate to help him, but she told herself that this would not last. In the ten years of their marriage she had set herself out to understand John. She had concentrated on him. She had got under his skin so that at last his every mood and its cause was known to her, and nothing could he keep hidden. Sometimes she even thought that this made him uncomfortable, but she never dwelt on the idea, because she knew she was not actuated by possessiveness, only overwhelming affection. The two things were very different, she frequently reminded herself.

She understood now that she must take John to some place where he had been happy so that there should be a quickening in him, an interest roused by memory that should shake him out of his condition of indifference.
and lethargy. Lately this had almost begun to frighten her, because in his quietness he had raised a barrier between them that she could not define, and therefore could not break down; and she was not accustomed to being shut away from him. But she told herself that this would soon be put right. As soon as she got him away she would talk to him and analyse this barrier, and when it had been destroyed there would be again between them that intimacy of mind amounting almost to telepathy which she realized John sometimes found awkward, but which was so much better for both of them in the end.

When they discussed where they should go, Ella was relieved to find that John did not want to go back to his old home. The journey was too long and tiring and he said he did not feel equal to it. Ella agreed with him. She was ready to agree with anything he said because he was too tired to argue and she knew that at any moment she could impose her ideas on him. She waited a little, then she suggested they should go to the hotel where they had spent the first part of their honeymoon.

"After all," she said, "the idea is the same. The doctor suggested you should go back where you were born, but that's too far. If we go to Llanbellan there is a parallel, John."

She waited. John said nothing. He lay on the sofa, very still and bloodless and apathetic.

"Don't you remember what you said to me on the first day of our honeymoon, John?"

"I'm afraid not."

"You said you had been born again."

"Did I?"

"Yes," Ella said firmly. "So you see, the idea is the same."

John made no reply. In his exhaustion he could not say what was expected of him. And Ella, though disappointed, understood this. Full of love and pity she
leaned across to kiss him, but he drew quickly away from her, and suddenly she saw the expression in his eyes.

It shocked her so profoundly that she stood up and walked quickly across the room. She saw her own amazed face staring at her from a mirror, and she pulled herself sharply together. It couldn’t possibly be. She’d made a mistake. The look in John’s eyes couldn’t be what it seemed. He had no reason to hate her—even dislike—she’d always lavished everything on him. It was nerves, just nerves, and in nursing John she herself had become nervy and had begun to imagine things. She looked at John lying limply on the sofa, his head turned away from her, then she looked back at her reflection in the mirror, a face very vivid and clear-cut and healthy under dark, richly-curling hair. The room behind her was oddly soundless, drained of vitality, as though illness had been there for a long time. And Ella knew, as she looked at it in the mirror and at John lying there so inert and removed from her, that everything would be all right when she took him away from it. From now on she would spend herself on him without stint, watch him night and day, feed him up, analyse and make clear to him and destroy the little doubts and barriers that had mysteriously come between them, until finally she could get closer to him with her love than she had ever been before.

They arrived at the hotel in the afternoon, and John looked so tired that she made him lie down. He had wanted to go straight down to look at the river, but she said, “No, John, there’s plenty of time for all that.” They went up to their bedroom and Ella took off his coat and shoes, and when he lay down on the bed she stroked his forehead with fingers that she knew must seem cool to him because the will for them to seem cool was so strong in her.
The afternoon was very warm, the rose-Dubarry curtains at the long windows full of hot sunlight, and in the white plainness and lack of angles and shadows the bedroom seemed curiously devoid of any sense of protection. It was as if John, lying motionless on the bed, were exposed to more than the glaring afternoon light. The air held an expectancy. All day thunder had been threatening. Ella sat close to the bed, leaning a little towards him as she stroked his forehead, determined to do her utmost for him, and while she willed him to sleep she listened to the waterfall down in the valley, the endless muted thunder of the water that had been a vague sound in her memory ever since her first night in the hotel with John nearly ten years before.

When she thought John was asleep she stood up. She was not quite certain if he was asleep or not; several times lately he had not been quite truthful to her about it, he had pretended to fall asleep almost at once although she would gladly have gone on stroking his forehead for hours. But she could not ask him. She went across the room and out on to the balcony. The bedroom was not the same as they had had on their honeymoon—it was a pity, she thought, because to have had the same room would have been a strong link between them and with the past—but the view was unchanged. She stood there looking out across the little valley, very quiet and sunny and breathless under the dark, overhanging mountains, and was immediately full of romantic memories. She wanted instantly to share these with John, but when she looked back into the bedroom she could see that his eyes were shut. Disappointed, she said nothing, standing there absorbing the view, the sound of the waterfall, the sun, the electric thunderous quality in the air, and her own memories, storing all these up inside her as if together they made up a conscious force that added to her vitality and later must be poured out on John.
It was early evening before John stirred. Immediately Ella was by his side. For some time she had been trying to decide if she was wise in allowing him to sleep so long. It might mean a restless night. Now she was relieved. She kissed him and said, "You have had a lovely sleep, darling. Do you feel a little better?"

He was still only half awake.

"D'you feel really rested? Is there anything I can get for you? You've been asleep two hours and ten minutes."

And he had wanted to wake up slowly... quietly... in a stillness of air and light... the soft pillow... no thought... Ella began at once to plan. "I think you still look very tired so perhaps it would be a good idea to have dinner up here. D'you remember we had it on the balcony the first night—"

"No, I'd rather go down," John swung himself off the bed.

"But you look too tired to dress, dear."

"I'm all right."

"I do think it would be best—"

"We'll go down, Ella!"

Ella tried to keep the hurt look from her face. She said, "Well, I'll put out your things."

"And I think I'll have a bath."

"Yes, dear. Wait a minute and I'll see it for you."

"No, I'll do it."

"But it's no trouble, darling, and I know exactly—"

John sat down suddenly on the nearest chair. He stared straight in front of him, his face dead and expressionless. In the bathroom Ella was turning on the taps. On an impulse he went quickly to the door and shut it, and the sound of Ella's movements and the rushing water was cut off. For a moment he stood still looking about the soundless bedroom, seeing for the first time its whiteness, the pink curtains glowing
with light, the details of the furniture, seeing all this intimately because the moment was blessedly un-guarded. And then, seeping into his consciousness, came the insistent voice of the waterfall and Ella was again in the room.

She said at once, "Why did you shut the door, John?"

"I didn't shut it," he lied quickly. "It must have slammed."

Ella said nothing. She watched him go into the bathroom. She was instantly aware that something was wrong, this odd elusiveness in John was getting worse. And it was not that kind of door. He had been un-truthful to her again.

As she shook out her evening dress it became all at once a blur in front of her. Why why why? She'd done nothing to deserve it, had she? Never once lied to him? Everything had been so honest and clear between them. At the slightest sign of reluctance in John to discuss a difference of opinion she had always told him not to be English, had forced him to put his cards on the table, had dissected his viewpoint and her own and the effect on their relationship. It was a game in which she was expert, and though emotional exhaustion might follow, it was worth it if only to get things clear. But now things were anything but clear, and she felt miserable. Great love, she decided, never reaped a just reward.

She looked at herself in the long mirror as she thought of this, and gradually self-pity and her appearance soothed her a little. At thirty-eight she was really wearing very well. It was a pity that John was so unwell otherwise this could have been a second honeymoon in every sense of the word. But he was only forty, he would recover under her loving care, there was still time. She looked ahead into the future, planning, and she made a mental note that this lying and elusiveness
must be spoken-of and cleared-up as soon as possible. It was dangerous to let it go on.

At dinner John was brighter. He ate his usual enormous meal. Sometimes Ella wondered where such a thin man could manage to put it. He went through the whole menu: soup, sole, chicken, sweet, savoury. He ate with absorption rather than pleasure, as if some inner necessity drove him on, his nerves crying out to be covered. She had a little soup and pretended to eat her chicken; with her, eating was less a necessity than a convention. The room was very full, a glitter of electric light vying with the sunset seen through the long windows, the waiters moving rapidly among the tables, and at intervals the far door into the kitchens swinging open to give a glimpse of white chefs in a confusion of plates and metal. She fed on these things and on the vicarious pleasure that was hers at seeing John enjoying his dinner. And all the time, threading the conversation, the clashing of china and silver, the elusive, sourceless singing of electric fans, came the sound of the waterfall, insistent and endless.

When they had finished dinner John suggested that they should walk down by the river, and Ella was pleased. It showed that he was beginning to take an interest in things. She went to fetch a wrap and as she came down the stairs again and saw herself in a long mirror she knew that she was looking her best. The silvery-grey chiffon wrap on that glittering black dress suited her completely; it gave a curious effect of moving water. A pity, she thought, that John was going so grey and looked so worn-out, because she felt as young as ever. She took his arm as they left the hotel and they began to go down the path towards the river.

The waning evening was still tense with a threat of thunder, the trees hanging very rich and heavy and no birds singing. In the breathless stillness the sound of
the waterfall was curiously distinct, as if it were only just outside the hotel gardens instead of some distance away, and John said, "Surely it's much louder than it used to be."

"I don't think so, dear."

"It must be. I don't remember hearing it like this before."

"We did, John. Have you forgotten in only ten years? We were here at the same time of year. A waterfall can't change."

"But the bed of the stream can. The rocks aren't hard here."

"Perhaps you're right, dear, but I feel that a waterfall can't alter, all the same, it isn't in the nature of things."

John made no reply. They reached the river a little below the waterfall and stood looking down at the swirl of dark water. Above them the fall hurled itself into space, touched to brilliance by the last fading lemon in the sky, and all round them was a feeling in the dusk of trees, of dampness, of every leaf and blade of grass trembling with submission in the rush of air and sound. At the edge of the pool under the fall the grey submerged rocks had been worn smooth and passive by the endless stroking of the water.

There was present a force that reduced any living thing to insignificance, yet although she was holding John's arm Ella could not feel that it drew them together. When they had stood on this spot before, the sound of the water had engulfed them, blended them together, so that they had gone there every day on their honeymoon and remained there for hours at a time, fascinated by this feeling of oneness. But now she sensed that there was an immense difference. John and she were not one, but separate entities; the force in the air, instead of drawing them together, was separating them, taking John away from her, so that, at this moment,
there was no indefinable communion between them, and she had no idea what was going on in his mind.

She had meant to remind him, to speak of those other days, and perhaps stir him to some feeling of tenderness, but now she was disturbed, and looking at the water she said abruptly, "John, why did you shut the bathroom door?"

"I didn't shut it. It must have slammed."

He denied it so quickly that Ella knew there must be a feeling of guilt in his mind.

She held his arm closer to her. "Now, darling, is that quite the truth? You shut it. You shut me away from you. Why did you want to do it?"

"Oh, Ella!"

"What, my dearest? What do you mean? I'm only trying to get to the bottom of this. I don't like it. I do my very best for you and then this happens—"

"What happens? What are you talking about? Do let's be quiet and listen."

"But I must find out. You're not being fair to me. I'm willing to do anything, only you must be open with me. Would you rather I had a separate room if it's alone you want to be, or if it isn't that perhaps—"

"Ella!"

There was such an agonized note in his voice that she looked at him sharply. But it was too dark to see his expression, and the waterfall was filling the darkness with such vibration that she could not be sure if she was not mistaken. Suddenly irritated by their surroundings she said, "Come away, darling, we'll talk about this in the light."

"But I like it here in the dark. I don't want to go back yet."

"I think you should, dear."

"Let's not argue, Ella, do let's be peaceful for a little."
“It isn’t that, darling. I never want to argue, but it’s getting chilly and the doctor said——”
“I’m quite warm—perfectly warm.”
“You may feel warm now, but it’s quite a walk back to the hotel and I don’t want you to catch cold in your present state. My darling!” She put her arms round him in the darkness and kissed him. “My darling, I only want to do what is best for you and look after you, only listen to me——”

He said nothing. The waterfall filled the silence between them with its soft thunder. Through his sleeves Ella could feel him trembling. “You are cold, you see!”

He let himself be led away.

Going up the narrow winding path to the hotel John walked in front. Behind him Ella followed silently. She had reluctantly made up her mind that John was in a difficult mood and it would be best to say nothing for a little while. But with every step, with every moment of silence, her dissatisfaction increased, damming itself up inside her. She wanted passionately to say to his retreating back, “What is it? What is the matter!” but experience had taught her that sometimes it was better to employ a method painful and alien to her, to approach a problem, such as this barrier between them had become, indirectly.

She said, “Walking along this path again makes me feel all romantic.”

John said nothing.

“I can’t believe we’ve been married ten years. Can you, John?”
“Yes, Ella.”

She did not know what to make of this, so she ignored it.

“You wouldn’t rather not have come here, would you, dear?”
“No, Ella.”
"I was just wondering because you were so quiet."
"It's such a lovely night," John said.
She tried to laugh off this rebuke.
"When we were here before you weren't so interested in the scenery. D'you remember that, my darling?"
"Yes, Ella."
She gave up. They walked up through the gardens in silence. The hotel in front of them was a glitter of light against the mountains. With the approach of darkness a wind had arisen and the trees were becoming restless against the stars. Right up to the hotel steps the voice of the waterfall followed, defeating distance and the dark and the secrecy of the garden. And she had so hoped, she had made it so clear, that during that little walk he might have shown some sign of being demonstrative.

The moment they reached their bedroom and Ella had switched on the old-fashioned hanging lights she was shocked to see how white and tired John looked. In a voice that anxiety made sharp, she said, "I knew we shouldn't have stayed down there so long."
"But it was lovely."
"It was very silly of me to let you."
"It's not a question of 'letting,' Ella. I'm not a small child."

She looked at him searchingly. This was another new thing; a sign of resentment. Immediately she forgot her anxiety for him and ceased turning over in her mind the conversation they might have had coming up the path. She had given him several opportunities to demonstrate his affection, and he had taken none of them. Tiredness was not sufficient excuse for that.

She would not look at him again, because in that moment she felt hurt almost to the point of anger, and instead she began to move about the bedroom, tidying it, putting clothes away in drawers and cupboards. And as if this tidying, the orderliness that
followed, had its natural reflection in her mind, she put on one side all the minor irritations that he had caused her that day and concentrated on the original hurt: he had lied to her about the bathroom door. This lie, the other instances of lying neatly tabulated in her memory, the look almost of hatred that he had given her, and several other looks of the same kind at different times lately; all these things came together and made up a monumental whole that could not go unexamined any longer. She had to have it out with John.

She did not begin at once. All discussions of this kind had a more successful ending if they began by John showing some sign of affection, of softening towards her. Then, as if a floodgate were being lowered, there would come from her a thin stream of pained reproach that swelled and swelled until it submerged him under a tide of unanswerable logic.

But John did not give the sign she wanted; he stood motionless staring into the small, flickering fire of pinecones, and Ella had the uncomfortable impression that she might not have been in the room at all. Vividly in her imagination she felt him going further and further away from her.

The room was silent but for the ceaseless voice from the valley. The lights suspended high up under the ceiling were almost painful, glaring fixedly from their antiquated glass shades. And she decided that it was these hideous lights that made John look so ghastly. He could not be as bad as he looked. And if he was it was partly his own fault, partly due to the fact that something was on his mind, troubling him, and he would not make it easier by telling her about it and letting her analyse it into insignificance.

She spoke to him then, to put herself again in the picture, urging him to undress, and began to take his clothes. She sat him down in a chair and untied his shoes, took off his socks. He said nothing to her, all
his movements were lifeless, so that in a little while, in the silence of the room with its glaring white lights and the undertone of the waterfall, even she in her concentration had a curious feeling of detachment that was almost hypnosis. When she touched his body she derived no lover’s pleasure from the contact and there was no response from him save submission.

Seeing him sitting there in his pyjamas she was all at once alive to the fact that in a few minutes he would be in bed and escaped from her into sleep, and another night would be gone past without this trouble between them being settled. She was instinctively aware that it might be better so, that now he was too exhausted to give her satisfaction in an argument, but she could not stop: stronger than the unselfish part of her love for him or her anxiety for him at this moment, there was inside her a relentless force, a thing almost alive and separate from herself that meant to reach out in a flow of words and strip his mind of its protecting coverings until the truth was laid bare, just as her hands had lately stripped his body of its clothing. The strength of the thing now frightened even her because she recognised that it had accumulated over a long period and at this moment was beyond control. And looking directly at him she said, "Listen, John, I must ask you this again. Why did you lie to me about the bathroom door? And why did you shut it? It’s been worrying me so terribly. And the other day—several times lately—you’ve looked at me so strangely, almost as if you hated me, but it can’t be that, I know. But there’s something on your mind, something you’re keeping hidden from me. . . . Oh, my darling, you don’t know how dreadful it is for me to have to feel that, you wouldn’t let it go on if you knew what I felt, you’d tell me immediately, something is wrong between us, and if it’s my fault you’ve only got to say so and I’ll change, I’ll do anything, only whatever it is must be
clear between us, you must be honest with me whatever painful thing it is that you’ve got against me. You know how I hate uncertainty—"

Her voice went on and on. She listened to it. In front of her John sat looking into the fire. And it seemed to her that his silence in that quiet room was louder than all she had to say. But somehow it did not matter. Already she was beginning to feel relief, all that was dammed up in her draining away, being poured out into his silence. Presently he would be forced to speak.

She said, "I’ve given you so many opportunities lately to tell me what’s in your mind. I know something is wrong between us, but if we can’t discuss it how can it be destroyed? These little differences grow and grow if you don’t deal with them at once, and it does so frighten me. I love you so much and we’ve always been so close . . . so close. . . ."

John stood up suddenly. He walked quickly across the room to the bathroom door.

"John! John darling, don’t go! Be patient with me. I haven’t finished, we must settle this. . . ."

He went into the bathroom, and shut the door.

In the silence she stared at the blank door in amazement. She could not believe that he had really gone. Then she followed him. Why had he done that? What was in his mind? Her hand on the door-handle, the absurd thought crossed her mind that he had gone to the lavatory where she could not follow, but she dismissed it. In a panic she turned the handle sharply and opened the door.

John was standing in the middle of the bathroom facing the door she had opened. The lights were even more glaring here than in the bedroom. He stood there in the pitiless light, unmoving, his hands covering his face as if he were praying and had hidden himself away.
She opened her mouth to speak, and in that moment he let his fingers slip down and he looked at her. He stood there, his hands still covering the lower part of his face, staring at her through his fingers. And he said nothing.

She understood at last. The words she was going to utter were frozen on her tongue. It was as if an icy wet sheet had been wrapped suddenly round her body. Somehow she was back in the bedroom and the door between was shut and she was alone. She did not attempt to find any excuse for that look of pure hatred, because there was none; there was no mistaking it this time, she could not blind herself to it any longer.

She knew then that he was ill not with a temporary illness, and she was part of that illness, and must go away from him or he would not recover. She saw it all quite clearly: for the first time in the history of their relationship she looked at herself in the light of no mercy, and what she saw shocked her. The door between them was shut and might never be opened again, and it was all her fault.

Somewhere over the mountains the storm had broken and the night air had become cold. The wind blew in from the darkness, stirring the curtains and making fitful, now loud, now curiously secret and stealthy and whispering, the voice of the waterfall in the valley. She shut the windows and turned off the lights and began to undress in the firelight, throwing her clothes into a heap whereas normally she would have folded them neatly, terrified that the bathroom door would open and John would come into the room before she was ready.

When she had finished she got into bed and drew the sheet up over her mouth, turning away from the other bed and closing her eyes, trying not even to think of John, trying to keep the thing inside her from reaching out to him and possessing him, so that when he should
come into the room he might feel alone and quiet, gathering the shattered pieces of himself together unaided and in peace.

She lay there motionless and heard the door open and his movements in the darkness, the creak of the bed, a breath like a sigh as he settled himself. And she tried to think of other things so that there should be a complete severance between them.

But in a little while she sensed that he was asleep. She could not help imagining what he looked like. Opening her eyes she stared at the reflection from the fire on the ceiling, and she began to calculate. Her mind could not accept this situation as final: there had to be a small hope, something to build on, some new understanding with John. She turned cautiously and faced that other bed, listening for some sound from it. But there was nothing. Only, very faintly through the shut windows, the ceaseless soft thunder of the waterfall, the endless turbulence pouring down into the pool, beating at the grey rocks, stroking them, wearing them away.
"I Killed My Granny!"

BY REYNER BARTON

"Yes," I said. "I done it. I killed her all right . . . with my knife I done it . . . I killed her!"

Over and over again I kept on telling them, and it seemed just as if they weren't never going to believe me.

"In my sleep, I done it," I said. "In my sleep. I 'walked' and I killed her. Yes, I done it!"

Of course it was in my sleep. I wouldn't never 've killed my poor old Granny, waking; not for nothing.

"Can you read and write, Mr. Hardlestone?" the gentleman asked me, and he held a paper in front of me what he'd been putting things down on as I told him them. "I'll just get you to sign this."

I looked at him stupid like for a second. I couldn't hink who he meant. You see, my brother, Ned, he's the oldest; so he's Mr. Hardlestone. Everyone I know always calls me Sammy . . . just like that . . . because I'm a bit slow like.

"Yes," I said, when I saw what he meant. "Yes, I can read and write . . . a bit."

I took the pen from his hand, and signed my name where he told me; and the other gentleman . . . what was the doctor . . . smiled at me and nodded, like he was encouraging me.

"Why," he said, "you're left handed, are you?"

"Yes," I said, pleased that he'd noticed. You see, I'd always been proud of that . . . that and walking in my sleep. It makes me kind of different, doesn't it?
"Is all your family left handed?" he asked me. "What about your brother, is he?"
"Oh, no," I answered him, surprised.

Then they left me alone. Quite pleasant they were very friendly, but I wished they wouldn't come asking me so many questions.

I lay myself down on the bed, and stared up at the ceiling. It wasn't bad being in prison, but I was sorry I'd killed my Granny; and it must've been me what done it, because when they come and woke me up the morning it happened . . . Ned and the others, I mean . . . the sheet was all dirty with blood where my hands had touched it, and the knife . . . that big clasp knife I'd had since I was a kid . . . was lying on the floor close to my bed.

Ned picked it up. "Oh, dear," he said, "you've killed our Granny!"

They said he ought not never to've touched it. I don't know why, I'm sure; but anyway they'd no business to speak so sharp to him. It made him go all white and frightened.

I've always walked in my sleep, but not so much now I'm grown up. When I was a nipper I did, a lot, but I'm twenty-one years old now, and Ned's just on thirty; we're men . . . both of us.

Him and me, we run the farm between us, and Granny helps. When we was boys she did it all alone; you see my mother and father died when I was three. Funny wasn't it, both the same year, and me as young as that? Granny had always managed the money side of things, because she understood it; had got a tidy bit of her own tucked away in the bank, Ned said. Some day that would be ours, his and mine, he said.

About a month ago I started walking in my sleep again. It's a dreadful thing, because you never know what harm you may do someone, see? That's what Ned said: "You never know what you may do."
"I KILLED MY GRANNY!"

Ned and me, we sleep in the same room, always have done, and one night I woke up quite sudden; frighten’d. I think it was the moonlight what frightened me; the room was full of it, and you could feel it all over you somehow, like a live, breathing thing. . . . I dunno. The blankets was all anyhow and Ned was beside me, holding me, like he was helping me back into bed.

"You all right now?" he said.

I couldn’t answer him. I was all dazed and silly with the moon, and waking up so sudden.

"You’ve been ‘walking’ again," Ned said.

After that it kept on happening, but somehow Ned nearly always managed to get me back into bed before I woke up.

"Blimey," he said to me once, "I had a job to hold you and no mistake; you struggled terrible . . . trying to get at your coat pocket for something." Then he looked at me solemn for a long time. "You’ll do someone an injury, one of these days," he said.

That made me feel awful. You see I’m a great big chap, strong as anything.

Then, about a week later, I had a dream. It seemed that Ned was holding me by the hand, and leading me across our bedroom floor somewhere. When I woke up I was standing on the little bit of landing outside Granny’s door, and I was by myself. I’d been ‘walking’ again . . . but the dream seemed so real, I just couldn’t believe Ned wasn’t with me.

Quiet as anything I tiptoed back, and got into bed. Ned was snoring, the other side of the room. Funny, I thought, I’d never heard him snore before.

Once I opened my eyes in the morning, and the first thing I saw, lying on the counterpane as if I’d been holding it, was my big clasp knife. The blade was open, shining all bright and polished.

I hid it away at once, and Ned never said nothing;
but I thought he looked at me kind of old-fashioned at breakfast.

All this worried me something chronic. Suppose I killed somebody in my sleep. . . . Ned or Granny! I'm as strong as a lion.

I began to dream a lot; every night I had them. Terrible dreams!

Then one morning, when I started to dress, I noticed my knife was laying on the chair beside Ned, where all his clothes was. Ned was asleep. I went over, and was just going to pick it up, when he spoke . . . quiet like.

"I found you standing outside Granny's door. That was in your hand . . . open . . . like that," he said.

He looked very severe at me, and I started to cry. I do that sometimes, if I'm frightened or worried. You see, I'm different from most people.

"Oh, Ned," I said, "whatever will I do? I'll hurt someone; I know I will." He just didn't say nothing.

That's how it was; so you see it must 've been me what killed poor Granny. It couldn't 've been nobody else, could it?

It began to get dark, and presently they brought me some food, but it wasn't very nice, and I got thinking of home and the good things I'd 've had there . . . and Ned, all by himself in that empty house . . . and Granny! Fancy killing her like that, and me so fast asleep I couldn't even remember what she looked like . . . afterwards.

I finished what they gave me to eat, and then sat with my elbows on the table and my head in my hands. I don't know what I thought about at first . . . nothing much, perhaps . . . but then I remembered the doctor.

He had been to see me two or three times, and it made me laugh when I thought of the funny things he'd asked me. He was kind, though, the way he looked at me and the sound of his voice. Peaceful it was when he
was in the room, and safe. I'd 've told him anything he asked me, and I couldn't never 've told him a lie.

He didn't seem to think I was bad because I'd killed my Granny.

It was quite dark now, and I took off my clothes and got into bed in my shirt. Somehow it seemed like that doctor was still in the room with me . . . and I knew I wouldn't have no dreams nor "walk" when he was there. Funny, wasn't it, feeling like that?

In the morning everything was hurry and bustle.

"You're going to the Court," the gentleman what looked after me said. "Mind you answer everything they asks you proper."

He laughed at me, and I laughed back, because it was exciting to think I was going to the Court. Of course I'd answer everything right.

I made myself as tidy as I could, and it didn't seem no time before we was there. It wasn't a very big room, and it was brimful of people. When I looked around I saw ladies and gentlemen I knew, and I nodded and smiled at them, but they seemed kind of scared, and turned their heads the other way . . . pretending they hadn't seen me. That made me feel awkward, but the doctor who'd asked me those funny questions came up to where I was . . . kind of raised up a step, with a wooden ledge in front of me . . . and he said: "You all right, Sammy?" and I said, "Yes," and I smiled back at him.

Suddenly all the whispering stopped, and everybody stood up. I saw that a door at the far end of the room had opened, and that an old gentleman had come in, and was sitting himself down at a table, high up on a sort of platform. I don't know what it was about him, but though he sat there for all of us to look at, it didn't seem, somehow, as if he was in the room at all; but a long way off. I can't explain; but I didn't feel as if me and my poor old Granny, or anything
that any of us could say or do had got anything to do with him. We didn’t count. That gave me a funny feeling, and I didn’t like it.

I looked up at a window there was, above my head in the roof. There, lit up with the sunshine that came streaming through, was a bumble-bee, a-buzzing and a-banging of himself about, trying to get free. The noise he made set me thinking of hay-making, and Ned and me down in Long Meadow sweating hot; and the bottles of cold tea Granny had given us set in the shade to keep cool. All of a sudden something seemed to stick in my throat, and I wanted to get out of this hot room, back again to the fields . . . and that made me remember Ned. Perhaps he was here, too, among all these people. Maybe he’d be able to help me, because I was beginning to feel frightened.

I saw him, sitting a little way off.

“Ned,” I whispered, quiet like, trying to attract his attention. “Ned!” But he wouldn’t take no notice.

They asked a lot of questions of everybody, and then it was my turn. I tried to tell them all I knew; how I’d always walked in my sleep, and how that was how I’d come to kill my Granny with my clasp knife. I told them, too, how Ned had warned me I’d be doing somebody harm if I didn’t watch out; because I didn’t want them to think he hadn’t tried to stop me.

“I done it,” I said. “I done it in my sleep.”

They asked me if I remembered doing it, and I tried to recollect. “No,” I told them. “Not clear.”

Did I generally know what I’d been doing of, someone said, and I told him, no, I didn’t; the first thing I knew, as a rule, was that Ned . . . that was my brother, Mr. Hardlestone . . . would be putting me back into bed, covering me up with the clothes and all.

“Have you been walking a lot in your sleep lately?” another gentleman asked me. He spoke quick like and
sharp, and that upset me. It made me feel guilty, like I'd done something wrong.

I tried to remember. "No," I said. "Not till about a month ago; it was then I began doing it again."

He asked me a lot more questions, and I spoke up as good as I could, but what I said seemed to make him cross, and once or twice someone laughed, and that made me feel foolish.

Then I saw the little old man up on the platform, nod towards the doctor, and he... the doctor who'd been so kind... stood up and smiled at me.

"Sammy," he said, "I want you to think very careful. When you've been walking in your sleep, haven't you had no dreams at all... nothing to remember when you've woke up?"

I don't know what it was about him, but directly he spoke I felt quite different; I forgot all about the people sitting there, staring, and I wasn't confused no more.

Suddenly it came back to me. "Yes," I said, and I told him about the dream I'd had... how Ned had got me by the hand, and was leading me across our bedroom floor.

"I see," he said, matter-of-fact, "you remember that. And when you woke up, you was in bed, I suppose?"

"No," I answered, glad to be able to tell him things clear. "No. When I woke up I was standing on the landing in my bare feet, outside of Granny's door."

There was a bit of a pause, and everything seemed very quiet. Then the doctor was asking me something else. "Then what happened, Sammy? Did your brother come and help you back to bed, like he usually did?"

"No," I said. "Ned didn't know nothing about me 'walking' that time; he was fast asleep in bed. I remember that very clear, because he was snoring... and that was funny. I've never heard him snore before."

No one spoke for what seemed a long time, and I
don’t know why, but I felt like I’d said what I didn’t ought; I was sorry, because I’d meant to say the right thing always.

I looked along where Ned was sitting. He’d gone as white as a sheet.

“*I did* kill my Granny,” I said. “True I did, and I’m sorry; but I didn’t mean to. Can I go now, please?”

All the people everywhere started laughing at that, and the little old man . . . who was looking more interested now . . . held up his hand, and told them off proper.

The doctor sat down, and the gentleman, who had been a bit snappy like before, was on at me again. I began to feel fair muddled and daft.

“On the morning when your grandmother was found dead,” he was saying, “you slept very late, didn’t you? Even when your brother brought the doctor and the police into your bedroom, you didn’t wake up, not until they had given you a shake. Did you usually sleep so heavy?”

I said no, I didn’t, and he asked whether I could account for it in any way. Those were his words.

“No,” I said . . . and then I remembered. “Except,” I went on . . . and it was the word “sleep” what made me think of it. . . . “Except that Ned brought me a glass of hot milk, after I was in bed.”

“Yes?” the gentleman said, sort of enquiring, “and did he say anything?”

“Yes,” I replied, quite ready, because I wanted them to see how kind Ned was to me. “He said I was to drink it up, because hot milk was good for making you sleep, and perhaps I shouldn’t ‘walk’ if I had some.”

“I see,” the gentleman answered, and then he turned round to where there was a policeman standing by the door. “Officer,” he asks, “was there an empty glass put down anywhere near the bed?”
"No, sir," the bobby replied, quite certain like. "No, sir, there wasn't."

I didn't know what they was all driving at. I'd told them I'd killed her; what else was they trying to find? The sweat was pouring off my face, and I felt a bit faint. I was just going to ask if I might sit down, when I heard Ned's voice. He was standing up, and he did look poorly. "If you please, sir," he said, "I took the glass, and I washed it up in the kitchen."

"Oh," said the gentleman, and he sounded so sarcastic I could've knocked him down, and pleased to. "That was a very tidy thing to do; very . . . careful."

What was it? What was it they was trying to do to Ned? I was just going to tell them all over again what they seemed too stupid to understand, when I heard a thin, high voice what seemed to come from nowhere, somehow.

It was the little old gentleman perched up on his platform, and, of course, I listened to him politely.

"Now, Sammy," he said, and I thought it was friendly of him to call me that, "we want you to help us, and you needn't be frightened."

He picked something up from in front of him, and I saw it was my knife. He gave it to a policeman, and the policeman brought it to me. "I want you to take that," the old gentleman went on, "and try and remember exactly how you killed your Granny with it."

I took hold of the knife in my left hand . . . being left-handed . . . and then I felt all bewildered. I couldn't remember how I'd killed her.

"There now, Sammy," said the voice . . . very gentle like. "Strike a blow with it; strike that wooden ledge in front of you, just like you did when you killed your Granny."

I tried hard to remember, because I didn't want them to think I was stupid, but I couldn't; so by and by
I looked at Ned. Perhaps he'd help me. Quiet like, he nodded at me, and his lips seemed to say: "Go on, do it!"

I lifted up the knife, and dug it deep into the wood like I was told . . . and left it there, shivering and shaking. Had they done with me now, I wondered, and could I go?

The gentleman, what had asked me so many questions, and the doctor came up to where I was. Then the doctor pulled out the knife, and looked hard at the hole it had made. They whispered together for a bit, and turned towards the platform.

"This helps to support my theory, sir," the doctor said . . . or some such words as those . . . "that the blow what killed the victim of this cruel attack couldn't possibly 've been given by anyone what was left-handed."

There wasn't a sound to be heard. The room was quiet, except for the buzzing of the bumble-bee against the glass of the window; then I saw that they was all of them staring at Ned. He was standing up, and he looked white and terrified.

Suddenly he started shouting. "I never done it," he cried. "I never done it. It's a dirty lie!" . . . and he fell down flat with a thud, like he was dead.

I never saw Ned again.

Everything that happened after he fainted is all confused to me; I can't remember nothing, but they must 've took me back to the little room where I was before. Later on the doctor came and talked to me. . . . Just ordinary things he spoke about, but it made me feel better. He kept coming, quite often; but every time I asked him about Ned he didn't seem to hear, but told me some joke or other . . . and then I forgot to ask again.

One day he said, how would I like to go and live
with him? He could do with someone strong for odd jobs about the house and garden, he said.

I thought that sounded very nice. "But when they let me out of here," I said, "I'll have to be helping Ned again with the farm."

Then he told me that I'd never see Ned no more, because they'd proved that it was him that killed my grandmother; and he'd got to take his punishment. I stared at him like I was dumb.

"Right from the beginning," he said, "we felt sure you hadn't done it; and, naturally, we were very suspicious of Ned. You see, Sammy, people who walk in their sleep don't do no harm . . . not to themselves, nor anyone else . . . but your brother didn't know that. Then you was left-handed, and . . ."

I couldn't wait no longer, but broke in on him though I knew it was rude.

"Ned?" I said. "Ned wouldn't never do a thing like that. Why, I told you how kind he was. It was me what did it . . . in my sleep. I . . . I remember . . . quite clear."

The doctor stood up, and put his hand on my shoulder.

"No, my boy," he said. "You don't."

He's been kind to me ever since, and I like working for him. I never walk in my sleep now, and gradually I'm beginning to forget that I killed my Granny . . . but I can't forget about poor Ned. It's cruel, that is! . . . Cruel!
First And Only

BY CAROLINE LEE

I feel in a tiresome way responsible, and yet I only saw her twice. As a matter of fact, I can see her now, umbrella and shopping-bag complete, though why a shopping-bag I didn’t know, and don’t know now.

I was on leave from the Nursing Service, in Kenya, some years ago and was staying with my mother at Colymouth. It was an extraordinarily mild day in March, with a sun that had real warmth in it. I’d had no exercise since I’d landed in a blizzard a week or two earlier, and it seemed the morning for a real walk instead of the usual crawl along the promenade. I felt rather a pig suggesting it and leaving my mother alone, but she pressed me to go, and I started immediately after breakfast, meaning to meet her later on the sea-front.

I decided to walk up Peel Hill, as being a rather less strenuous climb than the headland on the other side of the town, and set off with a pleasant feeling of exhilaration, happy to be warm at last and to see the countryside already busy with the early West Country Spring. I remember noticing how high the sky seemed, and how the bud-thickening of each twig altered the still bare trees and hedges, making them blurred and reddish-brown. There was a feeling of excitement about, like there is before a child is born—oh well, it’s no use trying to explain what I feel about the Spring. Missing it for two years out of three—if one’s lucky—seems to sharpen one’s senses when one comes back

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to it. I think plenty of people on leave would know what I mean. I felt as if I were sharing in a miracle.

I was getting a bit tired of the asphalt road when I noticed a turn off it to the right, leading to a path through two steep fields at the cliff's edge. It was there that I saw her first, stumping ahead of me in a business-like manner with an umbrella in one hand, though there wasn't a cloud in sight, and one of those big hanging-bags in the other, slung over her arm. She was tightly gloved, wore a fur stole and a hat that perched quite shamelessly in the manner of our great-aunts!

"You won't get far, all cluttered up like that!" I thought with an inward grin, feeling pretty superior, with no hat, gloves or bag, and a short tweed skirt. Something prompted me to speak as I overtook her—a sense of superiority, I fear, as much as anything, and curiosity, too, because she looked a little important, as if she were keeping some sort of an appointment.

"Lovely day, isn't it?" I exclaimed.

"Glorious!" she answered with equal though ladylike enthusiasm.

Her face was plum-coloured, her figure stout and tight. She looked quite unsuited to the fairly formidable climb. I had to fit my pace to hers, which was annoying, but after a few questions as to the possibility of sticking to the cliffs instead of the road, I suggested, rather to my own astonishment, that we should walk together. I wanted to find out what she was like, why she was walking with that purposeful atmosphere. She seemed pleased to have a companion.

"Do you know Colymouth well?" I asked after a few rather stately remarks about the weather from both of us. "You don't live here, I suppose, or you wouldn't be likely to be out so early?"

"Oh, no, I'm only staying here."

I tried another tack and then another. She was shyish, and I began shamelessly to cross-question her
in an attempt to get her going on any subject whatever. I made a point of introducing a good many autobiographical details myself to put her at her ease and to make her feel that I wasn’t being entirely impertinent. Not that she seemed to resent me. In fact she seemed willing, in a ladylike and self-respecting way, to answer any number of questions.

I noticed that she didn’t waste much time in looking at me. Her eyes were engaged with the view—to the left, the sea like silk under the sun, and before us, a coloured design of sloping fields and trees and homesteads.

“Do you do much reading?” I asked rather stupidly.

“Yes, I’m fond of reading,” she answered in her flat, Midland voice. “I like a nice book. It passes the time, doesn’t it?”

Good heavens, I felt, and tried something else. I was beginning to regret the impulse that had saddled me with her.

“I wonder if you know a part of the country I’ve stayed in a good lot—round about Melton Mowbray?”

Would she take it amiss that I recognised her intonation, I wondered? But no, she became quite animated.

“Oh yes. I live in Leicestershire, you know. Just on the outskirts of Leicester. Do you know Leicester?” she asked, a little wistfully, it seemed.

I do, and dislike the place intensely, as I do all manufacturing towns.

“Well, I’ve been there,” I answered cautiously. “Do you like it?”

“You see I’ve lived there all my life. I’ve got used to it as you might say—always been in the same house.”

*Always in the same house.* This depressed me horribly. I walked on in silence testing the flavour and finding it sour. The house would be square, I thought, and immensely solid, built of yellow brick with large and very brightly polished windows and no creepers. I had
begun to luxuriate in its probable horrors of ferns in
decorated pots, tightly stuffed upholstery and honey-
comb counterpanes when she spoke again—almost
apologetically, I thought.

"But I come here a lot, you know. Oh, I love
Colymouth! Don't you think it's a beautiful place?"

She turned her face to me and her dull little eyes
were shining. I agreed with fervour, glad to have
discovered some enthusiasm.

"I often come for Christmas, and then I'm here
again end of March and all April and some of May—
I'm a bit early this year, but it's been that mild I felt
I had to get away—and then I always come down in
September—too many people in July and August, it
doesn't seem to belong to one then—and stay till the
end of October. I sometimes think October's the best
of all. The colours—well, they're wonderful!"

"But if you like it so much and come here so often,
I can't think why you don't live down here altogether?
Or is the house your own and would it be difficult to
sell perhaps?"

"Oh, I've thought of it lots of times but, I don't
know—I've got lots of friends at home. They'd think
it funny if I left altogether. And then—if I really lived
here—perhaps it wouldn't seem so—I wouldn't like ever
to get used to Colymouth."

She spoke with intensity, and I felt I understood what
she meant, though it seemed pretty unpractical.

We had reached the top of the hill and stopped for a
moment to get our breath. Our road intersected a sort
of baby moor with clumps of gorse and rough springing
grass—fresh and sane and extraordinarily vigorous it
was. And the air smelt new.

It appeared to her a matter of importance which
road we took, "though they're both lovely," she said
with quite a little air of showmanship. We decided upon
the shorter way back to Colymouth. "It would never
do to keep your mother waiting,” she pronounced. “May be chilly on the front.” We turned right leaving the moor on our right with a coppice to the other hand.

We walked along in silence for a bit now, knowing each other well enough. I began to like her a lot.

“Do you ever go abroad,” I asked after a time, wondering if her love of scenery and the increased facilities for travel might have overcome her natural timidity. For I knew she was timid. But no. She was true to type.

“It seems silly, doesn’t it? I’ve often thought I would, but somehow I never have—cowardly, I suppose—and then there’s always Colymouth when I want to get away.”

This was really fatuous, I thought, and I felt I couldn’t let it pass.

“Oh, but you really should. After all, travelling is so easy nowadays, and there are such perfectly glorious things to see only a few hours away.” I began to warm to the subject. “For instance the Belgian Cathedrals or the Châteaux on the Loire. I’m certain you’d love them. And then those cruises in the Mediterranean. (Just her line, I thought.) How can you resist them? Why, I should always be travelling if I were you!”

“You seem to have got about a lot,” she said wistfully.

“I’ve been terribly lucky. And then, you see, my job takes me about too. You don’t really know what you’re missing—honestly you don’t. After all you’re not old—and it wouldn’t be a question of money, would it?”

“No, no it isn’t that. And I’m only in my fifties—and beyond a bit of blood-pressure, I’m as good as ever I was. It’s just the—the plunge, I suppose. I must really think about it. Matter of fact I’ve got a cousin—she’s always asking me to go out to her. Where did you say you were? I mean to say when you’re abroad.”
"I'm in Kenya."

"That's in Africa too, isn't it? She's in Africa—in Cape Town. But I don't suppose you'd know her?"

I repressed a desire to giggle.

"Africa's a big place, you know—and I've only once been home by the Cape. We go through the Red Sea."

Geography was evidently not her strong point, and she looked blankish.

"I must look at the map when I get home," she announced, "Forgotten all my geography, I'm afraid. Oh, you have seen a lot, haven't you? I've never talked to anyone who really lived abroad."

We parted later on the front, after exchanging expressions of goodwill and, rather self-consciously, our names. I felt a little sorry to be saying good-bye. She wasn't complicated and that made her seem quite real. A lot more real than most people you meet. And I felt I'd always remember her face when she talked about Colymouth. But after a few days I'd almost forgotten her and I didn't think of her again for a long time.

Kobona is hot in February and we were slack at the European Hospital. We bathed a lot off-duty, and when we were "on," groused about the heat, had more time than usual for cutting up dressings and more chance of getting to know the patients than when we were "heavy." I was pretty miserable at the time, having left the whole of my heart up-country and hating my transfer to the coast which had happened just before Christmas. I was on night, and it didn't help matters much. I blessed an emergency appendicectomy who gave me quite a lot to do for a few days. He was a nice lad and knew Charles—but all that's by the way and over and done with.

Matron told me one evening towards the end of
February in her day report that one of the liners had landed a new patient—a hemiplegia. These semi-paralysis cases mean plenty of work, and I felt quite glad about it. (I suppose this is the sort of remark that makes people say that nurses are hard-boiled. I can’t see it that way myself, but there you are.) She was described in the hospital way as “resting comfortably,” but I knew there’d be plenty to do for her.

Actually she was dozing when I made my first round and I didn’t disturb her. Her bell sounded about half-past-one—the cord had been tied to the bed-head so that her good hand could reach it. I hurried into the three-bed ward where she was the only patient.

“Oh, Matron—I’m dreadfully sorry——” she began.

I explained that I wasn’t Matron, that Matron had been in bed for hours, and began to put her to rights. Her voice was thick, and one side of her face was badly distorted, and she was in distress of body and mind. You could see she wasn’t used to having things done for her—and she hated it. But she was grateful, poor thing, and apologetic to the point of tears. When I was finished I dried her eyes and gave her some hot milk to try to make her sleep. She was difficult to feed, and I had a good chance to look at her. Something about her reminded me—I couldn’t think what it was.

The next night she seemed a little brighter, and the moment I saw her, I knew who she was. The facial paralysis looked to me a trifle less pronounced, and Matron had given me a good report of her. It appeared that she had recognised me the night before, but had felt too wretched to say anything.

“But I knew you the moment you spoke. I’ve often thought of you. But I never thought I’d see you again.”

“It was three years ago, wasn’t it?” I said. “So you did decide to travel?” It was best to be matter-of-fact about it.
Her head moved restlessly on the pillow, and one hand fidgeted with the sheet.

"I'm that annoyed," she muttered with the slurred voice that was difficult to follow. "I was planning to get back end of March—and now look at me, stuck here—and for ever so long, I shouldn't wonder."

All her gentility was gone and her accent much broader than I now remembered it. I couldn't blame her for feeling sorry for herself.

"Have you anything important to get back to—at the end of March, I mean?" I asked.

"Always like to get there end of March," she answered struggling, I could see, against tears. "I'll be missing all the best of it."

I recollected suddenly her passion for the place. It had seemed a good deal more than mere fondness.

"Well, we must work hard to get you better as soon as possible, and you must help, too, because that's very important," I said, as though speaking to a child.

She looked at me with an odd searching look, but didn't answer for a moment. Then she gave the twist to her face that was the best she could manage in the way of a smile.

"Funny me lying here and looking at a lot of palms all day. You never know what'll happen, do you? She crooked her good arm through mine and did what she could to help me to pull her higher up the bed.

"Always slipping down, aren't I? I don't seem to have any strength—but it'll come back, won't it?" Again that searching look.

I did my best to reassure her, and as the hospital was still light and she didn't seem like sleeping, I stayed for a few more words. One could hear the waves breaking on the rocks outside the windows—swish—shu-urr—swish—shu-urr—and the incessant shrilling of crickets in the hospital grounds.

"Did you enjoy your trip? You've come round by
the Cape, haven't you? What a lot you must have seen! Didn't you tell me you had a cousin living in Cape Town?"

"Yes, a first cousin of my mother's. I've been staying with her. Very good to me she was."

"What did you think of everything—and the scenery especially? How did it compare with Colymouth?"

I asked, wondering what her answer would be.

She took the question quite seriously.

"Oh, it was ever so interesting. I'm glad I've seen it—I really am—and I don't believe I'd ever have come if it hadn't been for our talk. But I want to get back now. I've had enough travelling—and after all there's nowhere like home."

"What did you like best," I persisted. "Didn't you love the Islands? And all those bays near Cape Town are lovely, aren't they?"

She agreed politely but not enthusiastically, fumbling in the bed for something concealed there. She drew forth a buff envelope and handed it to me.

"I got these last time I was there. Good, aren't they?"

I found myself looking at a series of postcards of Colymouth and the surroundings—in colour, and not very successful colour.

"They're not good enough, of course, but they give you an idea. Oh, they have been a comfort while I've been lying here."

She was like a mother showing with pride and joy the family portraits, and I tried to respond accordingly. She knew every detail of them, and was able happily to point out one of the exact view-points of our walk.

I handed the cards back to her and she lay silent with her face turned towards the window with its picture of sky and ocean, dusty palms and blazing sunlight.

"I made up my mind yesterday," she said suddenly. "I'm going to get you to write a letter for me." There
was a long pause and then she said with an extraordinary air of restrained importance and excitement, "I'm going to live there—going to buy a house at Colymouth! What do you think of that?"

She lay in a sort of beatitude; not in the Kobona European Hospital but already translated to the nearest approach to Heaven she knew. What, I wondered, was the powerful charm that had ousted love of man, urge towards a family, even, I suspected, any but a conventional attention to God?

"I've always wanted to be buried there—and now I'm certain to be!" she added with a sort of innocently sly satisfaction.

She was buried in the European Cemetery two days later, following a second stroke that was the end of her. I'd practically brought her here to die, and I couldn't even have her buried where she wanted. All I could do was to stand by her grave with the Medical Officer and the Mission Chaplain and cry, for some silly reason, my eyes out. For she'd had more than most of us. She'd lived with and loved an idea that had never let her down. And that idea had made her and kept her happy.

They say that the soul takes six weeks to leave the body. I wouldn't like to say what I think. All I know is that she died on the first day of March and she was seldom out of my mind until one day in the middle of March. When I say she was in my mind, I don't mean that I consciously thought of her at all. She was just there—distressed and lost and urgent like a frightened child. It worried me horribly. And then one day she'd gone.

It isn't that I don't sometimes think about her, because I do often, and wish I'd held my silly tongue about her coming abroad. But she isn't in my mind any more. And I believe I know—as much as I know anything—where she's gone. I wish I could be sure.
The Boulder

BY FRANCIS MUNRO

The old man trundled the barrow out of the cobbled byre, and with an adept twist overturned it upon the dunghill. He reversed it, and the sloppy brown load, like a patch of Autumn decay on the darker surface of the heap, steamed up in fine spirals. He wheeled the barrow under the byre’s gable, and returned to the front, where he stood as if thinking, licking his upper lip with his tongue-tip.

The croft buildings stood on a terrace of the hill slope, a stone’s throw above the flat of small fields that stretched for half a mile to the main road. Just beyond the road was the sea, a cold grey plain cut by one bright pathway that sparkled back the pale November sunshine. The first bus of the day, southward bound, slid its cream-coloured roof along above the dyke and whin patches that bordered the road; it went with an easy bodiless glide, as if it disowned contact with the solid earth. It stopped for seconds at the side road that ran arrow-straight from the hill-foot; and the old man knew that his neighbour, with whom he had exchanged a shouted greeting half an hour earlier, was climbing aboard.

When the bus moved on he went into the woodshed, where, rummaging, he brought out of a corner a spade and a crowbar. One tool in each hand, he passed in front of the house into the little sloping field just beyond. The grey-green grass, kept close-cropped by the cow until the end of October, was still short, and
lacking the resilience of growth, and retained clearly the marks of his heavily-tacketed soles.

A smooth-worn boulder-top projected several inches above the surface in the upper corner of the field. It was not particularly large, about eighteen inches across; through three generations the old man, and his father, and before that his grandfather who had won the croft out of the heathery hillside, had each in ploughing season turned his furrow aside there, leaving the mottled stone rising island-like in the midst of the black soil. Each had harboured in his mind the project of removing the boulder; each had put off the task, always finding other things more needful to be done when there was time on hand.

With short quick jabs the old man marked out a patch four feet by four, having the stone at its centre. He cut and levered away the turf in sections, to a depth of four inches, setting the slabs aside in a neat wall as he proceeded. The grass and its roots were matted and tough, and the old man panted with a forced outgoing of breath every time he drove down the spade, the sinews in his thin, brown wrists standing out like cords.

His daughter, forty and buxom, appeared at the corner of the cottage with a basin of scraps. She hardly needed to lift her voice, “Chookey! Chookey!”—the hens came at the run from every side, knowing that the basin signified a meal. She left them picking eagerly, and crossed the field to see what was intended by the strenuous digging.

“It’s that you’re at!” she addressed him, in a tone of half-protest. “Why are you troubling? You might as well be in at the fire with your pipe if there’s no work to do.”

He forced the spade into the soft, uncovered earth, and leaned over it, pushing one hand up under his cap, feeling his scalp damp with sweat below the thin straggle
of grey hair. He looked at his daughter with a sort of pity; she ought to understand, and yet it was plain that she did not understand.

"I’ve been telling myself for sixty years—since I was a wee chappie of ten or so—that some day when I’d have time I’d have to shift this bit rock."

"After all that time, it might as well be left." She walked round it, pushing at its unyielding mass with her foot. "It’s deep," she observed. "You’ll maybe find it too far in to move."

"We’ll see," he replied, digging again, and forcing her to move away. She watched him in silence for a minute before returning to the cottage.

He worked round and round the stone, exposing always more of it. Ever it slanted outward; he discovered a rough surface of uneven seams and broken ridges, in startling contrast to the top that had been worn smooth and round by countless years of weather. This new part of it was also of a darker colour than the top, and damp from its earth blanket. It was not now in the least like the stone that he had known all his days; he was antagonistic towards it, as though it were cheating him. Sometimes when the spade grated harshly on the rock he felt the antagonism seething at the very core of his being.

A hail from beyond the bramble-hidden fence drew his attention. It was the gamekeeper; brown-faced, brown-hatted, in his brown suit, he mingled with the thinned Autumn foliage inconspicuous as an animal in its natural camouflage.

"The old stone’s tough," said the gamekeeper in a soft voice.

"I’m going to be tougher," the old man rejoined with a curt laugh. "It’s near fifty-five years since I ploughed this field first; and that time and every time since it’s been in the way. But it won’t be again."
"Looks like it won't," agreed the keeper, and continued to look over the fence in a quietly impersonal way. The old man sat on the edge of the hole he had made, and dropped the spade back against the stone. "It's hot work, I tell you!"

"It's a warm day," said the gamekeeper. "It's not the sun, there's no heat in it at this time of year: it's a mildness in the air itself. Always for a spell in November it comes; Saint Martin's Summer, it's called."

"Ay," the old man nodded. "So I mind you told me a year ago. And the year before that. And the year before that again, that was the first November you were here. Saint Martin's Summer."

"My own name being Martin makes me think of that."

The gamekeeper was aware of a rebuke in the old man's words, but he smiled tolerantly. "I hope I'll be telling you the same thing every November for a good many years."

He walked a few yards, found a gap in the bramble screen, and crossed the fence. He was a big man, walking with an easy slouch. His terrier, a half-bred Cairn, came through at his heels, and nosed along the edge of the field.

"You've a way to go yet," he commented, looking at the stone. He laid down his gun, picked up the crowbar and stepped into the hole. He sunk the point of the crowbar into the earth, found that it was following the under curve of the boulder, and leaned his weight. The earthy fulcrum gave way to the iron, the boulder did not budge.

"I'll have to go a foot deeper. But I've all day to it."

"When you've cleared it you'll not get it out alone."

"Oh yes I will! It's not strength but knack that's needed. I'll ease it out."

The gamekeeper was manœuvring here and there with the bar, but without effect. "Like a dentist at a tooth—lever it out of its socket, eh?"
“Just. Look out—that’s my toes!”

The gamekeeper laid down the bar, produced cigarettes.

The old man refused: “I’ve my pipe.” He put his hand in his pocket and brought it out. “Twist for me; there’s nothing in them things.”

“Well, so long!”

The gamekeeper whistled up the terrier, lifted his gun into the crook of his arm, and strolled away.

The old man smoked contemplatively, studying his task. When he set to again, he found himself cutting away under the stone. At midday his daughter called him to dinner. He was satisfied with his morning’s work; the boulder sat clear of earth. The rest of the day he could devote to engineering.

After eating he sat for an hour in his cushioned armchair by the kitchen fire, smoking and thinking. The daughter cleared the table and swept the room, and announced that she was going to the village. He sat lazily while she prepared herself; shortly after she was gone he went to the door, and saw her cycling far down on the road through the small fields. He returned to the kitchen, and went to the big wall cupboard. He fumbled in a tin, and filled his pocket with sweet biscuits. Although they were his own to take, he did it stealthily, as if committing a theft.

He went back to the field with a two-inch plank. He cut a sloping gangway in one side of the hole, and toppled the boulder in that direction. Levering at it with crowbar and plank, he started it on the ascent.

It was much harder work than the digging. Frequently he stopped, to rest and munch a biscuit. He sweated considerably, although, mindful of the comparison to tooth-drawing, he used persuasion rather than brute force, easing an inch this way, half an inch that way, always onward.

His daughter, come back from her shopping, crossed
the field unnoticed, so that he was not aware of her presence until she spoke.

"I'll fetch over Tom Anderson to give you a hand. You'll not manage."

"I am managing," he retorted. He was breathing hard, and when he straightened up, having temporarily wedged the boulder, she saw that he was trembling.

"It'll be dark soon," she pointed out. "Leave it be. It's the horse you need to drag it out. You can get at it in the morning."

"Can you no' see, I'm doing fine." He was patient with her—always patient with her, because although she was a good housewife she did not understand the technique of outdoor work. "I'll have it out before dark—or I'll never have it out."

"Have it your own way. Mind it doesn't slip back on you."

She left him. He sat for five minutes, relishing the sweet taste of the last biscuit, and felt fresher when he bent to work again.

A small stone slipped away from under the plank, causing it to tilt upon its edge. The boulder, released, began to roll back. The old man plunged the crowbar in behind to stay it; but he saw that he was too late, and threw himself out of the hole. The boulder turned over, and settled back in the spot where it had been originally, the same worn side again uppermost.

The sun had passed beyond the western shoulder of the hill; a soft flame-coloured glow filled the sky there. In a short time it would be dark.

The old man took the spade, and began to throw the earth back into the hole around the stone. His limbs were steady again; he swung the spade with the fluent ease of the good craftsman. At intervals he halted and trampled down the soft earth. Finally he replaced the sods that he had cut in the beginning of the day. He pressed their irregular edges close about the stone with
his heavy boots, and in the dwindling daylight saw that
the surface of the ground and the top of the boulder
looked much as they had always looked.

He was quietly content as he carried the tools back
to the woodshed. He felt glad to think that in the
morning, and in all his mornings to come, he could
look across the field and see the mottled outcrop of
the boulder, familiar and friendly there as it had been
since the croft was won from the hillside. And in
ploughing time he would grumble as he swung out the
horses, to leave that defiant island unconquered by the
black furrows.
TREE AND PLOUGH

Scraper-board drawing by Victor Clarke
The Tree

BY CHRISTINA HOLE

Henry Morgan heard the verdict given without any real sensation of relief, just as he had waited for it without any definite fear. He had been pretty certain that it would be "Accidental Death," for there was nothing to prove that it could have been anything else. Morrison was a heavy drinker at all times, and he had been more than usually drunk that night. The river was very full after the rains, and the primitive unfenced bridge was not an easy thing for a drunken man to tackle. And it was known he could not swim. The conclusion was fairly obvious, and it was the conclusion to which everyone in the village had come before the inquest opened. Now the seal of authority was set upon it, and Morgan had nothing more to fear. Not that it was likely he would have been suspected even if there had been any doubt about it. He had taken very good care that no one knew of his burning, devastating hatred of the dead man; Morrison himself, the conceited, drunken fool, had no notion of it. "Let bygones be bygones" he would have said, and it was more than his heavy, unimaginative mind could have conceived that there are some things which are unforgivable. He had cheated Morgan out of a job that should have been his—a long time ago now, but it still rankled. He had stolen his girl from him by the loose-handed generosity that women admire; a dozen times a week he had sprayed him with his coarse jokes and idiot laughter, holding him up to ridicule, and never
thinking they could be resented. Well, he had never shown his resentment, but he had won in the last resort. Now he was free—free from the fear of the Law, and from the blinding hatred that had darkened the whole of life. Morrison was dead, and now he could forget him.

But could he? His sense of triumph flamed fiercely within him, but it was against a dark background of recurring thoughts from which it was still difficult to escape. Even as he strode back to his cottage he found himself going over and over the tale of his injuries, just as he had done when the other was alive; his thoughts ran round the circle of old miseries till they reached the night when those miseries were ended, and then back again over the same ground till he was sick of them. It had all been so easy in the end. He remembered how he had schemed and plotted, choosing and rejecting plans, and then none of them had been needed after all. It had been pure luck, really, but he had had the courage to take advantage of his luck. Just a drunken home through the darkness and a silent follower dogging his steps; a stormy night that cleared the streets of the village and left the world to those two alone; and then, on the bridge, a sudden lurch against him, a splash and a churning of the water, and nothing more. All as simple as that; and no one to see it, no one at all, except the single elm that grew on the bank, and that was not likely to bear witness against him.

It was odd how that tree kept recurring in his thoughts. It was under it that he had asked Gladys to marry him one lovely September evening, and she had said she liked him, but she must have time to think it over. Like a fool he had agreed, instead of forcing an answer from her then and there... and she had thrown him over for that brute, Morrison. It was under that tree, too, that he had had a fight with Morrison and been beaten; and the great fool had come the next day and wanted
to make up the quarrel. Oh, he'd made it up all right. He'd smiled and shaken hands and they'd stood each other drinks in the bar. Morrison had gone away thinking it was all over—as though the thought of being beaten by a creature like that could be wiped out by a few cheerful words and a few drinks! It seemed right, somehow, that the tree which had seen his double defeat should have been the sole witness of his victory. It knew now which was the better man.

With an impatient effort he thrust the tree and his late enemy from his mind and let himself into his cottage. The woman who looked after him had left his tea on the table and gone: a bright fire burned in the grate and the little room was warm and cheerful. Morgan made the tea and sat down with the newspaper propped up against the teapot, skimming over the headlines first, as was his wont, before settling down to read it carefully, page by page. At the bottom of the first paragraph he looked up sharply, his mind rather than his ears conscious of an unexplained sound. He became aware for the first time of the deep silence of the room, which the soft noises of the fire and the ticking clock only accentuated. Outside the uncurtained windows a dull, lowering sky, threatening rain, hung low over the listless smoke of the chimneys, and such sounds as reached him from the deserted street seemed to come from a long way off. What he had heard was something different, nearer and more intimate, but unaccountable. He listened intently for a minute, and then, dismissing it, returned to his paper again. And as his eyes sought the interrupted sentence, he heard it again—a rustling murmur, faint but distinct, like—what was it like? The thought dropped into his mind that it was the rustling of leaves in the wind, and was instantly rejected. It was not that, certainly; there was no wind, and no tree or bush anywhere near his house. In the same instant it ceased; and the silence
flowed back over the room, obliterating everything. Imagination, of course. He'd been thinking too much about that damned tree. He was getting nervous—perhaps the inquest had worried him more than he had realised at the time. Yes, that was it. He must pull himself together—it had come to something when he could let himself be frightened by imaginary noises. Clearly he wanted a drink to steady himself, and the sooner the better. He left his unfinished tea on the table and walked quickly down the village to the lights and commonplace comfort of the Red Lion.

Work and good company have always been the best antidote for morbid thoughts and imaginings. During the next few days, Morgan divided his time between his work and the Red Lion, going home only to eat, and returning after closing time, usually a little fuddled, to sleep heavily till morning. True, he was drinking more than was good for him, and spending rather more than he could afford; but Morrison no longer occupied the centre of his mind. He was beginning to taste the fruits of his action, to breathe freely in a world unsullied by his enemy. Even the talk about the inquest was beginning to die down in the bar of the Red Lion as fresh topics of interest took its place. As for the rustling sound, he had dismissed it for what it was—a figment of the imagination born of nervous strain. After all, it takes courage and determination to kill somebody, even a drunken rat like Morrison. No one else in the village could have done it. He knew them all—a loud-mouthed, boasting crew, with plenty to say for themselves, but without the grit between the lot of them to buy a drink after hours—let alone carry out a successful and unsuspected revenge. He, Morgan, was a man. He had risked the utmost penalty of the Law, and he had got away with it. He had nothing now to fear from any man, alive or dead.
A week after the inquest he walked down to the inn as usual in the early evening. As he laid his hand on the door to enter, he caught sight of something out of the tail of his eye, something tall and branched and leafy that towered over his head and shut out the sky. A tree, full grown, alive, and charged with menace. For the fraction of a second he stood motionless with terror, his hand still resting on the door; then, by an act of desperate courage, he wrenched his head round to confront the horror, and saw the empty, treeless street, with its houses flush on the roadway, and no sign of life except the voices of two labourers coming up to the inn. There was nothing there to fear, only the familiar, the commonplace, the well-known. His nerves had played him false again. Still shaken, he turned into the warm, lighted bar, and that night he got very drunk indeed.

Much later, he woke suddenly in his own bed out of a beer-sodden sleep. He was at most times a heavy sleeper, who roused slowly, but now he sprang at once to full wakefulness, with every sense alert. And he was afraid. Some sentinel within him had sounded the alarm; something had happened. It was still dark, but there was a moon, and her clear light shone on the wall opposite the window. And etched on that wall was the black shadow of a tree, the upper branches of a single elm, moving very slightly in the night wind.

Morgan did not scream, because his vocal chords refused to act. He did not go to the window to find out what was casting the shadow, because he knew there was nothing there that could. Vague prayers to a neglected God for mercy rose in his terror-frozen mind and sank again. They were no use, he knew. A cold voice within him kept telling him that a boundary had been crossed which could never be re-crossed. Dawn found him still staring at the wall from which shadow and moonlight alike had vanished.
He kept away from the Red Lion after that. After a few days he stayed away from his work as well. He found himself constantly glancing over his shoulder at chance shadows which never materialised, and his workmates noticed it; he thought he caught them once or twice talking about it in little groups and stopping quickly when he came near. Besides, the rustling of leaves had returned. He heard it now almost continually, and sometimes so loudly that it was difficult to pay attention when anyone spoke to him. It was easier to stay at home, safer too. The tiny rooms gave no space for trees to grow up behind him as they might in the open. Elms, especially, were dangerous, because they wait to drop their branches on people they dislike, and kill them. That one by the river must have been Morrison's friend, after all; that was why it was trying to get at him now. But he would beat it yet, as he had beaten Morrison. He had only to stay at home where it could not reach him. He saw no one but the woman who looked after him, and after a little she left. She said he made her nervous, muttering, and acting queer-like. But he did not mind. He preferred solitude, because it left his mind undistracted from his single purpose of defeating the tree. Once the landlord called for the rent and seemed inclined to stay and talk. Morgan thrust the money into his hand with a snarl and banged the door in his face. He had no time now to think of outside things and the little affairs of the village. He shrouded his windows with thick stuffs against the moonlight and its shadows, and kept the darkness at bay with constantly burning lamps and well-stoked fires. The need for food was the only thing that drove him out on quick forays in broad noonday—food, and, of course, drink. He could think better and quicker after a drink or two, he found. He'd be all right as long as his money lasted out, and as the days slipped by, he found himself needing less
and less food. There was no need to worry about money yet, anyway. Perhaps the tree would weary of its pursuit before that question became urgent.

One morning he woke suddenly to find himself sprawling, fully dressed, on the sofa in the living-room. The clock had stopped, but the light that filtered through the badly-drawn curtains showed him it was full day. He felt a curious sensation of lightness in his limbs, as though he had been very ill and was now recovered. An enormous load was gone from his mind, leaving it clear and active. He noted with disgust the sordid muddle of the dirty room, the unwashed crockery on the table, the stuffy, unaired smell of the atmosphere, still reeking with the fumes of the dying lamp. The face that stared back at him from the dusty mirror was haggard and unshaven, as horribly deteriorated as everything round him. But it was a sane face. Whatever had happened to him during the time that had just passed, he was all right now. He was as empty of ghostly terrors as a vessel from which a load of dirty water has been thrown out. He had come through a ghastly peril, but not from any tree. It was his own mind that had betrayed him, but he had escaped. Now he must get away from here, out into the air, to human companionship, to the proper place of those who have been ill and are now well again.

Shaking a little from weakness, he went out into the fresh morning air, letting his feet take him where they would. It was enough to be out of doors again and unafraid. There was no one about; everyone was busy, of course, the women at home, the men at their work. Work—yes, that's where he ought to be. He must try and get himself taken back. But not to-day. He must have a few days' rest, a few days to get his strength back, and get used to being well again.

He had only a hazy notion as to how long he had been shut up with his terrors in that cottage. It seemed
a very long time. He could remember very little of it, and had no desire to remember more. His one determination was that never again would he allow himself to sink into such a state. He would give up the drink; he would find another housekeeper, and seek out all his old friends, surround himself with cheerful companions. No more brooding for him. The idea occurred to him to set the seal upon his recovery by going to the place where the tree stood and looking at it. He had read somewhere that fears faced were fears conquered; he was no longer afraid, and he could prove it to himself for good and all. He set off then and there down the road and over the fields towards the river. This path, which he had not taken since the night of Morrison’s killing, aroused no particular memories in his mind. It was just the same familiar path it had always been with nothing gruesome about it. That proved he was all right again—yes, and the tree itself standing by the waterside was just a tree. He noticed with faint interest that it was less leafy than when he had last seen it; the autumn winds had stripped it of most of its leaves, and the bare branches stood up rather pathetically against the sky. There was no life left in it, no rustling, no menace; it was just an ordinary tree stripped against the winter, without power to hurt him or anyone. The terror had been in his own mind, not in this poor, natural thing—and now his mind was empty of horrors and quite sane again. He was glad he had come, but even this final expedition had not been really necessary, except as an additional proof of his cure.

He went back to the cottage, shaved, and dressed himself in his Sunday clothes. He felt like a new man, beginning a new life. At noon he caught the bus to the market town, and there treated himself to a good meal and a visit to the pictures. He met no one he knew, and of this he was glad; better to avoid any questionings as to what he had been doing with himself,
and just slip back into his place without comment. He remembered that there would be no one to get his tea at home; he could not face another meal in that dirty room until he had had time to clear it up a little, so he ate again in the town and caught a late bus back. A faint feeling of reluctance stirred in the depths of his mind as he alighted from the bus and turned towards the cottage; but after all, that was only natural. It meant nothing. He had been ill there, and so he felt less anxious to get home than usual. That was all. He stood watching the lighted bus as it drew away from him and passed out of sight. There was something warm and comforting about it that made the street seem darker than before when it had gone. Perhaps a visit to the Red Lion might be a good thing... but no, he had sworn off the drink. He'd had too much just before he was ill—it was that which had shaken his nerves, in all probability.

Inside the cottage, the cheerless atmosphere of the room daunted him a little. The air seemed thick, and the silence was like something heavy and concrete. He moved about quickly, setting things to right, clearing away the debris of old meals, kindling a fire. He'd soon have everything as it should be. He was glad to have something to do because even now, though he was well again, he found himself inclined to start at shadows, to listen to little sounds. The ticking of the clock seemed very loud as though it were an alien sound striving to break through a stillness that resented it. That was nonsense, of course. He mustn't get fanciful. But how tired he was, all of a sudden. He'd go to bed early and have a good night's rest, and then in the morning he'd see about getting back to work. There must be a fog coming up outside. That would account for the curious stillness, and for the fact that even in the room there was a sort of mistiness. Over there, in the corner, for instance, he could hardly see the
small table with the wireless on it. He could make out where it stood, but it looked thick, somehow, all of a piece, instead of a table with thin legs. Of course, that was always a dark corner, and with fog coming in, things took queer shapes. Odd, though, that it should be just in that one place. He felt a curious reluctance to investigate the matter further—too tired, that was it. He sat down, not in the easy chair by the wireless, but over by the window, and was suddenly conscious that he was sweating. He must still be very weak after his illness—or was the room really getting closer, as though something was drawing all the air from it? The fog must be getting thicker, too. That corner seemed to be filled completely now with something solid and round; the feet of the table had spread in some queer and irregular manner and stretched unevenly over the floor, like the roots of a . . . of a . . . No, no—he mustn’t let his thoughts run on like that again. That was all over and done with. It was just a wireless table distorted by the fog. Only it seemed to be getting thicker and taller—to be stretching right up to the ceiling, and to be throwing out shadowy branches over his head. If only there was more air in the room more light, he could think better, throw off this obsession see things as they really were. But the fog . . . or something . . . was taking the light from everything, drawing up the air, choking him, making him think of trees and horrors. There was nothing there but a table, nothing, NOTHING. His eyes stared at the floor where the shadows that looked like roots were lying, followed the thick, rough outline of the table upwards to what in the dimness looked like an overhanging branch bearing down on him and filling the room, sought desperately for the familiar outline of the wireless and the wall behind it. A cold wave of terror swept over him. He sat there sweating and trembling, unable to move, while his mind resisted with dreadful energy the
image that his eyes forced on him. Sane, ordinary words like fog, illness, shadows, scurried about his brain, bolstering up his shaking defences against the attacks of a deadly inner knowledge. A long way away, in another world, he heard some labourers going past the window. The sound of their voices was thin and unreal, like something heard in a dream. It did not occur to him to call to them, for he was no longer part of that world of human contacts in which they moved. Nothing now existed for him but this small, airless room, and that which stood in the corner. His mind made one last effort to save itself and forced him to his feet. Shaking like a drunkard, the blood drumming madly in his head, sweat pouring from his forehead, he seized the lamp and swung it high so that the light fell full on the place where the wireless table stood. Or where it had stood. For it was not there. The tree was there, soaring up to the ceiling, pushing out lusty branches against him, swelling while he looked to fill the room and crush him against the walls. With an animal yell of terror, he dropped the lamp and backed away—and felt in the darkness the roughness of the bole pressing him back, suffocating him, squeezing the life out of him. The loud rustle of angry leaves deafened him; strong branches swept across his face and beat down his feebly waving hands, pressing him down and down into a red-lit blackness that swept upwards to engulf him as the water had engulfed Morrison. His breath came in choking gasps which grew weaker and fewer as the deadly pressure increased. Finally they ceased. Quiet fell once more on the little room, except for the ticking of the clock and the soft noises of the fire, and soon they, too, slithered away into silence.
The Migrant

BY BENN’ SOWERBY

For days they had been gathering. The cherry tree was full of them. When a cold wind blew they would fluff out their feathers in disconsolate bewilderment, but for the most part they chirped and twittered restlessly and hopped from twig to twig unable to perch contentedly for more than a few minutes in one place. Sometimes they would flutter down in search of food on to the short turf that bordered the lane, the surface of which was already hardened by the earliest frosts. It was very quiet in the lane. The deep ruts were overgrown with weeds. In summer the still air between the hedges retained the warmth of the sun through even the darkest days: yet it was never wholly stagnant, and there would always be a scent upon the air, the delicate light fragrance of June roses, the rich wild odour of the honeysuckle, the sweetness of the mowing grass that filtered through the tangled growth of the hedge, for there are galleries and intricate small passages winding there, as the nesting bird knows though they are less than hers. Now the hedges were bare, reduced to a black network across which the withered bines still lay in unresilient stark coils. The tall weeds at the roots were rust-coloured. There was a bitter-sweet fragrance in the air, slight, indefinable, until the wind stirred and there was no longer any doubt of its pervasive quality. Then the birds fluttered uneasily, impatient and afraid. Still others came down, singly or in pairs, sometimes in small flocks, and as the days went by and
the gathering increased the incomprehensible impulse that had brought them together but was not yet fulfilled became more urgent: it grew into a dread from which there was no respite, no escape. They had no leader to direct their ceaseless activity, but each new arrival strengthened a reviving instinct among them, an instinct that became imperious and at last was no longer to be restrained. In sudden panic they rose all together as at some concerted signal. There was a whirring of innumerable wings: a fleeting shadow ran across the lane, lifted to the hedge, and was suddenly dissolved. Fear left them as they mounted, released by the movement of their flight. High up they wheeled, for a moment only faltered, then headed south to vanish soon beyond a grey horizon.

Miss Tinsley-Sheridal also journeyed southward. Wrapped prudently yet not unbecomingly against the weather, she braved the chill discomforts of the channel crossing with a tempestuous gaiety that concealed some inarticulate doubts. Other passengers, catching sight of her profile as she paced the deck, found themselves speculating as to what peculiar chance could have set her there among them, turned when she approached again to obtain a clearer view of her. The wife of an elderly gentleman who had been leaning against the rail was seized with sudden apprehension for his health: “I think, James,” she said, “we had better go to our cabin. The Dover cliffs have nearly disappeared now, and it won’t do you any good standing about in this damp atmosphere.” She thrust her arm through his with what struck him as an excessive solicitude. James, who detested the stupid pantomime of watching those bleak white walls as they diminished, allowed himself to be led away pondering silently on the uncertainty of a woman’s whims. Those who remained to gratify their curiosity were quickly undeceived. Miss Tinsley-Sheridal could never have
been described as pretty. A second glance assured one of that. Nor was she as young as that first brief glimpse of her had led one to suppose. The men turned away disappointed, slightly embarrassed by the sudden interest they had displayed, with an awkward smile of compassion, for a plain woman is clearly a disaster, and deserves some pity even in a world where a pretty one is something of a curiosity. The women lifted their chins a trifle higher, satisfied that she was not worthy of the criticisms they had been hurriedly preparing. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale continued to pace the deck. She had found by experience that the movement helped her to restrain the fluttering excitement in her breast.

Perhaps this was the pleasantest stage of her annual journey. Until she had actually stepped off her native soil she was continually harassed by a little nameless, nagging fear, but once on board the channel steamer she was aware of boundless possibilities. There was an air of romantic adventure about a ship which had always found in her an immediate response. Laughter bubbled at her lips, seldom to be released it is true, for channel voyagers are for the most part a morose and uncommunicative people, but hers was an irrepressible gaiety on these occasions that paid no heed to an uncongenial atmosphere. Already new horizons were spreading out before her beyond the channel mists, none the less alluring because the barque that bore her towards them over the curling white-flecked waves was a squat and grimy steamer that pitched and rolled uneasily and wallowed heavily in the troughs as it nosed its way through the water with a clumsy but dogged perseverance.

It is uncertain of what exactly Miss Tinsley-Sheridale went in search on this annual pilgrimage southward. That she had never found fulfilment of her vague dreams was evident, for there was a look of bewildered disillusionment in her eyes that belied her gaiety and
her unuttered hopes. But for the moment the little nagging fear was subdued to a mere doubt. As she leaned over the rail watching the gulls that circled and swooped about the stern of the ship she was filled with a sense of freedom, of escape. Her thoughts turned involuntarily to Becky—at such moments she had a quite intimate and tender feeling for Rebecca, and the diminutive came easily—whom she had left behind in the grey gloom of their Hampstead home. She and Rebecca Lynch lived together in one of those dreary, stonefaced houses, substantial relics of an age of stolid dignity, about which even now at times a certain melancholy still clings. Looking up at one of those grim façades drowsing in a summerlit noon it is difficult to imagine the ghost that should haunt the steps descending from its porch. Insidious time, unable to crumble the solidity of its structure, has made of it a graceless anomaly. The very pillars that flank the narrow entrance, designed on too massive a scale for the mere support of the light porch roof, having lost all significance as symbols of the dignified weight of responsibility that the household formerly upheld, appear grotesquely disproportionate. There is no longer any comfort in such a house. But the climate of London is kinder. It is rarely that such days occur to emphasise these defects, and in the long twilight that follows the house reveals a different aspect to the observant eye. Then shadows soften its bleak outlines: memories stir dimly into life, and the frightened ghost does at last step forth in bonnet and billowing skirt and sweeps with impressive self-assurance down the steps to the waiting brougham that rolls silently away to be lost irrevocably in the tumultuous delirium of modern traffic.

It is a vision not to be regretted, and one that would by no means justify the preservation of the building on sentimental grounds. But the house suited the two
ladies who now lived in it, perhaps better than they themselves would have allowed. Both agreed that it was much too big for them, but then it possessed two distinct advantages—the rent was very reasonable and the windows at the back looked out upon the Heath. Although it was the former amenity that more immediately concerned them, it was of the latter that they more often spoke, and not without a hint of pride that might well have evoked a pleasant pastoral vision of smooth swelling hills, of flowery vales and sunlit glades instead of the burnt and littered turf, the straggling thickets and gaunt, ungainly trees of the reality. Indeed, their private preference belied their apparent enthusiasm, for they secretly preferred the view from the front rooms which overlooked a quiet street bordered with plane trees and, when these had shed their leaves, a square plot of evergreen shrubs in the middle of which stood a small church overgrown with ivy that successfully concealed the ugly imperfections of its pseudo-Gothic design.

The little commonplace activities of life, the morning’s shopping, the social calls and tea-time gossip, bridge, a lecture to be attended perhaps, an occasional theatre, left no time for dreaming. Even their slight domestic disagreements served only to relieve a potential monotony and for nine months of the year they lived contentedly enough. But towards the end of summer the light grew comfortless. The sparrows chattering in the plane trees were as noisy as ever, but there was a cheerlessness in the atmosphere so that even the newly-painted pillarbox assumed an air of sombre melancholy. The change was indefinable. Miss Lynch was unaware of it. “What lovely weather!” she would say. “I like the autumn. It is the most satisfying season of all.” But Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was overcome with a sudden restlessness, breathing uneasily an air thinned and chilled that seemed to starve her lungs. Then the
domestic differences occurred more frequently: matters of no importance acquired a strange significance: the two ladies argued, scolded in a most unbecoming manner, and at last, unable to bear it any longer, Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, who had perhaps decided for reasons of economy to forgo her holiday this year, resolved to retract her prudent decision and escape. Her departure involved a multitude of preparations which fully occupied the intervening days, and despite her restlessness peace descended again upon the household, so that when the moment came for her to leave they parted almost sadly from each other. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was tempted with sudden generosity to seize her friend by the hands and exclaim, “Why don’t you come too, Rebecca? The change would do you good. There’s still time, you know, if you’d like to.” Some such words had actually escaped her once, but Rebecca, after no more than a moment’s hesitation, had shaken her head. Perhaps the use of her full christian name at that particular juncture had sounded a warning note in her sensitive ear. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was aware only of her glance cast at the waiting taxi with the travelling bags already piled in position. Rebecca was right; such a change of plans at the last moment would have been terribly inconvenient. She remembered, too, that Rebecca was a dreadfully bad sailor, and then there was the question of the expense: she herself had been half inclined to give up the idea of a holiday this year, and she really could not have afforded the double fare, which was what it would have meant for Rebecca’s income could never have run to such luxuries.

Nevertheless in spite of these generous impulses no sooner had the taxi turned into High Street than Miss Tinsley-Sheridale allowed a little sigh of relief to escape her. Poor Becky was sometimes very trying, she thought, remembering the tiresome differences of a few days gone. She was so easily put out. The most trifling
inconvenience was enough to upset her: not the practical type at all: and Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, her own vague dreams and romantic cravings forgotten for the moment, enjoyed a very comfortable sensation of protective sympathy. Where, she wondered, would poor Rebecca be without her. But then a hint of jealousy crept into her thoughts unnoticed. What did Rebecca do while she was away? Disconcerting suspicions flitted through her mind. Rebecca had never shewn any eagerness to accompany her, had never been quite as enthusiastic over her accounts of her holidays as she had expected, although of course these were really but a repetition of the long letters with which she kept her friend *au fait* with her activities. She enjoyed writing those letters. In them she could feel that she was to some extent unselfishly sharing her pleasures. They took up much of her time, of course, but she had always been ready to deny herself for her friends. That the letters she received in reply were brief and unadventurous had never struck her as odd in any way. Rebecca had not the gift of a sprightly pen, and besides, what, after all, had she to write about? Poor Becky was a little too contented, too settled. Her nerveless quiescence sometimes annoyed Miss Tinsley-Sheridale. Sometimes she would have liked to take her by the shoulders and shake her into a more vivid consciousness of the possibilities of life. And here she was most ridiculously suspecting the staid and simple Rebecca Lynch of goodness knows what wild adventures indulged during her absence and kept from her a jealously guarded secret! A merry little laugh at the absurdity of such notions restored her happiness.

For a while she played contentedly with the thought of her escape from a routine that was apt to become monotonous. Already to her imaginative eye as she looked out from her corner seat in the Dover train—she hated the rush and scramble of casual travel, and
always reserved her seat—at the landscape hurrying by a wintry look seemed to have descended upon it as if lit now merely by a few stray watery beams of the sun that danced voluptuously in the colourful piazzas beckoning her southward.

Although she would never have admitted it even to herself Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had no particular affection for Italy. Her delight in that country was the result of habit rather than any real feeling of attraction for it. It is true that she had written in one of her voluminous letters to Rebecca, "I feel I must have some mysterious deep-rooted affinity with this land and its gay and handsome people. It awakens in me emotions that are crushed and deadened in the ponderous atmosphere of England. It is like stepping into a new life, young and free and careless. You would not know me, Becky, I am sure, for the same creature. Of course I have my solemn moods, too, as who would not among all these wonderful old buildings. How I wish you could have been with me to-day when I visited the Palazzo Vecchio—the 'Old Palace' that is, and even if one did not know one could somehow feel that that beautiful old courtyard had remained there just so for centuries. To-morrow I go on to Assisi. I did not visit it last year as you know, and I am full of apprehensions, although I know it will be even lovelier than I remember. Things always are in Italy. Even the dark cypresses which you always seem to imagine must be so very gloomy, are young, too, in spite of being immemorially old. And what have you in England to compare with these olive groves? How cool and sweet they are. I think I must have been named Olive for their sake." But still she had misgivings. There were times when it seemed that this strange country would never yield her full satisfaction. Many years ago she had visited all the usual places. She had been diligent with her guidebook then, conscientiously inspecting the archi-
tecture and the works of art with the indiscriminating eye of the ingénue, bewildered by their profusion. Such things then had had for her all the allurement of novelty, but above all Italy had been for her the land of romance, the home of exiled poets, a passionate land of love and laughter. Even in the high chambers of the Uffizi, while apparently intent on some serenely smiling madonna to which Baedeker had directed her attention with particular insistence, her expectant eye had glanced nervously about her searching in vain for the tall handsome figure that had not even yet appeared. As the days of that first holiday slipped by her preoccupation with this fantastic fellow increased, her interest in art diminished. Before returning to England she had paid a fleeting visit to Venice and it was in the cathedral of St. Mark that she had first seen him. It was an unsatisfactory meeting, since it took place only in her imagination: yet so vivid was the vision evoked, no doubt, by a passing glimpse of some unobtrusive stranger that from that moment she carried a clear picture of him in her mind, a picture, however, never quite completed, for she was continually working on it, an exacting artist, adding a touch here, smoothing a curve there, never wholly satisfied. During the years that followed this malleable material suffered so many changes that at last even the main characteristics became blurred, and although the impulse that had created it remained unchanged the outlines of the picture had completely vanished. An irrepressible hope relinquished the bare canvas for fate to work upon unaided.

Fate, however, proved a lazy and capricious artist. As yet she had not so much as picked up the brush that Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had tactfully laid down. After her first few visits to the country her early enthusiasm quickly faded despite her repeated assertions to the contrary, and poor Olive, the exiled daughter of a southern sun, discovered to her chagrin that
Italy was after all merely another setting for the humdrum existence of people with no less practical, in fact no less vulgar aspirations than those at home. By then she had performed her pilgrimage to the various shrines of art a hundred times and in her rôle of conventional admirer of the recognised masterpieces had found that they were beginning to pall. Occasionally she did experience a new and real delight. Notably there was her discovery of Ostia. By some curious oversight it had been omitted from all her previous itineraries. She came on it one day quite by accident. Could there have been any doubt that this was the genuine thing she would in all probability never have turned aside to explore those quiet ruined streets. Perhaps she did experience some momentary misgivings—it must be remembered that she had not her Baedeker with her on that occasion—but she had had experience of such sights, and felt that here at least she could for once trust her own judgment. "Of course," she murmured to herself in extenuation "it is not to be compared with Pompeii," but secretly she was tired of Pompeii, with its depressing relics and the panorama of this fallen city gleaming white in the harsh sunlight among tranquil fields appealed to her senses with a peculiar force. In her letter to Rebecca she wrote, "I experienced the same feelings as the old explorers must have had when they came suddenly on some unsuspected wonder in savage lands." A second visit paid to Ostia in the following year wakened a less enthusiastic response in her. She wondered if she had not written of it to Rebecca a little too glowingly, and hastily turned the pages of her Baedeker for the comfort of its meagre confirmation.

Such experiences were naturally rare. Yet Miss Tinsley-Sheridale continued to visit Italy each year. There was for one thing her reputed love of the country to live up to. Then, too, she knew her way about there,
an asset that, recalling her early embarrassing attempts at enquiry for this or that, she was never inclined to underestimate. At home among her acquaintances, who looked up to her as an authority on southern Europe with a flattering disregard of the fact that she had travelled only in Italy, she could insert a phrase or two into the conversation with a charming unostentatiousness that earned her credit for a vocabulary vastly superior to the few poor fluttering rags of speech that were all she could wave desperately in the gravest emergency. It is reasonable to suppose therefore that Miss Tinsley-Sheridale enjoyed her holidays more in retrospect than in actual experience, when she was continually threatened with the necessity for expressing a personal opinion and when, released from dull routine with but a vague and ill-defined impulse to guide her, she lived a life almost as dull and full of surprising difficulties at which she never hinted in her letters.

The long journey across the continent tended to cool her ardour. Already she had begun to consider the inconveniences of travel in a foreign land and to wonder whether, after all, it was worth while. Having never defined the object of her annual journey she became a prey once more to the little nameless fear which had attended her departure from London and which now proved quite unexpectedly to have accompanied her across the Channel. In desperation she decided to face it boldly, but even as she did so it fled from her, elusive as always, only to return and torment her later when she thought she had finally subdued it.

Every year it ended in the same way. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, after a hurried excursion to some of the more famous cities, a duty she could not bring herself entirely to neglect, would settle down in a quiet pension where, being remembered from frequent former visits, her simple requirements were attended to with a satisfying un officious foresight, and where, consequently, she
would remain for the rest of her holiday enjoying the untroubled routine she had come so far to escape. She never confessed to Miss Lynch how much of her time was spent at this *pension*. "And now," she would write, "I am back at my old *pension*. They are always so kind to me here that I feel it would be ungrateful of me not to pay them a fleeting visit before I return home. It is pleasant, too, to meet so many old acquaintances. Colonel Brewer is here, and Mr. and Mrs. Copley and the two Misses Fenton and that queer young man, Mr. Marcus, whom I somehow cannot help liking although he does behave so very strangely at times." Indeed of late years it had been solely such old acquaintances who had rendered Miss Tinsley-Sheridale's stay in Italy at all endurable. How much she owed to them she herself scarcely realised. At each succeeding encounter she had grown to depend upon their friendly eccentricities more and more, so that it would seem but a just and logical fate that chose to employ them indirectly as accomplices in her emancipation.

The suggestion originated with the Misses Fenton, and was received with enthusiasm by all except poor Mrs. Copley. Indeed from the first Mrs. Copley was the one discouragement to the enterprise. But they could hardly leave her behind: besides Mr. Copley was such a help in these little adventures, almost indispensable in fact and, as Mr. Marcus had said, they were "like Mary and her lamb with the rôles reversed. Wherever Mr. Copley went Mary was sure to go." In spite of herself Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had been unable to suppress her amusement at his sally, and then, conscience-stricken at her unbecoming behaviour (really he did say such awful things), she determined to be particularly kind to Mary Copley, whom she had never cared for very much, finding her constant ailments a trifle tiresome. Mrs. Copley responded to her sudden
show of friendship, and even forgot herself so far as actually to enjoy the outing. Nevertheless the picnic, for some reason, was not a success. The day they had chosen for it turned out to be unpleasantly hot. They had forgotten, too, that it was market day in the little town, and the dusty road was crowded with traffic from the outlying villages. Then when at last they left the high-road they had to climb the hill which was to offer them such a lovely view across hills and valleys to the dim blue haze in the distance that was the sea. The Colonel, true old campaigner that he was, strode on ahead in an access of imprudent energy, only turning now and then to wave his stick at his straggling followers, a gesture that they scarcely knew whether to interpret as a command or an encouragement. Gradually the light chatter died on their lips. Even Mr. Marcus, strangely morose for once, walked with bowed head in silence as if at a funeral procession.

Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was quite exhausted when at last she subsided on the parched grass beside the Colonel. Although it had been her object to sustain Mrs. Copley with her sympathy, she felt an unreasoning anger with the smaller woman for looking so fresh. Her suspicions regarding her companion’s habitual ailments deepened. It occurred to her that Mr. Copley was altogether too easy with her: his self-effacing timidity merely encouraged her. She looked across at him now anxiously occupied in slicing a loaf. Strange she had never noticed before how bald he was! She had always thought of him as a comparatively young man, quiet but efficient. Now she saw in him only a harassed and ineffectual little figure busily carving his life into uniform meaningless slices and the sudden realisation that he must be very nearly sixty woke a fluttering uneasiness in her breast.

She turned with relief to Mr. Marcus who, having recovered from his sombre mood, was discoursing on
the beauties of the Italian landscape. As he flung out his arms to embrace the smooth, dark contours of the hills, the long, black hair fell about his face, framing and emphasizing the enormity of his nose. Drops of perspiration stood out upon the coarse skin. A crumb had caught ridiculously in his small goat's beard. All at once he turned upon Miss Tinsley-Sheridale as though his energetic peroration directly concerned her. A confusion of words fell about her ears mingling with the incessant throbbing shrill of the cicadas so that she could distinguish no reasonable sequence in them. Only he seemed to her to be reiterating defiantly "Yes, this is your young romantic-looking Mr. Marcus, this absurd gesticulating figure, lean and unkempt and fearful even as you are of the years." The two Misses Fenton leaned towards each other sharing the indulgence of a schoolgirl giggle. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had an uncomfortable feeling that that vulgar Mr. Marcus had made one of his stupid jokes at her expense. She glanced severely at the Misses Fenton. They should know better at their age than to behave so childishly: sometimes they made her feel quite ashamed of knowing them. But the reprimand of her glance was lost upon the two ladies, and as if animated by a single impulse they insinuatingly drew the Colonel into the confidence of their tittering appreciation.

"O, Colonel Brewer, isn't he really too disconcerting! You should never have allowed him to come on this expedition. Surely you won't permit such insubordination."

The Colonel, however, was in no mood for frivolous fun-making. Already he was regretting his extravagant exertion of the morning. He was too old for that sort of thing, and then these alfresco meals never agreed with him. They seemed always to choose the most indigestible things for their absurd sandwiches. He sat in the middle of the company upright and red-faced,
resembling nothing so much as a volcano that might be expected to erupt at any moment.

"My dear ladies," he protested gruffly, "you have only yourselves to thank. The fellow's altogether too headstrong for me to undertake to deal with him. Frankly I disclaim all responsibility."

"Come, come, Colonel. I can't believe you've met your match in me." Mr. Marcus could never resist an opportunity of chipping the Colonel, and was often suspected of being prompted by a secret jealousy. The Colonel's lack of humour on this occasion seemed to revive his high spirits. "If I thought for a minute that I was dimming your reputation after you have emerged unscathed from so many valiant encounters I would willingly surrender the one poor weapon that I have at my command. In your hands I am sure that bright steel would flash famously, and who knows but that thus armed you might conquer new territories you have as yet never dreamed of invading. One needs a deal of subtle tactics to subdue some of these fair citadels," and he nodded blandly at the Misses Fenton who, scarcely aware of his meaning, but flattered by so much attention, hid their pretty confusion in another girlish titter. "But you have it in you yet, Colonel. I believe you have it in you."

Nevertheless the superficial banter which usually animated these occasions had lost its flavour for them. Possibly to-day they detected a hint of animosity underlying its innocent-seeming playfulness. Mrs. Copley, unconsciously reacting to the change in Miss Tinsley-Sheridale's attitude towards her, began to feel another of her "attacks" coming on. Her husband in alarm—for these "attacks" were most undependable, and he could never tell what form they might assume next—timidly proposed that they should return home.

No one demurred, each secretly relieved that the suggestion had come so early.
"I think you're right, Copley, old man," remarked Mr. Marcus. "It looks to me very much like rain over there. If you ask me I think we'll be let in for a hell of a downpour before we get back unless we slip along pretty quickly."

"Now you mention it, it does look rather like it, although I hadn't noticed it before. We'll have to hurry," and Mr. Copley bustled round to assist in packing up the baskets.

No, the picnic had certainly not been a success. As they walked back down the hill Miss Tinsley-Sheridale felt that she had been defrauded: somehow she felt her friends had let her down. She was angry and disappointed. Stumbling downhill in silence she felt sick and dizzy with the heat. But, arrived at the bottom, she began to forget her disappointment. Along the road a stream of traffic flowed unceasingly, and she looked sympathetically upon the sad-eyed oxen, wondering to what degree of understanding with the peasants they attained. She had never considered it before, but now it seemed to her, as she watched them plodding by, man and beast in silent abstraction, that there must surely be some mutual understanding in lives so closely related. And it was just that kind of implicit understanding she imagined them as possessing which she had always hoped in vain to share with her closest friends. Her friends, it seemed, had never felt that need, Rebecca Lynch least of all, she reflected uncharitably, and it had been so little to demand in return for all her kindness. Perhaps human beings never did possess that instinctive knowledge of each other's feelings. Perhaps she would have been happier if she had had a dumb animal for friend.

She was aroused from her reverie by the voice of Mr. Marcus. "Italian," he was saying, "is the only language for swearing. I fancy even you, Colonel, couldn't compete with that young fellow over there."
Besides, I suppose one should really be a Roman Catholic in order to be able to swear properly. We have our 'damns' and 'bloodys' but we don't mean them literally, and so they lose more than half their force.”

The young fellow in question was struggling with a refractory goat, and despite Mr. Marcus' contention, although he was swearing lustily at the frightened animal, his words appeared to be having not the slightest effect. Then, to her horror, Miss Tinsley-Sheridale saw the young man raise a stout stick and begin belabouring the animal with heavy blows. She had often seen animals whipped and beaten, but she had never been so horrified as at this sudden assault. Perhaps the close bearing of the incident on the subject of her thoughts roused some dormant passion in her, perhaps merely its proximity, or perhaps, as the others all agreed afterwards, it was a touch of the sun. Whatever may have been the cause of her impetuosity Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had done a curious, even a dangerous thing. She had run up and interposed herself between the animal and the man's raised stick. “You scoundrel,” she had screeched at him in a shrill and desperate voice, “how dare you treat a helpless animal like that!”

The man had dropped his stick, amazed at her audacity. But, not understanding her English, he had evidently jumped to the conclusion that she wished to buy the goat. Quick to seize his opportunity he had named his price, an exorbitant sum for the poor creature. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, slightly bewildered, had stood her ground.

“He is offering to sell you the animal,” Mr. Marcus had explained, laughing, as if he enjoyed the joke enormously.

But Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, stirred by a righteous indignation, was not to be laughed into relinquishing the cause she had so unexpectedly taken up. At that moment there had been an air almost of dignity in her
bearing. "Very well," she had replied, "and I am going to buy it."

They had argued with her, protested in vain. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale had paid the man then and there. She had wanted to lead the goat away with her, but they had succeeded in dissuading her from that. She would have the goat fetched away at some convenient time then, the next day perhaps or the day after. Meanwhile the man must not hurt it. It was her property and she would look to him to respect it as such.

But that was only the beginning of it. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, having acquired a goat by some strange freak of circumstance—she herself could scarcely understand afterwards how it had occurred—was obliged to provide it with a home. That night the storm predicted by Mr. Marcus at the picnic arrived. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale lay wakeful in her bed, listening to the hiss of the torrential rain, unperturbed by the deafening peals of thunder, pondering her problem. Unthinkingly she had assumed a tiresome responsibility. She could not pay the man from whom she had bought it to keep the goat for her. After what she had done that would be not only ridiculous, but equivalent to a confession of defeat. Yet she could not keep the animal at the pension. There was plenty of room to tether it in the courtyard. But she doubted very much whether Signora Buonomini could be persuaded to agree to that: and then there was the question of feeding it. Goats, she believed, required pasture. Perhaps it would have to be milked she thought suddenly. A flash of lightning lit the room, emphasising for one vivid second the comforting triviality of familiar things. In the blackness that followed it Miss Tinsley-Sheridale groped her way hopelessly through a veritable jungle of startling possibilities. Towards morning the storm grew quiet in the distance and she fell into an uneasy sleep in which she fancied that Rebecca Lynch, who was
travelling with her in a train, perversely turned into a goat, and that Mr. Marcus, the insolent conductor, threw them both off in the middle of a tunnel.

As the days went by Miss Tinsley-Sheridale grew desperate. Something must be done. She was so continuously preoccupied with thinking of the homeless goat that she soon came to pity it, and then to regard it with affection. She would not consider selling it again: for how could she be sure then that it would not fall into as barbarous hands as those from which she had rescued it. There was nothing for it, she decided in the end, but to rent a house. After all, she could be very comfortable here, and it might even prove cheaper than the pension. As soon as the goat died she would be able to go home. It never occurred to Miss Tinsley-Sheridale that the goat might go on living.

 Fortune, it seemed, smiled kindly upon this decision. There was a house to let, the very thing, she told herself, when she first set eyes on it, with a small outhouse for the goat and a common pasture close at hand. Poor as it was in appearance, she was delighted with it; there could be no question of its convenience in her present situation. An old peasant woman, Grazia, who lived near by, would do the cooking and the cleaning, and she had a small son who for a mere pittance would tend the goat. “Really, things could hardly have turned out better,” thought Miss Tinsley-Sheridale. “I am sure I shall be very happy here.” She wrote to Miss Lynch telling her about the house, but omitting all mention of the goat. Becky would never have understood that part of the affair: she would be amazed even to hear that she had taken a house here. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale experienced a flutter of pride at her own boldness. With pen poised thoughtfully above the inkpot she mused on her own strength of character. Becky was so dependent upon her: she would be lost without the kindly pressure of her guiding hand.
Dipping her pen as if into the pool of human charity she decided quite irrelevantly to call the goat Rebecca.

She was glad that everything had worked out so simply. The impetus afforded by that first rash act had seemed to carry her blindly forward through the nightmare consequences of the next few days. Insurmountable difficulties had dissolved before her, and she was surprised to find herself so soon committed to this rustic life and so easily settled in it. But the nervous strain had tired her considerably and she was grateful for the opportunity to rest. The weeks slipped by, and she found a new happiness in the simplicity of this life. Every day she would walk out to see that Giovanni was caring properly for her goat. Already the animal had grown sleek and lazy under her attentive eye. So nervous at first that its apparent ferocity had alarmed her, it now permitted her to approach, and suffered her caresses patiently. In the evening she would watch for Giovanni’s return, leading Rebecca, and would follow them into the little outhouse to attend the milking as if that were a ceremony of very special significance. Giovanni was a handsome lad, with long, black hair that was continually falling untidily about his face. Then he would toss it back with a sudden lift and twist of his head, raising for an instant his flashing eyes to hers. But she never looked at Giovanni, and rarely spoke to him. Her whole attention was concentrated on Rebecca. In a little while she had grown so fond of the animal that she no longer thought of returning home except as a very distant possible contingency. The goat had even found its way into her letters, grazing at first quite casually in the background but gradually acquiring there also its proper importance in relation to other things.

Day by day her hungry affection grew more vigilant. At first Giovanni had seemed to her an exemplary guardian of her treasure, but now she began to perceive faults in his ministration. Rebecca’s coat had lost its
smooth appearance: it had become matted and shaggy. What but Giovanni's neglect could be responsible for that? Once, too, she found that Giovanni had forgotten to water the poor creature. She spoke to him severely, but he received her scolding in sullen silence, and she could not be quite sure that he had understood all she had tried to say. And then one evening she watched for his return in vain. Filled with dreadful forebodings, she waited impatiently at the window: the minutes crowded past, hustling one after another. Giovanni was more than half an hour late. She could wait no longer. Crushing a hat upon her head she hurried up the road. Perhaps Rebecca had broken loose and strayed away and was lost.

At a turn of the road she came upon them, Giovanni and another boy, hurling stones down a steep bank. For a moment she did not see Rebecca. Then she caught sight of the animal racing in a frenzy of terror down the slope of the bank followed by the flying stones. Even then she did not comprehend immediately that the young ruffians were deliberately aiming at her goat. Suddenly they saw her and fled in confusion. For fully an hour she coaxed and called before she could persuade Rebecca within reach. It was already growing dark when at last she led the goat home. There was a deep cut on its neck, and the sight of it infuriated her. She could forgive neglect but such wanton cruelty was unforgivable. Somehow she managed to milk the goat and water it herself. She had seen Giovanni perform these duties so many times that she knew how it was done and her anger blinded her to her incompetence.

Afterwards she went round to see Grazia. The old woman was delighted and honoured to receive her. No, Giovanni was not at home. She had not seen him since the morning.

"I saw him this evening," said Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, "and I do not wish to see him again. He has behaved
disgracefully. In future I will attend to the goat myself."

She turned away from the door, but Grazia clung to her, beseeching her to give the boy another chance. "He is young and thoughtless," she said, "but a good boy." She did not know what Giovanni had done to incense his mistress, and she did not try to explain away any misdeeds she could imagine him as having committed. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale understood very little of what she said. She tried to shake herself free from the old woman's clinging, bony fingers. She felt revolted by the cringing humility of this pleading, and not a little alarmed. "I will not have him near the house again," she repeated with conscious determination. Grazia, enraged at her indifference, tore at her dress, screamed at her in sudden fury. If Giovanni left she would leave, too. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, overwhelmed by her abuse, ran from the house. Before she could break free Grazia had actually spat on her. She trembled all over with fright and rage at the indignity of it. So that was the real nature of the family she had employed so trustfully! Well, she was well rid of them, and it would be easy to find someone else to work in the house. After this experience she would not trust another with her goat. In future Rebecca should be her own personal charge.

But Miss Tinsley-Sheridale soon found that she could not get anyone else to work for her. Grazia, in spite, seemed to have cast a spell upon all the neighbours and not one of them could or would accept her offers. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was compelled to do all the work herself. She did not mind tending Rebecca. Her love for the animal quickly accustomed her to these tasks, and, although anyone who knew the prim maiden lady of Hampstead Heath would have been surprised to recognise her in this quietly intent domestic figure, yet she was contented. But the housework was mere drudgery.
Little by little she began to let things slide. Dust accumulated upon the shelves and tables: she could not keep pace with it. Spiders span innumerable webs about the walls. She had never known how to cook properly, and now, as more and more of her time was devoted to Rebecca, she became careless of her own meals. Sometimes she would pass whole days without eating more than a few crusts of bread and butter. The remains of these sketchy meals lay everywhere.

Rebecca throve and grew fat. Her quarters were kept clean and neat and wholesome. She no longer supplied her mistress with milk, as though even that slight duty were beneath the dignity of so pampered a pet. But Miss Tinsley-Sheridale was not angered by this failure. She did not need the milk. All she asked was the goat's friendly, unprotesting company, and she would sit for hours upon the grass in the heat of the sun watching the grazing animal in deep absorption. She had no other friends. She had even given up writing to Miss Lynch, and a letter she had begun more than a month ago still lay forgotten on a table among a miscellany of soiled plates and empty tins. The peasants, who had grown used to seeing her with her goat, spoke of her as la vecchia donna Inglese che è pazzia, and none of her former friends, if they could have seen her now dressed in tattered dirty clothes with dishevelled hair and gaunt and sallow features, would have thought for a moment of questioning their verdict.

As a pebble dropped into a deep still pool shatters its stillness, wakening it to life in a hundred widening ripples, so a letter was dropped into the smooth placidity of Miss Tinsley-Sheridale's rustic isolation. She had picked it up mechanically and was glancing over it with listless, unseeing eyes when a phrase leaped out at her and caught her by the throat—"we are to be married on the twentieth of next month." Without reading further she stood with the letter in her hand slowly
recovering consciousness of a former existence. From
the centre of the picture that memory painted in her
mind the face of Miss Lynch smiled out. She raised
the letter to her eyes turning to catch the light from
a window curtained with dust. Other phrases swam
into her mind—“old friends”—“my annual holiday”
—“undreamed-of happiness.” By the time she had
reached the end her attention was fixed. “Dear Olive,
you must hurry back. I need your help in so many
little things, and I know you will share the gladness of
your Becky,” she read, and promptly turned the letter
over in order to read it through again.

So during all these years Rebecca Lynch had been
deceiving her. A wave of the old spirit surged up in
her. During all that time she had concealed no secrets
from Rebecca Lynch—it did not occur to her that she
had had no secrets to conceal—and she had imagined
that she received the same confidences in return. Tears
of indignation rose to her eyes. It was she who should
be married, she, Olive, who had searched, had waited
so long for the expected bridegroom. And now Rebecca
Lynch had snatched him from her arms. So it seemed
to her as the full meaning of the unexpected news broke
upon her. In that moment she saw the purpose of her
life’s journeyings revealed for the first time, as though
a dark corner of her mind had suddenly been lit by a
piercing ray of brilliant light.

The writing on the paper wavered, blurred, before her
eyes. She looked up and faced the spectre of herself
reflected in a fly-spotted mirror. Instinctively she made
a movement of recoil. But then immediately she stepped
forward, incredulous, to peer more closely at that
strange caricature. The leaves of the letter fluttered to
the ground loosed by the autumn wind of her loneliness.
Even Rebecca Lynch was deserting her now, but not
without a last appeal to her generosity. Perhaps it was
that that wounded her most deeply. But she had her
pride. Yes, she would return and face the bitterness of life with haughty defiance. What had she been doing here? She must have been mad to bury herself in this solitude with nothing but an old goat for companion. What must the people have thought who had seen her leading the animal out to pasture every day! A flush of shame spread over Miss Tinsley-Sheridale's cheeks as she realised what a ridiculous figure she had made. With hasty touches she tried to push her hair back into some semblance of tidiness as if she had just caught the sound of a visitor's footsteps approaching. She thrust out a foot, and, glancing down at the cracked and shapeless leather, uttered a little cry of dismay. The spectre in the mirror frightened her. In another moment she had turned and run from the room.

The Miss Tinsley-Sheridale who stepped demurely, if a little nervously, downstairs about two hours later had the appearance of a well-bred stranger in that humble dwelling. Dressed neatly, decorously, in clothes that exhaled the unmistakable odour of camphor balls, she stood in the middle of the room, a firm-set rock of respectability in a sea of disorder. The sunlight struggled feebly through the blackened glass of the windows. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale looked about her in surprised disgust. There was a musty odour in the room that overpowered even the strong smell of camphor she had introduced. She went over to a window and tried to open it, but it was stuck fast, and when she shook the sash she was enveloped in a cloud of dust. She stooped to pick up the scattered sheets of the letter, and, having folded them carefully and tucked them into her reticule, she brushed the dust from her gloves and went out of the house. The goat was bleating in the outhouse, protesting, no doubt, at being kept so late within. Miss Tinsley-Sheridale unlatched the door and looked in. The unclean smell filled her nostrils, and she slammed the door shut, careless of the fact that in so doing she
struck the animal, which had started forward at sight of her, forcibly on the muzzle. So was Rebecca informed that her days of ease were over. Towards evening a man came armed with a monstrous stick and drove her away with many a hard blow.

It was a warm bright day. The sunlight, dancing on the water, was dazzling to the eyes. There were many people on the quay. They stood about in groups, chattering and laughing gaily. There was none of the usual impatience. The very air one breathed seemed to be infused with a fine quality of contentment. Even I, who stood by myself gazing idly enough on the scene about me, felt that the arrival of the boat would destroy a pleasant illusion. The noise, the disorder, the hurrying this way and that, necessary effects of the steamer's disgorging, would seem out of tune with the calm geniality of the weather, and I almost hoped that the boat might be at least an hour late. The cliffs gleamed with a creamy whiteness, reminding me absurdly of clean linen hung out to dry: they had just that air of purity and freshness. I thought I had never seen the sea so blue. A little cloud far out over the water caught my wandering eye. It approached slowly at first, but then, as it seemed, with gradually increasing speed. I watched it as it came closer, puzzled by its appearance and in doubt as to what it might signify. Soon it defined itself as a flight of small birds. They passed directly overhead, flying high, a cloud of eager, fluttering wings. Nobody else appeared to notice them. The voice of the crowd hummed and murmured as before, but above it I fancied I could hear a faint twittering. I turned toward the man nearest me. "Look," I wanted to exclaim. "The winter migrants are returning. It is already spring," but he was a sour-faced individual with an unpleasant leer, the result, in all probability, I could not help thinking, of habitually recounting
improper stories. So I said nothing, but the quay was suddenly transformed for me into an ash copse. Primroses bloomed upon the mossy turf. Green buds punctuated the curt statements of the ash stems. Here and there they had already broken into miniature leaves. A blackbird whistled, filling with rich notes the cloistered air between the trees, and then was silent. All at once a flight of small birds descended on the disused cart track that bordered the southern side of the copse. They began pecking in the light dry soil immediately as though their long journey were no more to them now than if they had flown over only from the next meadow.

I awoke from my daydream to find that the boat was already alongside. The gangways had been lowered and the passengers were streaming down them. The friend whom I had come to meet greeted me lustily. We exchanged the usual odd scraps of news that floated to the surface of our minds. As we moved away from the ship’s side a lady with a rather harassed look in her eyes hurried past us. My friend raised his hat and she turned her head to smile on him in passing, a smile that struck me as being the most mechanical smile I had ever seen: devoid of all emotion, as such smiles often are, mere vehicles of politeness, it seemed in its pure disinterestedness to be even a stage further removed from actuality. It was as if the lady kept that particular smile always about her person ready to be drawn out of her pocket and fluttered ever so slightly in recognition of an acquaintance, rather than a spontaneous movement of her facial muscles: one could imagine her casting it with towels and shirts into a laundry basket.

"Who was that lady?" I enquired with casual interest, for we had fallen silent.

"Her name is Tinsley-Sheridale," my friend replied, "Miss Tinsley-Sheridale, a very model of propriety.
I made her acquaintance on the boat. She is returning home after wintering in Italy. She has just got rid of her villa there and thinks she will not visit the country again. Italy, she told me, is not what it used to be, though in what respects it is changed she herself seemed a little uncertain.”
Death of a Politician

BY META MAYNE REID

As old Sam Delaney lay dying, he lifted his head, and his eyes narrowed as they used to do when he made a telling retort in the House. “Even if the history books sing small, there’ll be one or two in Faughan’ll tell tales of me to their gran’children. Maybe Janey Gault might be among them—though it’s odd thinkin’ of Janey with gran’children—her that was supple as a wand.”

His gaze brightened as if he had seen something new. “Pity us, but it’s the queer immortality we want—a handful of tales about a boy’s trick, and no mention at all of how he was saving the country when he was a grown man.” He shrunk back among the pillows again, his voice losing its resonance. “They can keep their fine wreaths if they’ll leave me a tale or so——”

He laughed soundlessly—mirth was hard work, and the sage’s grasshopper a burden these days—and shut his eyes, so that he might see Tyrone-among-the-bushes and Janey Gault of Faughan Vale the better, and imagine John Ryan’s voice. “Faughan Vale, Faughan Vale—an’ who’d live in it if he could find a better place? An’ wasn’t y’rself off to the town afore y’d hair on y’r upper lip? Faughan Vale——” John always had had a liking for him, John would keep the boyhood of him fresh in Tyrone while the newspapers talked politics—the politics that had left him no time for Faughan Vale.

Two days later the newspapers gave the dead man gladly of their space. They recounted his life, they told
tales of his rapier wit, his unfailing geniality. Nationalists wept for a valiant friend, Tories for a generous enemy: there was no one who did not grieve for Sam Delaney. Down in Tyrone, where he had been born, they talked of the politician who had fought for a free Ireland, and for the rights of the mountainy farmers, wondering that such a man should have come from the quiet places of Faughan.

John Ryan, who had run wild with him about the country in his young days, found himself suddenly in demand, for he would tell tales the public had never known, and when an enterprising newspaper heard of him and insisted that he come to the funeral at their expense, Faughan Vale was exalted among the townlands. John Ryan was not so happy as his neighbours. “I’ve not been over fifteen miles from Faughan in my life, and I’ve no mind to travel in m’ seventy-fifth year. Annyway, what’ve I to do with the buryin’ of a gran’ politician like Sam Delaney?—it was only a wild mountainy lad I knew?” His sister only muttered: “Och away with ye!” and brushed his greenish black frock coat, with the two buttons at the back, which had belonged to an uncle in Fivemiletown sixty years ago.

So John Ryan, the envied of the district, went to Belfast for the funeral. He was tired, and stiff and hungry when the train drew into the smoky station, and the young reporter who had been sent to meet him did not find it a hard task to discover the dazed countryman. There followed for John Ryan an hour of nightmare; he was first photographed, and then the reporters took their turn, and asked him questions until his head reeled. Finally, weary and bewildered, he burst out: “How’d I know what his people think of his united Ireland policy? His own people, is it? An’ him not livin’ in Faughan these fifty years——” He got up. “I’ll be goin’. There’s nothin’ I can do for yous at all.”
In vain they rained eloquence on him. England and America wept for Sam Delaney. Sam Delaney was the greatest politician, the hardiest fighter Ireland had ever known. They led him to the window, below which the crowds were hurrying to the funeral.

Old John blinked down at them, the wrinkles tightening about his faded eyes. It was like something he might have read in the week-old Saturday Night his sister got from Mrs. O'Boyle: it had nothing to do with Faughan and the Sammy Delaney he had known. He wished he had stayed at home.

One of the reporters spoke despairingly. "But what was he like in his young days? Did he just loaf about the country? Did he ride, or shoot, or fish—you’ve salmon fishing there, haven’t you?"

"We have so." John Ryan’s voice was firmer. "Ay, we’ve salmon—I mind now, the time Sammy Delaney and m’self went to Darraghmore—" The reporters were listening now, this was why they had brought the old man to town. His voice fell lower, so that they had to strain to catch the words. "He was only a bit of a lad, all legs an’ eyes an’ a shock of hair that would be for ever fallin’ intil his eyes. Maybe he’d be nineteen, an’ there was no divilment he wouldn’t be up til once it entered his head. There was gran’ salmon in them days, an’ all the water was preserved by Lord Owenreagh, him that has thon estate over two miles of the Vale. Sammy had a pick at him the way he was after keepin’ his property til himself, and he said he’d be damned to all eternity if he wouldn’t pull salmon out of his water by fair means or by foul. He had me in the plot because I wouldn’t be out of it. June that’d be, but I dear knows the year——"

Whatever the year the wild roses had never been so thick since, or the honeysuckle so heavily scented, or any girl so tantalising as Janey Gault. That night the moon sailed quietly between slow-moving clouds,
making luminous the white walls of the cottages, putting a gleam upon unlighted windows.

"We went soft as birds through the hazels. He'd the gaff safe, but he'd let me take the lamp—it was good of the soul for he was half daft with the ploy, now an' again he'd be whistlin' til himself, and I must tug at his coat tails to make him houl' his whisht, an' he'd turn to smile at me his teeth white as hazelnuts in those days. The noise of the river an' the honeysuckle breathin' so sweet amazed us, we put spurs to our heels an' ran over the brambles an' under bushes that would be forever lashin' us in the face. Sure, we were like hares ye'd see at play, leapin' as they do in the Spring. There was no stoppin' us until the lamp went with a fearsome clatter on the wall of His Lordship himself. Then we hushed, stiff with fright, an' when all that came was a beetle bummellin' intil Sammy's ear, we laughed till the whole townland might've heard us—little we'd have cared if they had.

"By the time we'd come to ourselves there were clouds up from the west over the moon, an' thankful we were, thinkin' of the keepers and the fish. So up over the wall we went into Darraghmore woods. I min' m' oul' uncle told me Big Owenreagh used to walk there, with the sword that kilt him fast between his ribs, an' Mary Shea that he never married still dabbled her hair over the Long Linn—an' she dead a hundred years, m' uncle said. But we'd keepers an' their dogs to fright us as well, an' when the leaves rustled, how'd we know which of all these would be comin'? We went quiet enough now, even a twig snappin' was loud as a drum, an' the silence would wash down over the wee sound like a wave. Not a rabbit nor a weasel nor a bird did we see, there wasn't a thing alive in the wood but the pair of us, an' we were poachers thinkin' ourselves the gran' rebels in a townland too stupid to be catchin' anything but a cold. There wasn't a laugh in us now.
Sure, we were all the lads in Tyrone that’ll never be young again, with the round of the world snug in our hands. We were alive in every bone of us; we couldn’t but catch the finest salmon in the river.

“At the end of the woods there was a flat field with a scatter of thorn bushes in it, an’ here the river was goin’ slow to make the Lord’s pool. We’d luck, for the moon was still covered, an’ there was a grey shadow over the grass and the water. Sam put me to kneel with the lamp, to bring up the salmon, nosin’ for a gleam of it; he’d the gaff—he was a clever lad with his hands. The water was like oil, slippin’ away, an’ the light shone over half the pool, there was no dimmin’ it, so we let it be. ‘Sure,’ says Sammy, ‘there’ll be none after us the night!’ We’d just seen a brave salmon, a fine big silver fellly, when ould Kerr the keeper, lets out a screech at us from the far bank.

“We ran back into the woods. We’d no mind to be gaolled for a night’s foolin’, an’ we went between the trees like hurricanes—twigs breakin’ an’ branches cloutin’ us over the head, an’ the birds cryin’ as if we’d stolen every egg in the world. Kerr was blowin’ his whistle, an’ a bramble took the lamp clean out of m’ hands, an’ the gaff was broken when Sam fell on it, but we got to the estate wall, an’ we were half through the whins above the Gaults’ cottage afore the underkeeper had his fool’s nose above the wall.

“Janey Gault had the house door open as we went f’r her shed. ‘Wakin’ m’da with y’r pranks,’ says she, in a voice that’d honey in it f’r all she’d hair like fire. ‘Away with yous under the hay—an’ beyond it by the wee door if needs be.’ She shut the door on us.

“We’d hardly our head well covered afore Kerr was after runnin’ up, howlin’ for Tim Gault to waken. ‘Now wouldn’t he be wakin’?’ says Janey out of the windy, loud as himself. ‘Sure, aren’t ye makin’ all the noise in creation? Of course there’s never a soul in
the shed, but I'll unlock it—annything f'r a quiet life. But it's a pity if ye keep the peace by goin' roun' wakin' sick men.' She came in herself tossin' the hay this way an' that. Of course, Kerr would want a candle, f'r the place was black as y'r hat, an' just then the pig heaved himself up an' ran out—so we crawled out too, by the wee door at the back—an' presently Kerr was off, glad to be rid of Janey an' her pig an' her poor da and her laughin'.

"She wasn't back with us till they'd time to go a mile. 'Come in f'r a crack,' she says, 'an' tell me, is it murder or is it poteen y'r after? Come in now, m' da's asleep an' the judgment itself wouldn't waken him.' So we followed her in. Why wouldn't we, an' she one could take a man with crookin' her finger at him, let alone hidin' him from the keepers? I came in anyways—tumblin' over m' own feet—I was shy with Janey as a child's shy with a grown man that he's worshippin', but Sammy grinned an' tossed back the black lock on his forehead: he never did be shy."

John smiled to himself—it was so clear in his mind. Janey had a blue apron over her petticoat, and a shawl about her shoulders. In the yellow lamplight her throat and arms were honeysuckle coloured, her tumbled hair a flame. John thought that when she moved he caught the scent of whins; he dared not look away from her glowing face, he would have given his soul for her in that moment, but could not even speak.

She and Sam looked at one another, smiling, and when his hand touched her arm, grasping its roundness, she tilted her head back and laughed once. "Sam—oh, Sam—" Her voice was warm and sweet with a promise. They drew nearer, breast to breast, still laughing, delaying to its utmost the prospect of delight.

Neither of them noticed when John went out. They were locked then and ever after far from his reaching; so when, three weeks later, Sam went to Belfast without
a good-bye to him, John was not surprised; their fare-
well had been wordlessly taken in Janey’s room that
moonlit night. Once he had had hopes of winning
Janey, and indeed he married her in the autumn, but
she died in childbirth with a black-haired son five
months after the wedding.

Old John’s thoughts had outstripped his speech, and
unwittingly he had fallen silent. The reporter had to
urge him on: “But you weren’t caught? You escaped
all right?”

“Och they never found us at all,” said old John
Ryan, and shut his mouth firmly. After all, what
business was it of theirs? They let him go: they had
a story, and that was all they needed, and John was
free to go into the crowded streets.

Here were newspaper placards, flags at half-mast, a
surge of people through the streets through which the
funeral procession would pass, a man was selling
a farewell ballad. The town hummed with excitement,
and talk of the dead politician. Already his life was a
legend, ready to be embalmed between the pages of a
history book, and when he was spoken of, superlatives
were essential. In a night Delaney had grown into a
colossus.

Somehow John Ryan found his way to the Cathedral,
and waited there. All around him people were talking:
“An honest man, too, who never did a thing to be
ashamed of.” “Pity he’s not chick nor child, but he
wasn’t one to be kind to himself.” “Man dear, d’ye
remember thon money he give, an’ him needin’ it?
An’ how he’d go everywhere in the riots, keepin’ friends
with both sides?”

But no one spoke of Faughan and the young poacher
who had loved Janey Gault.

Suddenly the talk hushed. Within the Cathedral
music rose, and down the steps four men shouldered
a coffin. An old man sobbed sharply, and the crowd
sighed in unison, like trees touched by the same wind. "There's the Duke," murmured the man. "An' Lord Derry, an' all Stormont. Och, Sammy, why're ye dead?" He knelt, and the wind bent the crowd with him. Uniforms and plumed hats followed the coffin, and down the street went carriages of flowers, car after car of notabilities come to do him honour. At the burying of Janey Gault and her black-haired son, there had been only the one mourner.

John Ryan backed his way out of the crowd. Here was no place for him who remembered Janey. He did not know the dead man, had never known him. He had only known a lad in Faughan, and now even he was lost, he and John's own youth together.

John would tell no more tales of those dead things, he had only left the quiet woods of Faughan.
The Extraordinarily Horrible Dummy

BY GERALD KERSH

An uneasy conviction tells me that this story is true; but I hate to believe it. It was told to me by Ecco, the ventriloquist, who occupied a room next to mine in Busto’s apartment-house. I hope he lied. Or perhaps he was mad? The world is so full of liars and lunatics, that one never knows what is true and what is false.

All the same; if ever a man had a haunted look, that man was Ecco. He was small and furtive. He had unnerving habits: five minutes of his company would have set your nerves on edge. For example; he would stop in the middle of a sentence, say Shh! in a compelling whisper, look timorously over his shoulder, and listen to something. The slightest noise made him jump. Like all Busto’s tenants, he had come down in the world. There had been a time when he topped bills and drew fifty pounds a week. Now, he lived by performing to theatre-queues.

And yet he was the best ventriloquist I have ever heard. His talent was uncanny. Repartee cracked back and forth without pause, and in two distinct voices. There were even people who swore that his dummy was no dummy, but a dwarf or small boy with painted cheeks, trained in ventriloquial back-chat. But this was not true. No dummy was ever more palpably stuffed with sawdust. Ecco called it Micky; and his act, Micky and Ecco.
All ventriloquists’ dummies are ugly, but I have yet to see one uglier than Micky. It had a home-made look. There was something disgustingly avid in the stare of its bulging blue eyes, the lids of which clicked as it winked; and an extraordinarily horrible ghoulishness in the smacking of its great, grinning, red wooden lips. Ecco carried Micky with him wherever he went and even slept with it. You would have felt cold at the sight of Ecco, walking upstairs, holding Micky at arm’s length. The dummy was large and robust; the man was small and wraith-like; and in a bad light you would have thought: The dummy is leading the man!

I said, he lived in the room next to mine. But in London you may live and die in a room, and the man next door may never know. I should never have spoken to Ecco, but for his habit of practising ventriloquism by night. It was nerve-racking. At the best of times it was hard to find rest under Busto’s roof; but Ecco made night hideous, really hideous. You know the shrill, false voice of the ventriloquist’s dummy? Micky’s voice was not like that. It was shrill, but querulous; thin, but real—not Ecco’s voice distorted, but a different voice. You would have sworn that there were two people quarrelling. This man is good, I thought. Then: But this man is perfect! And at last, there crept into my mind this sickening idea: There are two men!

In the dead of night, voices would break out:
“Come on, try again!”—“I can’t!”—“You must.”—“I want to go to sleep.”—“Not yet; try again!”—“I’m tired, I tell you; I can’t!”—“And I say try again.” Then there would be peculiar singing noises, and at length Ecco’s voice would cry: “You devil! You devil! Let me alone, in the name of God!”

One night, when this had gone on for three hours, I went to Ecco’s door, and knocked. There was no answer. I opened the door. Ecco was sitting there, grey in the face, with Micky on his knee. “Yes?”
he said. He did not look at me, but the great, painted
eyes of the dummy stared straight into mine.
I said: “I don’t want to seem unreasonable, but
this noise . . .”
Ecco turned to the dummy, and said: “We’re annoying
the gentleman. Shall we stop?”
Micky’s dead red lips snapped as he replied: “Yes.
Put me to bed.”
Ecco lifted him. The stuffed legs of the dummy
flapped lifelessly as the man laid him on the divan,
and covered him with a blanket. He pressed a spring.
Snap! — the eyes closed. Ecco drew a deep breath,
and wiped sweat from his forehead.
“Curious bedfellow,” I said.
“Yes,” said Ecco. “But . . . please——” And he
looked at Micky, frowned at me, and laid a finger to
his lips. “Shh!” he whispered.
“How about some coffee?” I suggested.
He nodded. “Yes; my throat is very dry,” he said.
I beckoned. That disgusting stuffed dummy seemed to
charge the atmosphere with tension. He followed me
on tiptoe, and closed his door silently. As I boiled
water on my gas-ring, I watched him. From time to
time he hunched his shoulders, raised his eyebrows,
and listened. Then, after a few minutes of silence, he
said, suddenly: “You think I’m mad.”
“No,” I said, “not at all; only you seem remarkably
devoted to that dummy of yours.”
“I hate him,” said Ecco; and listened again.
“Then why don’t you burn the thing?”
“For God’s sake!” cried Ecco, and clapped a
hand over my mouth. I was uneasy—it was the
presence of this terribly nervous little man that
made me so. We drank our coffee while I tried
to make conversation.
“You must be an extraordinarily fine ventriloquist,”
I said.
“Me? No, not very. My father, yes. He was great. You’ve heard of Professor Vox? Yes, well he was my father.”

“Was he, indeed?”

“He taught me all I know; and even now . . . I mean . . . without him, you understand—nothing! He was a genius. Me, I could never control the nerves of my face and throat. So you see, I was a great disappointment to him. He . . . well, you know; he could eat a beefsteak, while Micky, sitting at the same table, sang Je crois entendre encore. That was genius. He used to make me practise, day in and day out—Bee, Eff, Em, En, Pe, Ve, Doubleyou, without moving the lips. But I was no good. I couldn’t do it. I simply couldn’t. He used to give me hell. When I was a child, yes, my mother used to protect me a little. But afterwards! Bruises—I was black with them. He was a terrible man. Everybody was afraid of him. You’re too young to remember: he looked like—well, look.”

Ecco took out a wallet, and extracted a photograph. It was brown and faded, but the features of the face were still vivid. Vox had a bad face; strong but evil—fat, swarthy, bearded, and forbidding. His huge lips were pressed firmly together under a heavy black moustache, which grew right up to the sides of a massive flat nose. He had immense eyebrows, which ran together in the middle; and great, round, glittering eyes.

“You can’t get the impression,” said Ecco, “but when he came on to the stage in a black cloak with red silk, he looked just like the devil. He took Micky with him wherever he went—they used to talk in public. But he was a great ventriloquist—the greatest ever. He used to say: ‘I’ll make a ventriloquist of you if it’s the last thing I ever do.’ I had to go with him wherever he went, all over the world; and stand in the wings, and watch him; and go home with him at night, and practise again—Bee, Eff, Em, En, Pe, Ve, Doubleyou
—over and over again, sometimes till dawn. You’ll think I’m crazy.”

“Why should I?”

“Well... this went on and on, until—Ssh!—Did you hear something?”

“No, there was nothing. Go on.”

“One night I... I mean, there was an accident. I—he fell down the lift-shaft in the Hotel Dordogne, in Marseilles. Somebody left the gate open. He was killed.” Ecco wiped sweat from his face. “And that night I slept well, for the first time in my life. I was twenty years old then. I went to sleep, and slept well. And then I had a horrible dream. He was back again, see? Only not he, in the flesh; but only his voice. And he was saying: ‘Get up, get up, get up and try again, damn you; get up I say—I’ll make a ventriloquist of you if it’s the last thing I ever do. Wake up!’

“I woke up. You will think I’m mad.

“I swear. I still heard the voice; and it was coming from...”

Ecco paused and gulped. I said: “Micky?” He nodded. There was a pause; then I said: “Well?”

“That’s about all,” he said. “It was coming from Micky. It has been going on ever since; day and night. He won’t let me alone. It isn’t I who make Micky talk. Micky makes me talk. He makes me practise still... day and night. I daren’t leave him. He might tell the... he might... oh, God, anyway; I can’t leave him... I can’t.”

I thought: This poor man is undoubtedly mad. He has got the habit of talking to himself; and he thinks——

At that moment, I heard a voice; a little, thin, querulous, mocking voice, which seemed to come from Ecco’s room. It said:

“Ecco!”

Ecco leapt up, gibbering with fright. “There!” he
said, "There he is again. I must go. Forgive me. I'm not mad; not really mad. I must—"

He ran out. I heard his door open and close. Then there came again the sound of conversation, and once I thought I heard Ecco's voice, shaking with sobs, saying: "Bee, Eff, Em, En, Pe, Ve, Doubleyou. . . ."

He is crazy, I thought; yes, the man must be crazy. . . . And before, he was throwing his voice . . . calling himself. . . .

But it took me two hours to convince myself of that; and I left the light burning all that night; and I swear to you that I have never been more glad to see the dawn.
DERBY

DAY

Wood-engraving by Tom Chadwick
Man And Dog

BY FRED A. M. WINTER

Along the shadowy road under the dripping trees of the wood came the grey forms of a dozen mountain sheep. It was near clipping time, and the wool hung thick and bedraggled about their legs. Their lambs, plump and black-faced, ran at their sides, bleating, pressing themselves now and then against their mothers.

Behind the little group came old Matt Hunter, the shepherd, and his dog Lad. A sack, the only protection Matt cared for against the mountain rain, was over his battered hat and about his shoulders. He had the slow, almost weary walk of the fellside shepherd, and Lad, for a few quiet moments, had it too, ambling along sleepily with muscles relaxed.

But as they came out into the driving mist of rain on the bare hillside, Matt stopped suddenly and spoke to Lad, and they came to life, the pair of them. Matt became once again the beloved, rigid old tyrant whom Lad had served for six years over green and craggy mountain slopes above the lake. His harsh voice thrilled with the rapture of command. He saw Lad’s eyes flash quick and watchful, saw his dark, slim body bound off around the sheep, alert for a word, a whistle, a gesture.

Matt opened a gate in the grey stone wall and the sheep crushed themselves through on to the short, wet turf. Lad slunk eagerly back into the road, and Matt paused, looking down at him with fierce, admiring eyes.

“Old devil,” Matt said at last. He loved Lad as he had loved nothing for forty years.

Lad liked the tone of “old devil.” His eyes grew
deep and bright with adoration. His tail waved slowly in quiet ecstasy. Above the noise of tumbling water in the craggy ghyll beside them, neither heard the purr of a large car that came swiftly round the narrow bend out of the shadow of the wood. There was a cry, a sickening bump of the great tyres on the wet road. The car did not stop, and was lost almost at once in the dense rain.

The farmer thought it best to let Matt follow out his whim. It could not last many days, at his age, and it would work off his grief a little. So the farmer’s wife put up some food and a little money, and Matt took to the fells, as he had done forty years ago, when Janet jilted him. He meant to find the car that had killed Lad. He was sure he would know it,—its colour like that of a blackberry not quite ripe. It might not have gone far yet. Holiday-makers, no doubt. He set off over the passes to Keswick. There were many cars there, and in the narrow streets it would be easy to stop the one he wanted. He did not think what he would do when it stopped. His only thought was of some kind of revenge. Now and again he thrust his hand into his pocket to grasp his only weapon, his clumsy folding knife.

But the hot sun glared on the Keswick pavements, and people began to look at him strangely as the hours passed. So he went away from the town towards the lake and watched the small boats coming and going across the shining water.

He had brought Janet to the fair at Keswick. In the evening they had taken a boat and he had rowed quietly over to a little bay under Catbells. There they had stayed until dusk came and the breeze rose, sending the grey ripples running past them over the pearly water, and the moon came up over the edge of Falcon Crag. Janet loved him then. In spite of all that happened
afterwards, he would swear on his soul she had had no desire in the world but for him.

His eyes filled with tears now as he remembered it, and he turned away from the lake and reached the Borrowdale road. He began to walk away from the town, down into the valley where Janet had lived.

After the evening on the lake he had taken her home—five miles along the moonlit road, in and out of the tree shadows. And that, as it turned out afterwards, had been their last time together. They had stood by the low wall of the bridge at Grange, hearing the dark water slip gurgling beneath the arches. Even now he remembered the white light on her neck, the feel of her hair against his face. He remembered how the roofs of the sleeping village had shone in the vivid moonlight, how each bush and tree on the smooth slope of Maiden Moor above threw long shadows towards the dark cluster of Manesty woods.

He might have wrung any promise from her then, might perhaps have taken her away up to the fell slopes and been with her till dawn. But he was dazed with happiness. It never occurred to him to do anything, say anything to hold her. He thought her words, her lips pressed against his, her clinging arms, were enough. He had let her in the end go away from him into the deep shadow among the cottages, and had walked on to the head of the valley and westward over the passes to his home. And he had lost her.

She had gone to stay with an uncle at Dockray. He could not leave the farm to follow her. He had written her letters, but had no reply. Months later, in despair, he had come over to her home at Grange and learned that in a week she was to marry a farmer near Troutbeck.

"They were all on with each other a month after she went," they said. "Such a quick courting. They put off the wedding to please us. We like it to go slower—"

"Maids are fickle," Matt said.
“Maybe, but she loves him. There are other lasses, Matt.”

“In a week, did ye say?”

“Aye, but it’s no good going after her. She’s countin’ the days—”

He had tramped the fells that night and many nights, trying in vain to forget her. He had been a strong lad then, a little short, but well-built, a little shy, but passionate, worth any girl’s loving. But it was Janet he had wanted. How grandly he had trod the roads and fell tracks with Janet at his side. And since then? Looking back, the years seemed monotonous and empty until, near seven years ago, his dog Bess had given him Lad.

He had never married. There had been girls act loving with him for want of a better, and he had been a few times with women in Keswick. But he had no more than a vague memory of them all. Then in his old age his fierce, lonely heart had been subdued by a dog. He must have worked with a dozen dogs and more in all his years, but with Lad his heart became warm and tender again, his life centred in a perfect companionship.

And now—Janet and Lad, both gone. Beyond the passing of the days and months in the valleys he loved, life had held nothing but them, he thought. Somehow he would avenge them.

Cars passed him every few minutes as he walked. Then at last, near Lodore, he caught a gleam of blood-red on one that came towards him. He stepped out into the road, trembling, but when the driver pulled up and called to know what he wanted, Matt saw that the car was brown. Only the glow of the sunset across the lake had crimsoned it. He shook his head, and stepped back, speechless.

At Grange he turned on to the bridge and looked down at the river, as he had done with Janet. Perhaps Janet would be dead now. Perhaps not. She was eight years younger than he was.
At the other end of the bridge some men stood in a group, talking. He went and joined them. "It's many years since I was this way," he told them. "When I was young I used to know a lass here."

"Oh, aye."

"Janet, she was—Janet Tyson."

"And what were she to you?"

"Oh, one of many," he said—"one of many. A bonny lass. She married a farmer, Troutbeck way."

"Aye. Richardson. She's a bonny woman still. It's a good farm."

"I can't figure where it lies. I don't know the roads that way."

"The name's enough," they said. "He's well known from Threlkeld down to Patterdale."

So they thought he'd go and see her, did they, with his heart heavy and bitter for Lad.

He slept that night among the bracken on Grange Fell, and in the morning decided to go to Grasmere. All the visitors went there, they said. But it was a steep climb over the fells, and he began to grow very tired. At Grasmere his search was fruitless. He had not seen these valleys now for many years, and towards nightfall he grew lonely for the shapes of his own fells against the deepening sky. A wind came up from the southwest towards dawn and brought the low clouds over the lip of the fells and crowding down into the hollows. The bracken rustled about him and he could not sleep. Perhaps, after all, he would make for Troutbeck and just look at the Richardson farm. He was as likely to find the car that way as any way.

Up on Dunmail Raise he came into the rain—the grey sweeping torrents that stirred his heart. He trudged on, exulting, forgetting now that Lad was not going at his side. Once or twice he spoke to him and shouted, and once he turned suddenly, sure that he had seen his dark form, his white flying feet, bound off across the
slopes up to the craggy tops where the mists waved and beckoned.

But Lad was dead and he was alone. And Janet was married to Richardson. He wept as he went. Each hour his heart grew more fierce and heavy with a weight of vengeance.

He was too exhausted to reach Troutbeck that night, so he paid for a meal and a bed at Threlkeld, for it was still raining. He lay picturing the water roaring white in the ghylls, muttering softly to Lad, who had died in a mist of rain, with the noise of water all about him.

In the morning he set his face towards the unknown land. He had been to Threlkeld years ago for the fell-races, but never beyond into this flatter, unfriendly country. Soon, they told him, there would be many cars on the road going to Ullswater, especially as it was fairing up, and the rain coming only in flying gusts now.

He spurred himself on like a warrior and by midday was sitting on a grassy rise overlooking the Richardson farm. He stayed a long time, watching the group of grey farm-buildings below. There was much bleating of sheep and lambs in the pen and clipping going on in the barn. There were geese and a scatter of inquisitive hens. All was sunshine now, and flying high white clouds, and the smoke from the chimneys bent and swayed and fluffed away in the wind.

Near three o’clock he went into the yard and asked for Mrs. Richardson. One of the men went to the open house door and called her—“Someone to see ye.”

A voice answered, “Oh, aye. A minute and I’ll come.”

When at length she came from the shadow of the house and stood in the sunshine he stared, wondering if he would have known her. She was plump and pleasant, and her dark hair was only lightly touched with grey. Her hands were powdered with flour, and she rubbed them down the large white apron she wore
and said, “I’m baking, or I wouldn’t have kept ye waiting.”

At her smile he caught his breath. It had not greatly changed.

“And who may it be?” she said.

“Ye don’t remember,” he said. She smiled again and shook her head. “I came courting ye at Grange, Janet. I took ye to the fair at Keswick that last time, and on the lake, and walking back along the road. It was near day with the moonlight.”

Her face was stilled a moment, then she said, “Why Matt! What’s wrong with me? Come in now and have some tea. Ye look tired.”

They went into the great dim kitchen that was filled with the smell of baking. “Sit ye down, now,” she said, “while I make a bit o’ tidiness.” He watched her moving briskly about, putting on kettles and chinking the china.

“I don’t like this country, Janet,” he said. “Too flat to bide in, and the fells showing yonder.”

“Oh, I’m used to it. It’d seem queer now, living in the steep places.”

After a moment’s silence he said, “Be your husband in, girl?”

“No. Jack’s at Penrith with the lad to-day.”

“Jest one lad?”

She smiled. “Oh, two girls as well, but one’s nurse to children in Keswick, and the other married—gone to Scotland. And you, Matt?”

“Me?”

“I like hearing about families. I’d have liked more children. It’s a bit lonely in the days now.”

“Lonely?” His harsh voice trembled. “Aye, it’s good for the women to be lonely sometimes.” He gulped. “Children?” His imagination flamed suddenly with a determination to outdo her, and to hide away the years of loneliness that the far memory of her had imposed upon him. “I’ve one more’n you, Janet. Two
boys—great tall lads they are. Make me look smaller'n what I am. And two girls. They were all pretty close, too. We were so fond and eager, her and me, those early years. And we're fond now, mind you. I reckon she be fretting, these few days I've been away."

"And what's brought you away, Matt?"

There was a pause. He looked out through the deep window to the sunlit yard, and she saw his eyes fill with angry tears. "A dog, Janet. Have y'ever taken to a dog—as if he was your brother? There was a dog like that with me—Lad, he was."

He stood up and drew himself to his full height and went across to the open door and back again. His face was working with grief. "There was a car killed him—a few days back." He spoke fiercely, as if she were to blame. "I'm searchin' the roads. I'll search all Cummerland. For six years I've had Lad inside me here"—he struck his chest and glared at her—"as I've never had any woman inside me. D'ye hear that? That's what brought me away, and there's no tellin' when I'll be back. Let 'em wait!"

"But what can ye do, Matt? Come and sit down now."

"Do? I'll find that car, then I'll show ye what I'll do." He pulled his knife from his pocket and showed it to her and put it back again.

"But, Matt, ye can't—ye could never be sure—so many motors."

"It was the colour of the brambles in July, Janet, and a lot of silver work, shining, even in the rain. I'd be sure."

"Sit down, lad, do. Ye'll be overdoing yerself."

"Overdoin' meself? And what d'ye think is a few days on the fells? Overdoin' meself!"

"Look, I'm pouring out your tea. I'll butter you some scones now. They're still warm." She felt his fierce blue eyes watching her as she moved. While he sat sipping his tea the tears were running down
his cheeks. She saw how tired he was. "You'd best go home, Matt," she said. "The car may be a hundred miles away by now, and there's no good ye can do. There'll be other dogs."

Someone when he was young had said "there are other lasses." He turned angrily. "Oh, ye think I'd go home and get another pup and forget him. Ye think I've come on a fool's errand. Ye don't understand. Ye never did understand. We were lovers and ye didn't understand that—went away and never give me a word and took other kisses——"

"Oh, Matt! Don't bring that up after all these years."

"Years? What are years?"

There was knocking at the front door. "That'll be visitors wanting tea, I reckon," Janet said. "You be gettin' on and help yerself." She went out of the kitchen, and he heard voices as she took people into the front parlour. "Five of 'em," she said, when she came back, and began putting china on a tray, and cakes and scones and apple-cake, small dishes of bright jam and rum-butter.

"Motoring?" Matt said.

She was behind him as he spoke, and she paused just a moment before she said, "I didn't notice. Motoring people mostly go to the inn."

"I thought I heard a car."

"That'd be passing on the road."

"Do you remember, Janet, how we crossed the marsh road by Lodore, and that big wind came up? You had a big hat—blue."

"Aye, I remember."

She went out with the tray. But as he sat quietly eating, glancing sometimes out through the window or the open door at the sunlight, or into the glowing fire, a phrase or two of the talk reached him. There was a child with an excited, penetrating voice. He caught
something about a car. Janet, coming back, found him making for the door that led to the yard.

"What's to do, Matt?" she said, surprised. "Ye're not going."

"Only into yard. They said somethin' about a car."

"Yes, that's right. I saw it out in t'front, this time—a beautiful green colour. Come now, and have some more tea."

"No. It was a grand tea, but I've finished."

"Well, come and sit in cosy chair till they're gone."

He came back and sat down. The drowsy warmth of the kitchen made him feel weak and tired. "Do ye remember, Janet, that Sunday afternoon in Farmer Storey's orchard, sitting under the trees and telling stories, like children? The apple blossom was falling all about."

"I remember. There were other times too. Tell me about them."

So she egged him on, eager to talk now. She did not mind now what he brought up, nor if he blamed her. Then, after a long time he said, "I think I'll go and look round the yard."

"No, no, Matt. Wait till they're gone."

"They're so long. You've some fine calves, Janet."

"Aye, you shall see everything. But I must wait for fear they call——"

"I'll go alone and come back."

"There, listen. They're beginning to collect up. Do rest yerself now. Ye've come a long way and it's a long way home. I'll be back in a minute."

She went out, closing the door behind her. Soft and easy and smiling she was. She knew how to get her own way. Yes, curse her! Suddenly his fierce restlessness came over him again. Talking to Janet he was losing time. Cars would be passing on the road beyond the yard.

He got up and went across to the door and out into the brilliant sunshine. He paused for a moment, dazzled, uncertain, then went round towards the front of the house.
There, drawn into the big open yard, was the car, coloured like a blackberry not yet ripe, its silver shining and glinting in the sunlight. He stood looking at it, still almost as death. His knees began to tremble, but he stumbled across and laid a hand on the smooth door, then drew it away again, shuddering.

In a moment the passion of all these days flamed up in his heart. He groped in his pocket for his knife and wrenched it open. Then, fearful, he thrust it open into his pocket again and slowly turned. A man in a leather motoring-coat had come to the front door of the house and stood smiling at him. "Having a look at the old bus?" he called.

Matt did not answer. The man came over to where the shabby brown figure stood by the car. There were two women and a boy and a little girl with him. "Rather a beauty, isn't she?" the man said, and the little girl came up close to Matt and stared.

"Aye," Matt muttered, and did not move. The man went on talking about the car. Matt stood looking at the child with a strange stare, and his hand in his pocket closed a little tighter about the knife. He thought of Lad, and his heart called to him with a shout, as it had done when he was young and strong.

But Janet had come out of the house, and gave a cry at sight of the little group by the car. Rushing towards them, she saw Matt's face, sensed in some way his desperate purpose.

"Matt!" She pushed the child away and faced him, trying to hide her terror, searching her mind for something ordinary and reasonable to say. "Ye know ye're not well—y'ought not to be out here in hot sun. Come in now and—"

But at the look on his face she stopped, aghast. The others stood amazed and silent, and for a moment there was no sound but the cry of lambs from the pen. Then Matt spoke, never looking away from Janet for an instant.
“So it was a beautiful green colour, was it. So ye lied to me—ye cheated me again. Jest the same woman after forty years,” he shouted. “Ye’d have kept me back and let ’em go. I cud’ve walked meself dead all over Cummerland—dead like Lad—but ye’d have let ’em go. A beautiful green colour—” His voice broke with rage. Suddenly he wrenched out his hand holding the open knife and raised it to strike.

But he was getting old, and his limbs would not move as swiftly as his frantic thought. There was time for the astonished man in the leather coat to grip his arm and twist the knife from his fingers, to drag him roughly a few steps away from the terror-stricken Janet.


The man took his hands away, and Matt stood trembling, for a moment all his fierceness gone. He knew only that he was an old man and tired and had come a long way from home. He looked across the unfriendly open country to where the fells stood, range upon range, smoke-blue against the sky. That way lay the shadowed lakes in the steep western valleys that were his home.

Janet went and took hold of his arm. But his strength had not all gone. He shook her off. “Get away, woman, get away. There’s some as chooses women, and some dogs. There was a man chose you, and he can have ye. But I—I had me six years with Lad, and there’s things I know—things I’ve seen—”

He stopped, in his eyes a swift, fierce flame of glory, his voice choked to a whisper. He shook his head, gulping. Drawing himself up to his full height, he raised an arm in a wide, comprehensive gesture, to the distant fells. Then, not once looking back, he stumbled silently away along the road to the mountains.
Sicilian Sun

BY DORA BIRTLES

The brown-eyed Sicilian baby leant over the back of the bus seat and tugged at Leonie’s heartstrings. “Mama! Mama! Mama!” His skin was the colour of sunlit brown sand, liquid sunlight gurgled in his laughter, his hair was the tarry brown-black of the fine-meshed sardine nets spread on the beach to dry. “Mama! Mama! Mama!” He laughed at Leonie, and showed his six new baby teeth, white, beautifully spaced . . . then he made another grab at the ornament on her handbag. It was her handbag he had hold of after all and not her heart.

“Oh! No! No! No! No! No! No! No!” His mother remonstrated, laughing. “È un cattivo bambino.” A fine plump young woman with a high chest and a high colour and a melon-smooth skin. She had on a pink blouse and long blue ear-rings. She tried to unclasp the baby’s fingers that were tugging at the big ivory “L” on Leonie’s handbag.


The baby rippled into laughter. His eyes danced, his chest heaved up and down with laughter, his arms
twinkled towards her. He wasn't a bit shy. The bus load of women going home from market laughed too. Leonie took the initial off the bag, it had an attachment that clipped on so that she could use it with anything. "No need for him to dirty the bag," she thought, "his fingers are a bit sticky." "Leo, Leonie," she said, pointing to herself, "Leonie."

"Ah! Ah! Ah!" said the mother, excited. "Leo... Leonie. Leo!" She dug the baby in the chest, "Leo." "Anche lui...!"

"Leo! Leonie!" echoed the bus load of women, who were all in the affair by this time.

"Imagine, Oscar!" said Leonie, to the man beside her, "His name is actually Leo too! Imagine! Of all the names he might have had his name is Leo!" She laughed as loudly as any of the women. The baby was trying out his teeth on the ivory L. "Tell her he can keep the L... L for Luck you know. Tell her he's a beautiful baby. Un bellissimo bambino."

"Un bellissimo bambino. Un bellissimo bambino," echoed the women. They were all delighted.

Oscar translated what Leonie had said. He spoke fluent Italian and understood the Sicilian dialect. It was one of his graces, like wearing the right kind of clothes and ordering divine meals and knowing how to handle neurotic women. He could handle market women, too, if it came to that. He passed a string of compliments rapidly between them and Leonie. He made them all laugh. "They say you're una bellissima bambina yourself," he told Leonie.

"It's my round face and the Peter Pan collar on this dress." She made a grimace. "Gives me a little girl lost kind of look."

"They want to know," said Oscar laughing, "if you're the lady from the villa, and how long you are staying, and if you are my wife and how many children have we got."
“Tell them I’m married to Roger and that he’s much better looking than you and that we’ve a dozen children. No, four will do. It’s more credible.”

Oscar spoke quickly in Italian, and the women clucked their tongues in response, and looked pityingly at Leonie. “What did you tell them?” she demanded.

“The truth. That we do come from the villa, and that we’re staying two months, and that the handsome Roger with the little moustache is much cleverer than me because he persuaded you to marry him, and that you haven’t any family though you’ve been married five years.”

“Now why,” protested Leonie, “did you tell them all that?” The youngest of the Sicilian women was making quite a speech. She spoke earnestly and pulled out from underneath the seat a pair of white pigeons which she held out for Leonie to take.

“Oh, I can’t possibly buy them, Oscar. Oogly would tear them to bits!” Oogly was the Siamese cat that Roger had bought her in Milan. They had taken him into the market town to have a lead and collar plaited for him, and he now sat in a covered basket in Leonie’s lap. “Tell her no.”

“She wanted to give them to you,” said Oscar softly. “She says you must offer them at the shrine of St. Catherine of the Doves and your prayer will be answered. The shrine is on the mountain road behind the villa, a little beyond where the archaeologists are excavating.”

“But these pigeons must have cost a lot of lire. See there isn’t a dark feather on them. They’re pure white, and their pink legs are so pretty! Tell her she must keep them for herself.”

More gabbling in Italian. “She has only been married eight months,” Oscar translated. “You need them more than she does. She begs you to take them.” It would be ungracious not to accept the doves. Leonie
took them, and Oscar nursed them for her. All the women in the bus began to talk at once. Obviously they approved of anyone so unfortunate as Leonie offering doves at the shrine of St. Catherine. The young woman gave Oscar a twisted slip of paper with a closely printed inscription on it. "It’s the prayer that you must make with the offering," said Oscar.

The air vibrated with graciæs. "Grazie. Grazie." A fat old woman wished Leonie luck, and another showed her the christening robe that she was taking to her son’s wife who had just had "a lion of an infant, so strong he is!" Everyone was very matey. "This would never have happened if I hadn’t got bored with Margot and Ann and curio hunting," thought Leonie. "We should have driven home in the car and touched nothing more Sicilian than the dust on the road. This is fun. These people are real." Suddenly she wanted to give them something, too, even if it were only the surprise of seeing Oogly. Such a cat they could never have seen in their lives. They weren’t common even in civilised parts of Italy, and Roger had had to pay a fabulous price for it. He had given it to her in just the way that he always gave presents now, with the air of staving off something more important that she hadn’t asked for though he knew she wanted it....

"Look!" she said, and brought Oogly out of the basket. He was a handsome creature, the fawn skin dusted with brown on the forelegs, his feet, ears, tail-tip black and his face as soft and black as a pansy. But his most curious and highly bred feature was that one eye was bright green and the other an equally bright and convincing blue, and he had a squint, in his good moods so slight that one did not know if it were a squint or an optical illusion. Just now he was not in a good mood. He dug his claws savagely into the edge of the basket, squinted villainously at the bus-load of women and
opened his mouth and let out a ferocious hoarse yowl.

He wasn’t popular. An old man crossed himself, the woman with the baby tucked its head into her breast and shut her eyes and the old lady with the christening robe burst into a flood of language. “Oh! Ah! Molto villano, Signora!” An evil creature surely. A cat of the forest. A jungle creature.” . . . “A beast of the Devil with evil intentions,” translated Oscar. “I think we’d better get out and walk.”

They got out. Addios! Addios! Addios! Oscar carried the doves and Leonie Oogly in his basket. “They believe in the Evil Eye,” observed Oscar, “and even a friend would not hesitate to tell you that Oogly is, to say the least, odd.”

“Oh, how childish!” said Leonie, who didn’t like having to walk across the vineyards in her town shoes.

“They are childish here. There still exists here in Sicily a primitive animism, a religion of the soil. They plant olive cuttings in the waxing of the moon from slips that have been taken in the dark of the moon. Those blue beads that the baby wore were to attract the glance of any passing demon or evil-wisher and draw the curse down, away from the soul of the baby. Jimmy tells me that the excavations they are working on now were formerly a shrine to Aphrodite, goddess of love and the fruits of love. Her symbol was a pair of white doves remember, and you are even at this moment carrying doves to the shrine. . . .”

“Of St. Catherine,” said Leonie.

“The Lady of the Doves,” said Oscar. “Jimmy will be charmed to hear about to-day. Local beliefs. Historical continuity. All that.”

“You won’t tell him?”

“Not if you don’t want me to.” He looked at her shrewdly. “Bother him being a professional psychologist,” she thought. All the same, she knew he would
sacrifice telling the good story to her feelings. Roger wouldn’t have.

But what were her feelings anyway? It was the next morning. She was lying on the beach letting the sun soak into her bones. The holiday was doing them good; she could feel her body putting on a bloom, her flesh growing less tense. Roger was looking younger too. His shrewd City air, the successful young man attending to his job and getting on touch had dropped from him. He might have been a planter home on his first leave or a still briefless graduate, he looked so young and thought-free. If only her mind wouldn’t fidget but lie still like her body and grow well! The fact was they were jarring on each other. At night when she wanted to do nothing but lie on the terrace and catch the scents of orange groves and perfume fields miles away, or walk romantically by the sea, he wanted to play bridge or dance to radio music relayed from London via Rome, or tear around the country working up an enjoyment about something, driving forty miles over rotten roads to drink ambiguous cocktails to watch a fifth-rate cabaret. He wanted to do all the things they could do much better if they were home in their Bayswater flat.

And the outrageous compliments he paid Wendy! Wendy, who had short legs and simpering ways, and a mouth much too full of teeth. She didn’t smile so much as glitter her teeth at you. Leonie found herself full of emotion about Wendy’s perpetually smiling teeth, and knew that, perversely, she was spoiling her own morning thinking about them. She gathered up her things and made the long, toilsome ascent to the villa. She would take the doves to the shrine and maybe afterwards she would feel better about things. All the same, she was sure that one of Wendy’s centre
front teeth was a pivot. It had a kind of dead whiteness about it.

The doves were under a vintage basket in the little kitchen courtyard. The cook, a fat, motherly woman in a red and white flowered overall, tied their legs together and gave Leonie a lot of advice, which, since it was in Italian, Leonie didn't get at all. However she did catch the implications of ‘Santa Catterina?’ and an upward-pointing gesture to the road through the pines that led to the shrine.

“Si.”

The cook beamed. Her flood of Italian indicated that it was well done. Leonie went out through a back garden, into a field and across a small vineyard. The tiny clusters of grapes were just beginning to form. The sun was very hot. The two doves had nestled quietly into the crook of her arm content when the shadow of her big hat fell over them. Yet in London at that very minute people would be wearing fur coats and treading on sloppy pavements! How lucky she was to be in Sicily, in the sun. She climbed a wall of loose stones and crossed a narrow belt of pinewoods and came out at length on the road to the shrine. It was a long way, and she had to rest several times before she came to the half circle of stones let into the crumbling slope of a terrace. The shrine itself was nothing much. A tawdry picture of an undistinguishable female, stiff in robes let into a kind of stone box in a pillar and protected by a rusty iron grille. Offerings of faded flowers hung from the pillar. On one side was a chaplet of artificial roses, very much the worse for the weather.

But the situation of the shrine was magnificent. Rocky, volcanic and pine-clad the mountain rose behind the shrine. In shady corners behind the rocks the last of the spring flowers still bloomed obscurely. Anemones, crocus and iris. In the strong sunlight poppies, clover,
daisies and mustard. Below the terraced vineyards fell steeply away to the sea. The villa was a white doll’s house and the fishing hamlet round the cliff from the bathing cove was a village out of a toyshop. The sea was the mediterranean blue of grey London day-dreams. It cut deep gaps into the red earth and turned that enchanted coast of Sicily into a serrated red flower flattened on an intense infinity of blue. Along the hot roadway drifted the honey-sweet fragrance of thyme.

Leonie twisted the slip of paper with the printed Italian formula of invocation into a slot at the side of the pillar where other papers, before hers, had evidently been pushed. Then reading quickly, and as if she were rather ashamed to be doing it, she uttered the translation Oscar had made of the invocation, “Blessed Saint Catherine who suffered . . . more than all women suffer . . . the sufferings of motherhood and martyrdom . . . grant that . . .” a mumbo jumbo of phrases that didn’t so much request as hint at “the unsatisfied but holy desire of the heart.” Then she fumbled at the cord that bound the doves’ legs together.

When they were free they stood for a moment or two and then, one after the other, they took flight and flew upward in a long, slanting line, upward into the eye of the sun. “That, for what it is worth,” thought Leonie, “is a good omen. They went together, in the same direction and upwards.”

She went down the road. If she didn’t hurry she would be late for lunch, and Sarah didn’t like that. What had she really prayed for? A thousand a year Roger had said, a steady thousand a year instead of a precarious six-fifty, and both of us straining to make it. Then we can have a family. That was three years before, and they hadn’t reached the thousand a year stage yet. But they had had a good time and they were still lovers. In spite of being married. And they could, for instance, afford to have this holiday. Sarah
took the villa and managed everything and the guests paid the expenses. Admirable arrangement. Sarah loved managing things—and people too. Leonie was sure she wanted to wish her on to Oscar. She was always putting up Oscar as her version of the Ideal Husband. And she was always saying that second marriages were best. More stable. And she knew that Oscar had been in the background before Roger. Leonie was sure that Sarah got a sardonic enjoyment out of watching Roger's gyrations with the Wendy creature. There were more women than men in the house-party, and Roger got more attention from the unattached females than was good for him. But she was a jealous pig to want to cramp his style. To-night she would dress up and play gay. Gayer than Wendy.

In the garden of the villa she met Oscar. "Hullo, darling, you look fagged," he said. "Take a siesta this afternoon like the natives. Remember you came for a rest. You can't scurry hither and thither in this temperature. The metabolism's different here. You have a bath and lie down and I'll get your lunch sent in on a tray."

What was more, he did. Unobtrusively. No fuss. No other guests asking "Where's little Leonie?" putting their heads around the door and making silly sympathetic noises. Before Oscar had gone in for psychology and nerves he'd been a general practitioner. He didn't only have the grace of speaking Italian. He had a way of seeing inside people and of getting things done.

After lunch Roger came in to collect his racquet. He was going to play tennis with Wendy and a couple of others. "In this heat!" exclaimed Leonie.

"Don't let the climate get the better of you," he snapped back. "Get up and run about a bit. Do you good." He went out without kissing her and whistling,
"The flowers that bloom in the Spring, tra la la,
Have nothing to do with the case,
For I have to take under my wing, tra la la,
A most unattractive old thing tra la,
With a caricature of a face. . . ."

It didn’t make Leonie feel good at all. It made her think of front pivots again. She took aspirin to forget it, and Oogly jumped up on the bed wanting to be cuddled. He had a self-righteous air and was squinting violently. He had had fish for lunch, and still smelt of it. Leonie put him on the floor. Then on a piece of notepaper she drew a circle in ink, put two eyes, a nose and a mouth in it and a lot of squiggly hair about it. "That’s Wendy, Oogly. Isn’t it like her? All frizz and smile. See I’ve put in hundreds of teeth, now it’s more like her still. We’ll pin it up on the wall and make an Aunt Sally of it, and that will sublimate all my repressions, as Oscar might say. . . . See! Bang!"
She took a ball of knitting wool and threw it at the sketch. "There you are, Oogly. Right in the mouth." With her still wet pen Leonie blacked out the left centre front tooth. "See the horrid gap it’s left!" Oogly purred ingratiatingly back at her, and made a conversational miaow. Leonie lay down again and went fast asleep.

So fast asleep that at tea time she was a new woman. She made-up carefully and put on a new house-coat with a long zipper down the front. It had a tiny waist and enormous shoulders and was very fetching. They were having tea on the terrace. The sea had turned to a dark amethyst and there were clouds in the sky and the shadows of clouds on the sea. The tennis party came back. Straggling. Unhappy. Jim, the archaeologist, explained. . . . An unfortunate backhand had caught Wendy in the mouth. Before Leonie saw the gap where Wendy’s left centre front tooth ought to
have been she knew the worst. "Oogly!" she gasped. But Oogly was unconcernedly licking his whiskers, and she noticed that he hardly squinted at all.

Wendy was cracking hardy. After the accident she had actually finished the set. "Smashed my pivot clean away," she said, "and there won't be a dentist I'd trust on the whole island. No, Sarah, it doesn't hurt at all but it makes me look an awful fright." She hadn't looked in her mirror and the full horror of her appearance hadn't yet entered her soul. She was still jolly and sporty about it. But dancing after dinner that night she felt pretty miserable. Roger had cooled off. He couldn't stand imperfection. A missing front tooth is a serious imperfection. He was very sweet to Wendy, but he didn't want to dance. He took Leonie off to walk a little way in the orange-scented air. Thousands of stars glittering in the sky and not a tooth to be seen, Leonie thought thankfully. She had put the smudgy ink drawing of Wendy away in her suitcase and hadn't mentioned the coincidence to anyone. Not even to Oscar. Leonie couldn't help being very gay and irresponsible. She wanted to laugh—a great deal. Roger took her in his arms. He was playing the charming lover, and enjoyed it. And it was his wife he was making love to! "This island's **Paradise,**" he said.

But no Paradise without its snake. A week after Wendy it was Miss Torrington. She fluttered moth-like wherever Roger went. It was Leonie's belief that Roger fell for any woman who flattered him enough. After six years she wasn't going to flatter him, not undiluted. She had gone on strike about flattery. Roger was quite capable of conveying to Miss Torrington that he was unappreciated, and Miss Torrington, in Leonie's opinion, was much too sympathetic and gentle to be true; the kind of young woman who goes about like an angel, all sweetness and light, finding the most unexpected people wonderful, and telling all attached males that they are
unappreciated, and being generally a well of sympathy deep enough to drown discretion in. In Leonie’s opinion the thing that gave Miss Torrington away was her nose. It was a big nose with a high bridge and a determined hook on the end of it, and it simply couldn’t belong to the clinging vine type of woman, which was what Miss Torrington pretended to be when men were about. In the sole society of ladies her personality was different. Dominant, like her nose. She always got her way about things that don’t matter in the least—and do matter terribly. First turn at the bath . . . the only apple in the fruit bowl . . . the best chair in the room . . . what they were going to do next.

Now Leonie did not draw a portrait in profile of Miss Torrington and put a suggestive piece of sticking plaster on the nose. Not at all. She only confided in Oogly on the night everyone went to dinner in fancy dress that if Miss Torrington painted a few coloured stripes on each side of her most prominent feature she would pass very well for a toucan. When she saw Miss Torrington drink out of Roger’s glass as if it were a loving cup and invite him with liquid, sympathetic eyes to bathe himself in LOVE, she contented herself with remarking to Oscar, “Have you ever noticed, Oscar darling, how when Miss Torrington swims her nose cuts the water like the prow of a ship?”

“Miaow,” laughed Oscar.

In the bus Leonie had pretended to be a lion. Now she was Oogly. She drew up her hands like claws, squinted villainously in the direction of Miss Torrington and hissed through her teeth the way Oogly did when teased with the tail of a sardine.

Almost immediately, apparently as a result of a girlish Torrington scrimmage in the bay window, a great carved Sicilian curtain pole fell down with a heavy thwack right across the Torrington profile.
“Oogly! We’ll have to stop,” observed Leonie sternly next morning. “This has gone quite far enough. Curtain rods and tennis balls are harmless enough, but somebody will be getting seriously hurt soon. Poor Miss Torrington has an awful swelling on her nose and one eye is black, which is much worse, Oogly, than having two black eyes—and she has to have a pad of zinc ointment on the broken skin, which is unpleasant this weather because the ointment melts and goes smeary all over the face. Altogether she looks rather a mess, Oogly.”

“Miaow,” said Oogly intelligently.

“I know Oscar says it isn’t broken,” continued Leonie, “but it might have been. Now you’ve got to stop it!”

“Miaow.”

“I don’t know whether you’re saying yes or no. Were you responsible?”

“Miaow.”

The weather was a little too perfect. The days passed. After six weeks Roger was getting restless. Life in Paradise was too settled. Miss Torrington packed up and cut her holiday short. A first class black eye takes a fortnight to fade, and Miss Torrington’s was a beauty. Besides, even invisible court plaster, when worn on the bridge of the nose, is horribly conspicuous to the owner of the nose. “Makes me want to keep on squinting,” said Miss Torrington bitterly, “like that disgusting cat.” After the incident of the curtain pole some of the sweetness and light had passed out of Miss Torrington. It was noticeable, even to Roger. Formerly she had called Oogly and Roger, indiscriminately, “Sweet Pet.”

In Miss Torrington’s place for the last fortnight, came Ursula, Sarah’s niece and just turned twenty. Ursula was a little beauty. If she knew it it didn’t make her looks any the less attractive. Even if she was what a jealous
woman might have called dumb, it was pleasant just to sit and look at her. Leonie found it pleasant. She couldn’t be jealous of Ursula; Ursula was too young and pretty. She had a Dresden China prettiness of hair and skin and youth and porcelain chiselled features. The Latin villa-owners for miles around found her beauty irresistible. They flocked about. So did the Archaeologists. So did a man who had his yacht anchored for a few days in the fishing harbour. So did Roger.

Ursula couldn’t swim. So she said. Privately Leonie thought Ursula an adept in the art of being taught swimming. Roger was favoured with the teaching of Ursula to swim. She glided through the water in his arms like a captive mermaid. She was most enchantingly fair in the water. On land Roger’s eyes followed her with the attentive gleam of a faithful water spaniel. He was always asking her if she wanted another lesson. He motored a hundred and fifty miles to buy her the biggest water toy in Sicily. It was a dolphin. Roger was ridiculous over Ursula. It wasn’t only Leonie’s imagination. Sarah’s sardonic eyes commented on it every time she saw them together. . . . Was that why she had brought Ursula out?

For the first time Leonie began, seriously, to worry. Perhaps she and Roger wouldn’t always hit it off. Maybe he’d never get the sense of responsibility for her that she craved, that Oscar, for instance, could so easily give her. She felt miserable, pale under her tan, not quite well . . . in spite of the holiday. They had bathing parties in the dark of the moon. Ursula looked like something out of Hans Andersen interpreted by Mendelssohn. Sweet, pretty. But not out of real life. She couldn’t have borne it except for Oscar, who joked about Roger. Said he was the City Peter Pan who couldn’t grow up. Dear Roger. . . . Dear Oscar.

Oscar was always around. Chatting, fooling, laughing. He was there the morning the mother of the baby in
the bus brought back the ivory L. Little Leo was sick, had fever, couldn’t eat. He had lost weight and was hardly recognisable. Maybe the L was a female L, good for Leonie but not for Leo. Never once did the mother’s eyes look directly at Leonie, and she avoided touching the L, which was carefully wrapped in a piece of linen. Yet she gazed round the courtyard as if expecting to see something horrible, and yet relieved that it was not there. Oogly, of course. The Evil Eye. Superstitious peasants. Oscar pacified the woman. Gravely he agreed that a female L might bring bad luck to a boy. At the same time he assured the baby’s mother than Leonie had wished Leo no harm, that Luck in English always meant GOOD Luck never Bad Luck. Might he see the baby? He was an English doctor and maybe he could help. It was marvellous the way he won her confidence to the point of letting him accompany her to see the baby.

When he came back he said, “It’s colitis, an infantile form. Serious, but he’s over the worst now. I’ve prescribed diet and medicine. Poor little chap, you would hardly have known him, he’d wasted away terribly.”

“Was it—natural? The disease?”

“You don’t believe in the evil eye do you?” he teased.

“Well, I thought that Oogly might... Perhaps... in conjunction with me. You see since I’ve had him so many odd things have happened...” She told Oscar very solemnly about Wendy’s pivot and the sad tale of Miss Torrington and the curtain pole.

Oscar laughed. He comforted her with the common-sense of science, and poured ridicule on the supernatural.

She was still serious. “Three coincidences,” she said. “It is strange isn’t it?” and then why did Roger give me the Siamese suddenly like that when we were on Milan station? I’d always wanted one and he wouldn’t
let me have one. Said women who were sex-starved went crazy over animals and that . . . well you know . . . that I’d be wanting a baby next, and we couldn’t afford it.” Leonie held up her head defiantly, “And then, with all these theories in his head he gives me a cat without thinking about quarantine or the trouble it will be travelling! Now how do you explain that?”

“Easy. If it’s any relief to your mind I’ll tell you. I suggested the Siamese. I didn’t say a Siamese in so many words. I said that you had a biological need for something small and live and cuddly to love. Most women have. I told him after you’d both been so pettish in the train. Oh yes you had, don’t contradict! I spoke what I thought strongly, and left it to his imagination.”

“Meaning . . . ?” said Leonie. Then she laughed. It was Oscar’s turn to look sheepish. “Roger’s got no imagination,” she said. “You must have made him feel guilty; he bought Oogly that very afternoon.”

“Most people,” said Oscar easily, “feel guilty about something. We are all of us steeped in guilt, particularly City boys who don’t want to grow up.”

“I can’t force him to grow up, can I?”

“Circumstances make people grow up,” said Oscar the psychologist heavily.

. . . . . . . . . . . .

The last morning but one of their stay Leonie got up early and climbed up to the shrine of St. Catherine. The prospect was as magnificent as ever. This morning the sea round the shore was a brilliant emerald green and far out, in deep water, an intense blue. The contrast reminded Leonie of Oogly’s eyes. “Nothing so pretty could ever be evil,” she thought. “If people complain that he looks sinister and unnatural I shall have to tell them about the sea this morning. Give a cat a bad name that’s all it amounts to.”
On an impulse she took the wreath of artificial English Spring flowers from her sun hat, cornflowers, buttercups, daisies, poppies and forget-me-nots, and hung it up beside the wreath of roses on the shrine. Then she went gaily down the road singing.

Just before she came to the little wood she met, toiling up the hill, the young woman who had given her the doves. She was carrying a large and hideous spray of pink and yellow lilies. The women saluted each other gravely, “Buon giorno.”

“Buon giorno.”

“Buona fortuna?” enquired the young woman pointing up the hill.

“Buona fortuna?” asked Leonie indicating the pink lilies.

“Si. Si Si. Si Si. Si Si.” They laughed and held hands and embraced.

When Leonie came into the little courtyard the cook was standing at the kitchen door drinking a tiny cup of coffee. Oogly at her feet was licking his lips over some tit-bit. Lulu, the ginger cat, was sitting in the sun very maternal.

“Lulla, Oogly,” said the cook clasping her hands together firmly and interlocking the fingers in the sign of unity, the marriage sign. “Santa Catterina,” she added, and went off into convulsions of laughter.

“She’s genuinely fond of Oogly,” thought Leonie. “I’ll be able to leave him here with her. I’ll have to speak about it to Roger.”

Roger was waiting for her very impatiently. Where had she been? He wanted her to bathe. Ursula wished to bathe. He had bought a new swimming gadget, a French idea. A pair of enormous rubber fins for the feet and hands. Using them one simply spurted through the water, it was amazing. Oscar had gone off to see
some little boy who was ill, but would come down to the beach later. Now would she hurry up!

The three of them set off for the long descent from the villa to the beach. Oogly came stepping delicately after them. The Siamese has some of the instincts of a dog, and will follow out of doors and also retrieve. Leonie was delighted. Oogly had never followed so far before. "He's clever, he doesn't want me to leave him behind!" she thought. "Oogly! Oogly!" she called, encouraging him. Roger grumbled at the delay. He was very much the small boy anxious to try out the new rubber fins.

On the beach Ursula put on the rubber fins and tried to frighten Oogly with them. He was scared, but he kept his dignity—with an effort. Ursula began to throw tiny pebbles at him to ruffle his dignity. "Don't, Ursula," said Leonie, "he doesn't like it." But Ursula kept on, laughing at Oogly. Now cats don't like being laughed at. When a pebble a little sharper and heavier than the others struck him Oogly flew, without warning, at Ursula and left three angry long scratches down her shoulder.

Roger was furious. He beat Oogly, harder than he ought to, harder than Oogly deserved. He threw words at Leonie harder and sharper than the pebbles Ursula had flung at Oogly, and then he went off in a high temper to fetch iodine from the villa. A long, hot, thankless walk.

"It doesn't matter, it really doesn't matter! It was my fault! I teased him!" cried Ursula, who was a nice girl at heart. "I'll go in the sea, Roger, and, get the iodine from the water. It's quite all right." But Roger paid no attention.

Ursula began to play in the shallow water with the rubber fins on her hands and feet and the dolphin floating about beside her. She laughed and called cheerfully to Leonie to show that she was quite all right and didn't mind about the scratches. Leonie waved back
and then lay in the sun considering Oogly, who had installed himself close to her and was plainly sulking. The strong sunlight had reduced his eyes to slits, but whenever he opened them a fraction Leonie could see that the slits were squinting fearfully. Leonie sympathised with Oogly even though he had made Roger cross with her and spoiled their last day in Paradise; a day that she had wanted to keep sublimely perfect. Still she wasn’t going to worry. She wasn’t going to get indignant. She wasn’t going to sulk with Roger over silly little Ursula. She was much toopleasantly lazy to get emotional. Much too happy to be emotional. It was as if she fell off a cliff straight into a profound sleep.

She woke with a start, all her senses wildly excited, and a creepy feeling on her as if she had been touched. Perhaps Oogly had patted her with an enquiring paw, for he was still close beside her and squinting drowsily. But he was no longer sulky. She could tell that in a moment from the way he had nestled down, and the self-satisfied look her wore. An echo of fear came to her. She raced down to the water looking for Ursula. Nobody, nothing in the shallow water. Five or six hundred yards out the dolphin. She could tell it was the dolphin. And Ursula laying on its back? It was hard to tell, but Leonie didn’t need telling. Oogly and his moment of opportunity. Three coincidences. Four. Ursula, who couldn’t swim! Playing round with the dolphin and getting out of her depth. Drifting. Losing her courage. Leonie was a good swimmer. She swam with long, powerful strokes.

She must have swum a quarter of a mile. Keep the dolphin in sight. Turn on her back and rest. Get her breath back. Swim on her side. Don’t get excited. It wasn’t so far to go. The dolphin was drifting, but she was gaining on it. That was better, long, strong strokes again. Regular strokes, regular breathing. But suppose she didn’t catch the dolphin? Suppose,
when she got there, that it would not bear the weight of two? She couldn’t get back to the shore now without a long rest. She swam on mechanically. Twenty or thirty yards more, that was all. She began to count the strokes. One, two. One, two. One, two, three, four. She was so deadly tired. The wind had come up a little and there was more swell. She only saw the dolphin occasionally. Ten yards. Had anyone on shore seen her? If only Roger would come quickly. Get a boat and come quickly. He was such a good swimmer. Then she realised that the dolphin was still as far away as ever. Further. It was drifting faster than she could swim! It was gaining on her! If she lost it now she would never catch it, and Roger would never find her. Last spurt. One, two. One, two. One, two, three, four, onetwothreefour. Put all she had into it. Got it! Missed it. Got it again.

Hang on. No sign of Ursula. No sign. She was too late. The Evil Eye. Hang on. Don’t let go. The dolphin turned turtle. She went down and swallowed water. Gasping. But she still had the dolphin. It had a little saddle on its back and a pair of stirrups and a silly little loop for the reins. Careful. This time she scrambled on. Put her feet in the stirrups, the loop of the reins over her head. Then she passed the girdle of her bathing dress round the dolphin’s fat rubber body.

Safe. Even if she did faint.

They found her. She was half-conscious and dreadfully thirsty, and talking nonsense about Oogly not being able to swim so far. When she came to they told her Ursula was safe; that she hadn’t been on the dolphin at all, but round in the cove buying a fish off the fishermen to give to Oogly as a peace offering.

“You were a goose,” said Roger sternly. She was wrapped in blankets and lying in his arms. He had an extremely grown-up and responsible look in his eyes, and the clear intention of looking after her for ever.
“A goose,” said Oscar, smiling at her. “Go on. Tell him. If you don’t I shall. After all I am a medical practitioner.”

“S’sh,” said Leonie weakly. “S’sssssss.” It was a very feeble imitation of a goose, but they all laughed.

As for Oogly, he went bush for a week. Even if they’d wanted to take him back to England they couldn’t have. “A cat of the forest,” said the cook. “A cat of the jungle. But when he comes back I have a fish head for him. Very nice. Eh, Lulu?” The ginger cat waved a supple tail. “I wonder what colour the kittens will be?” asked the cook.
Literary Shrine

BY FAITH BALDWIN

A four-square Georgian house of white painted brick, it stood far back from the street, having survived more than a century with dignity and resignation. On the really beautiful door a small brass plate proclaimed it the birthplace and dwelling of Henry Hobson Allen, born 1807 . . . died 1891. And beneath the plate a small, lettered card announced that the house was open to visitors from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day in the year for the sum of fifty cents.

Henry Hobson Allen, the poet, was born in the same year as Whittier and Longfellow. Irving and Cooper were still alive during Allen’s prime, and were his friends. Thoreau, ten years his junior and dying, regrettably in 1862, once visited him here, in Northern New York State and he had known Lowell and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Emerson and Hawthorne. Posterity, turning a critical searchlight on his times, set him down as a lesser poet than Whittier, Lowell or Longfellow and a minor essayist. But there are two excellent biographies of Allen, one by the Englishman, Mortan Dane, the other by Andrew McEvoy. Both Dane and McEvoy, while they do not see eye to eye on the place Allen’s poetry should be accorded in American literature, are agreed that his essays, while light, and sometimes almost frivolous, are possessed of great and lasting charm.

There exists, of course, the intimate biography, My Great Grandfather, by Elsie Hobson Allen. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings, containing
photostats of many letters written him by his illustrious contemporaries, Miss Allen’s book is remarkable for its prejudice and its arch, chatty style. The frontispiece shows her, at a tender age, safely ensconced upon the poet’s knee . . . a slender-faced little girl in sashed muslin, with waist-long curls. Her book appeared some time after Dane’s bulky volume and the standard scholarly appreciation by McEvoy had appeared, and was, it may be, written to refute certain statements of these two gentlemen. Certainly in her book there is no hint of the superb bad temper which Dane mentions, or of the querulous irritations and jealousies which beset Allen’s later, less productive years. And Miss Allen, understandably enough, is extremely reticent when the matter of his separation from his wife, her great grandmother, is touched upon. Dane says, on page two hundred and forty-six: “Divorce being unthinkable in that day and community, Maria Allen was forced to leave her husband, return to the home of her astonished and unhappy parents in Syracuse and there, with her only child, Harriet, live the few remaining years allotted to her, neither wife nor widow, and conscious to the last that in the eyes of her limited world she had taken a shocking, unparalleled step.”

McEvoy is blunter. “Maria,” he writes, on page two hundred and six, “no longer able or willing to put up with her husband’s outbursts of temper, his appalling jealousy, showed, at last, some spirit. Taking the little girl, Harriet, she fled the house in Blue Valley, during the night, driven to the junction station by a good friend and neighbour. And never returned, despite the urgings of her parents. She died, some eight years later, broken in spirit, and Harriet, whose memories of her father were coloured by the tearful accounts her mother had given her when she was old enough to understand, never saw her father until after her marriage. Her grandparents having died, she was teaching school
near Buffalo when she met and married James Gallan, a handsome young scapegrace, who deserted her a year later, and was never seen again. He died, she learned many years after, in a brawl on the Barbary Coast.

"After his desertion, and the birth of her son, Harriet Gallan became reconciled with her father, through the offices of close friends, and went to Blue Valley to live with him. She did not, however, long survive her misery, and died, leaving her father to bring up his grandson, Peter."

Henry Allen, it appears, undertook this task with considerable pleasure. His first move was to have the boy's name changed legally to Allen. He never sent young Peter to school, but tutored him himself. Dane and McEvoy are in accordance on the subject of Peter's education. They find it faulty to a degree, but Peter's daughter, Elsie Hobson Allen, is enthusiastic. "To think," she writes in herbreathless way, "that this dear little orphaned boy found both mother and father in his grandfather! He was taught Greek and Latin before he was seven, and by the time he was twelve was as conversant with all the classics as many a college-bred man. To him was given the privilege of living daily with genius, and finding genius as simple, as open-hearted, as kind and friendly, as the average man living in the little town."

Not a great deal is known about Peter Allen. Even Dane and McEvoy, indefatigable in research, lose track of him. It was, of course, established that when he was twenty-one he married a girl who was visiting a neighbour and went west with her to stake a homestead claim. His grandfather had apparently nothing against this early marriage, he himself had married at twenty—but he quarrelled bitterly with the boy, because of his plan to leave the East and strike out for himself in the "uncultured West." There was therefore a break in their relations, which was not healed until Peter, dying
from the effects of an accident in the haying field, sent his wife and daughter back East to Blue Valley.

Elsie Allen, born in a sod house in the West, was nurtured on stories of her great-grandfather’s nobility and greatness. Her father, forgetting much that he had suffered at the hands of an egotistical, temperamental, gifted man, compensated himself for the hard going he found in a new country by tales of his grandfather’s substantial means, the beautiful old house, the peace and plenty and culture of Blue Valley. He was not encouraged by his wife, who had been afraid of the old man from the start, who had not liked the East while visiting her cousins there, and who had been glad to return to the West, and gladder still to shake the literary dust of the Allen house from her stout shoes. She came of pioneer stock, a full-breasted, tall girl, with a fine carriage, and a wide, mobile mouth, given to laughter. She had very little education, but was plentifully endowed with physical allure. She was a woman born to work hard, to love deeply, and to work, practically, with her hands. She was not given to reading, and literature bored her. She had never possessed a proper appreciation of her husband’s grandfather. Also, she was meant to have many children, to nourish and mother them all, but in this she was disappointed. Elsie, born less than a year after marriage, was the only child. Secretly, Peter’s wife blamed him for her disappointment, and questioned his virility. And they had not been married long when she realized that Peter was not built to stand up under a hard, vital life. Latin and Greek he might know, and the classics, he was handsome enough in an ethereal sort of way, spoke a carefully articulated English, and could discuss world politics and literature over a glass of wine with the itinerant preacher. But he knew nothing about the soil, about the growing of wheat, the raising of stock. His health suffered. His hands grew calloused. He
could not endure the catastrophies prepared for the pioneer farmer by an ironical nature . . . frosts and blight, drought and hail, insects, winds.

So his wife became the man of the family. Only when Peter lay dying did something of the old passion for him which she had felt back there in Blue Valley return, and she held his hand in hers and wept slow, difficult tears and promised him that yes, she would go back East and bring up their child in the home of his ancestors.

Perhaps she had not meant to keep that promise. The biographers do not say, and certainly Elsie Allen believes what she herself wrote, that her mother yearned to make Peter Allen's last hours happy, that she was willing, even glad, to return to Blue Valley. But whether or not this is true it soon became apparent that return she must, whether she wanted to or not. The banks could no longer carry the Allen family. And eventually there was just enough money to bring Mrs. Allen and Elsie East, by slow and uncomfortable stages.

Allen had never communicated with them. But Peter had written his grandfather during his nine years of exile . . . long, elaborately phrased letters set down in a thin Spencerian hand, in which he boasted of the beauty of his new surroundings and of the success he was certain to have. Some of his letters are reproduced in Elsie Allen's book. She would not give them to the earlier biographers. But now they are printed, for anyone to read, in all their pitiful vainglory and futility. But Elsie believed every word.

She was a throwback to the Allens. She looked like her great-grandfather. And because his wife had failed him as an audience Peter turned to his daughter. By the time she was six she could recite without faltering Henry Hobson Allen's long narrative poem "The War of Eighteen Twelve," and many of his lyrics. She knew the features of his photographs by heart, and he was
compensation to her for many things . . . for the fact that she was not as well dressed as other little girls who came to the schoolhouse, that she was not as robust nor as pretty, that the other girls knew that her father was having a harder time than their fathers. At least she could say, proudly, “My great-grandfather is a poet and a genius!” Even if some of the children had never heard of him, the school teacher had. And often asked Elsie to recite, on Fridays, some of her great-grandfather’s poetry.

So at eight Elsie journeyed to Blue Valley, which she had never seen. Mrs. Allen had sent no word ahead, and arrived, with the tired child, long after the supper hour, on the doorstep, clutching a shabby bag which contained all her belongings, in one hand, holding Elsie’s little hand in the other. In her purse was the letter, the few lines which Peter’s faltering pencil had managed to scrawl before he died.

The door was opened to disclose the square hall flooded with light. The woman who opened it was old and bent with service. She had the closed, still face of a woman who has all her life been both cautious and suspicious. Elsie, blinded by the lights, awed by spaciousness, and terrified of the strange woman, burst into the loud, gulping wails of childhood . . . sounds which brought her great-grandfather into the hall, to inquire testily what the devilish row was all about.

She saw him then for the first time, through tears. He was seventy-one years of age, a very big man, straight and broad-shouldered. He wore a beard, of which he was very vain, and his white hair was still thick and plentiful. He had sword-sharp black eyes, and the mobile mouth of an actor. His clothes were unlike anything Elsie had ever seen, a frock coat, a gold watch chain, a black velvet skull cap. His trousers were wide at the cuff and he wore embroidered carpet slippers.

She thought he looked as God must look. From that
first moment she confused her great-grandfather with the Deity.

Vain, lonely old man . . . he had believed that Peter would one day tire of all “this foolishness” and return to him. But he had not returned, unless it was in this gaping, fragile child with the fair hair, now out of curl, and the red-rimmed, blue eyes staring at him, half in terror and half in worship.

Now Peter’s wife said in her stolid way, “Peter wanted we should come back here to live with you,” and Allen shuddered at the phrase, but extended his hand to his great-grandchild. Later, when the serving woman had shown them the room which had been Peter’s, a large, cold chamber with heavy, carved furniture and a washstand set in china, with hand-painted roses, Allen sat in his study and read his grandson’s letter. We know that he sat there, and the coal hissed in the grate, and that he said, “Poor, stubborn, foolish lad!” aloud. Because he took good care to set down his words and his reactions in his daily diary.

The study was lined with books, calf bound. The furniture was carved walnut, leather or horsehair. Signed photographs of his illustrious friends looked down from the walls.

This was the room in which God lived and of which Elsie became guardian. Moved by some whim, her great-grandfather, she tells the visitors who stand awkwardly by the doorway, privileged to gaze upon Allen’s study for the sum of fifty cents, permitted her to dust it for him. It is easy to picture her, a thin, blonde child, with a black pinafore over her merino frock and her duster in her hand, familiarizing herself with the features of the famous.

She became, as she says in her book, her great-grandfather’s “right hand man.” For within a year of coming to Blue Valley Peter Allen’s wife married a sturdy young farmer, and returned to the West she
loved, to share the fortunes of the settler and to bear him six sons. Elsie was left in Blue Valley, as it seemed that there was where she wished to be. Her mother parted from her in tears. "If he's not good to you, Elsie," she said, "if you aren't happy . . ." But Elsie looked at her in astonishment. She was fond of her mother, in the unreasoning way of small animals, but she did not adore her as she did the memory of her father, as she did her great-grandfather. And a year of living in a big house, where the porcelain was delicate and the crystal glasses rang when you but touched them, a year of helping polish worn old silver and dust the glass protecting the features of the illustrious, had moulded her. She was sorry to see her mother go, but she deeply resented her remarriage to the hearty, awkward farmer. And besides, was she not Henry Hobson Allen's hand-maiden?

Allen was delighted to see his grandson's widow depart. He gave her a hundred dollars and some furniture as a wedding gift. He deplored her taste, beautifully, in his diary, profanely to his friends. How any woman who had been married to Peter Allen could put up with that manure-smelling lout was beyond him, damned if it wasn't! But he was enchanted to have Elsie remain. He had urged it when, her resolve to remarry revealed, Mrs. Allen spoke as if it were understood that Elsie would return with her.

"It's out of the question, Madge," said the old man, and Elsie, tiptoeing by the door, halted to hear his beautiful, sonorous voice deciding her future. "Peter's child belongs to me. My heiress. The last of the Allens. Besides, she is not strong, she'll never survive the winters and summers in that God-forsaken place. She has a THROAT," he pronounced in capitals, "and Doctor Peters informs me she needs care and watching. And I wish to educate her myself. My last work," he said, slowly, "my last great task."
So Elsie stayed . . . to dust the study, to preside at her great-grandfather’s polished mahogany board, to walk with him on clement days in the gardens or on the streets, trotting along beside him, her small hand in his large hand, noting with what deference the passers-by stopped to greet him. For he was their one celebrity. Massachusetts had a dozen. Concord and Salem, Boston and Cambridge had their great men, but in this region, where the foothills of the Adirondacks marched blue against the sky, Henry Hobson Allen reigned alone. For thirty years or more his house had been pointed out to visitors, and every summer brought pilgrims, young students, men and women from Boston and Philadelphia, New York, and even from abroad.

Allen was content. In Massachusetts you couldn’t walk without falling over a poet, a novelist, an essayist . . . but up here, where the smoke-blue hills paraded like soldiers and the winters closed down white and frozen and the summers rioted in roses, he was the only one . . . the god in the shrine . . . the genius.

He had a few close friends among the townsfolks, the doctor, the preacher, the banker and one or two others. Every second Tuesday in the month the chosen came, in the evening, to sit with him in his study or the garden, depending upon the season, and listen to a reading from his latest work . . . for he was still writing, for *Atlantic Monthly* and *The Century Magazine*, and issuing a small volume every January. Supper was served them, under Elsie’s watchful eyes.

She grew up, a slim, blonde girl, with forget-me-not blue eyes and a mass of wavy fair hair. She ran Allen’s house, catered to his needs, listened to his reminiscences. When now and again one of his famous friends came up from Boston or Concord to visit him she was permitted to remain in the room with her sewing, quiet as a mouse, listening avidly to their conversation. Whittier gave her a little purse, Longfellow kissed her cheek, Lowell patted
her head . . . and once when she ran across the lawn, tripped and fell, it was Emerson who picked her up and set her on her feet again.

When she was eighteen she met Roger. That is to say, she met him again. He was the son of the pastor of her great-grandfather’s church, and he had been a big boy, in high school, when she came to live in Blue Valley. Ten years later he was through college and medical school and going out to India as a medical missionary. Elsie re-encountered him at a party at his parents’, whom he was visiting for a month before he sailed.

Her great-grandfather was ailing that evening. She had not wished to leave him nor indeed did he have any generous impulse to let her go, and resign himself to the competent, if less loving, care of the housekeeper. He liked to have Elsie near, to read to him, to fix his milk, toast and tea in the exact way he preferred it. But Doctor Peters dropped in, and offered to stay—he hadn’t anything to do, he said smiling at Elsie, and he and his old friend would have a game of cribbage.

So she went to the party, and we know for whom it was given, and that it was in June, as well as what she wore, for she sets it all down in the biography. But is thereafter reticent. The name of Roger Watson is] not mentioned again.

She went with their next-door neighbour, on foot, for Roger’s house was not far. And she wore the new dress from New York. Allen was never stingy with her. She dressed well, even elaborately, and he selected her clothes himself. Twice a year he took her to New York and they stayed at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, went shopping, gave dinners and attended the opera and the play.

The dress she wore at Roger’s party had been designed by Worth. “It was,” she writes, “of pale blue,” and the back of the semi-trained skirt of nun’s veiling clouded with dotted net, the front of silk trimmed with long bands of blue and pink ribbon, placed diagonally,
and fringed, the blue ornamented with crystal drops, the pink with pearls. High on the right shoulder was a pink butterfly bow. “They were,” she adds, “still wearing small bustles at this time. My gloves were long and very tight, and the décolletage quite modest.”

The party was a great success. Miss Allen recalls it in detail, the refreshments, the songs they sang, such old favourites as “Juanita” and “In the Gloaming” and the newer ones, “The Convict and the Bird,” “Good-bye, my honey, I’m gone,” and mentioned that “one of the young men could whistle like a bird, and entertained us with his amusing gift.” Reading, one wonders if, in the preacher’s double parlours, he dared to render the gayer songs of the period, “Throw him down, McGinty” and “Slide, Kelly, slide!”

Miss Allen does not mention in the biography that Roger asked her if he might call. . . . “After all we are old friends, you know,” he told her smiling. He had a pleasant smile, and dark eyes and hair, a strong and stocky body. Now he looked her over with a professional eye . . . yet not entirely professional—“You could stand a little weight on your bones,” he mused aloud, and when she gasped and flushed he added, “but they are very nice bones,” and Elsie turned a deeper rose.

Her great-grandfather, “Gran” is the affectionate name she had given him, did not approve much of Roger, or his frequent calls. He liked the young man’s father, approved his choice of a profession—medical men were respected, some were even very witty, cultured gentlemen, vide Oliver Wendell Holmes—but deplored his notion to convert and heal the heathen of India at one and the same time. “Can’t be done,” said the old man, with finality. “Why don’t you leave them alone?”

But his real fear was losing Elsie. That is in his diary, too—“My little girl,” he wrote, “the sunlight of my declining years, she is all I have, if I lose her,
life itself must go.” And certainly when he became convinced, reluctantly, that Elsie, alternately weeping and laughing, alternately pale and rosy, was as much in love with Roger as he with her, Allen quoted to her from the diary. He was an old man. He had outlived his times, Emerson had gone, Longfellow, Bryant; the old order was passing. If Elsie left him . . .

She did not leave him. She stood in the sunny garden with her lover the day before he was to sail on the first lap of his long journey and held her hands clasped tightly before her and raised her thin, small face and promised steadily, “I shall pray for you all my life.”

Roger did not want prayers. He would have enough of them and to spare. He wanted this fragile, stubborn girl who stood before him with her hands clasped and denied him her love. He argued, he stormed, he pled. Nothing moved, or seemed to move her. And finally he cried with violence, “You’re mad, Elsie, sacrificing your life for that old man in there—selfish, conceited tyrant—”

“Don’t—”

But he went on heedless and headlong. “He can’t live long. And you—you’ll have to go on living . . . and I will too, without you, without all that matters to me. He’s had his life, Elsie, we’re entitled to ours. . . .”

He had her in his arms now, and she was struggling, but not too hard, against him, her heart pounding till she thought it must burst her tight bodice, when Henry Hobson Allen came down the path between the roses, and thumped his stick and cried out at them. And Roger released her, sullenly. . . .

“What’s this—what’s this?” said Allen, his temper rising. . . . “Elsie——?”

But she had fled into the white house, and Roger held his ground. He said, “We love each other.”

“I haven’t been informed of the matter,” said Allen.
Then—"She would love me," young Roger blurted out, "if it weren't for you!"

"Nonsense," said Allen more kindly, seeing the danger pass. "You mistake a friendly interest, a—a childhood attachment for something more important. Elsie is very young. She has years ahead of her. . . . And surely," he went on, as if shocked, "you would not contemplate seriously taking a young, inexperienced and delicate girl to live among the heathen, exposing her to hazards of disease and climate?"

Roger admitted that he had thought of that. Yet . . . well, he was a doctor was he not? He would know how to guard his own.

"I think not," said Allen.

Roger never saw her again. He came back later that afternoon, but she would not see him. Allen sets it down in his diary.

"After an emotional scene Roger returned to demand to speak to Elsie. I found her locked in her room, quite crushed, and she told me to tell him to go away. Which I did. Later I had Josie take her a little supper, a chicken wing, a glass of wine, and went and sat with her myself for a time. When I bade her good night she flung herself in my arms and told me, with tears, that she would never leave me."

She kept her word. Henry Hobson Allen died two years later, in eighteen ninety-one. Once just before the end he looked at her with the ghost of a twinkle in his eyes. "Now you can go out to India," he murmured as if he were bestowing a legacy, and she could only smile, and hold his hand and feel the constriction in her throat, for her great-grandfather had forgotten—during the last years he had been very forgetful—that on the way out to India Roger had met a young missionary and had married her, shortly after they landed.

Last year Elsie Hobson Allen was sixty-seven. She lived ever since her great-grandfather's death in the
Georgian house, and on the income he left her, more than adequate at the time of his death, but shrinking noticeably during the last twenty years. The biography still sold a little, every year, but the figures lessened with each royalty statement. The house had been open to visitors ever since shortly after Allen’s death, but it is only during the last few years that Miss Allen charged admittance. She had to, in order to keep up her taxes and the repairs. It was suggested to her that she sell to a literary organization, but none presented itself. She managed, however, with a little supplementary writing, for some of the soberer magazines, articles based on her memories of the great people who crossed her threshold in her childhood and youth. And her handbook on the furniture of the nineteenth century enjoyed a good and steady sale.

Last June, a party of tourists, on their way to Lake Placid, spent the night in the village, and in the morning the older woman said to her husband, “Will, did you know that Henry Hobson Allen’s house is in the neighbourhood? It’s open to visitors. We’ve all the time in the world . . . let’s go——”

“Sure it won’t be too much for you?” her husband asked anxiously, for Mrs. Janney was an invalid and suffered a great deal from her heart. Their journey to the summer resort had been taken in very easy stages.

“Oh, no,” she said, brightly, “I’d love it. I used to adore his things when I was a child.”

So they went to the Allen house, Mr. and Mrs. Janney, their twenty year old daughter, Betsy and the young man who was so much in love with her, Harry Benson. And Miss Allen greeted them at the door. She was a small, frail woman, with white hair and faded blue eyes. She smiled as she opened the door and said, as a hostess would say it, “Won’t you come in?”

They followed her slowly through the big house. Mrs. Janney was not equal to the stairs, so they left her
in the study, to sit in the big chair at the desk and look about her at the books and pictures. "This was my great-grandfather's chair," explained Miss Allen reverently.

Betsey and Harry lagged a little behind. Miss Allen was talking in her precise, careful way, "When Whittier came here," she said . . . and again, "Once when I was running across the lawn I tripped and fell and Emerson, a guest in the house at the time, picked me up and set me on my feet." Each room held a memory, each picture. She showed them the first editions of the Allen books, of the biographies. She did not, she said severely, care much for either Mr. Dane's or Mr. McEvoy's book. They had not known their subject, she said.

In one of the big bedrooms there was a portrait of Henry Hobson Allen's wife. Mr. Janney, who had not read the biographies, asked curiously, "Did she outlive him?" and Miss Allen responded rather coolly, "No . . . no, she died, many years before."

Her own father's portrait, painted from a photograph, hung in the upstairs sitting-room and she exhibited it. There was none of her mother.

Harry tugged at Betsey's hand. "Let's get out of here," he murmured, "quick . . ." and they tiptoed away and down the stairs, and through an open door into the garden, a little neglected now, the statues broken and dirty, the sundial fallen and the bird bath discoloured. But the roses still grew in great profusion and the privet hedge was neatly clipped.

Miss Allen had returned to the study with Mr. Janney and was exhibiting the portraits, the glass cases of letters. Mrs. Janney sat at the desk and Miss Allen put a silver penholder in her hand. "You may write with this in our visitors' book," she murmured, "it was his pen."

Mr. Janney walked about, his hands behind his back, whistling. And Golden, the tortoiseshell cat, scratched at a back door and clamoured to go out. Miss Allen excused herself and went in search of him. She opened
the door and watched him whisk away, and then she heard the voices of the two young people strolling back from the garden.

"Look, I've only two more weeks' vacation. . . . after that back to South America. You're coming with me, Betsey . . . ?"

"Darling, I can't. I can't leave mother."

"You must . . . we have our lives to live," he said, selfish, superb and perfectly right, "she'd be the first to want you to live yours. . . ."

"Please, Harry, let's not discuss it now," said the girl unhappily, "we must get back, they'll be wondering what happened to us, and we haven't seen all the house."

"Who cares?" said Harry.

"Well, mother likes it and father pretends he does. And the dear little thing who owns it. Can't you see how proud she is? She isn't of this era at all, she lives in the past."

"More fool she," commented Harry, "or any of us. It's now, it's to-day . . . and to-morrow's coming. Betsey, you've got to marry me and come with me to Rio——"

"Please . . ." There was a silence, and then Betsey said, half laughing, "Not here, Harry. . . . No, let me go . . . what would the ghost of Henry Hobson Allen think? . . . ."

"Who was he, anyway?" demanded Harry. "I never heard of the old boy."

"Idiot, you must have . . . there's always a mention of him in Lit . . . or did you funk it? Of course, he wasn't awfully important . . . ."

Miss Allen moved from the door. She went back to the study and Mr. Janney said, "Oh, here you are . . . I'm afraid we must be going. It's been most interesting." He felt a little embarrassed, giving her the two dollars; and asking, "Are these postcards for sale? Then may I have two sets . . . ?"
The young people had walked around and were waiting outside, they could see them from the windows. Mrs. Janney felt apologetic, she murmured, rising, "I'm afraid they've been rather rude. But you know what young people are... they take so little interest in anything which happened before they did!"

The Janneys had gone. Miss Allen stood at the kitchen windows watching Golden stalk a butterfly among the roses.

"Of course," the girl had said, "he wasn't awfully important."

I can't think that, said Miss Allen to herself, I mustn't think it... not now. If I think it, what will become of me?

She hated them, the boy who had never heard of Henry Hobson Allen, the girl who thought him unimportant. They had awakened her from so long, so dreamless a sleep. Now she was wide awake, an old woman, very tired, with only a servant by the day and a tortoiseshell cat for company... with only letters and pictures, walnut furniture, mementos and memories... dust, ashes...

She thought suddenly, recklessly, but if I had gone out and told her, Yes, leave your mother, leave everything dear to you and go with him, make your own life, you can't live on the ghost of someone else's life...?

The doorbell rang. Miss Allen composed herself and went to answer it. Two middle-aged women stood there, severe, trim, with sharp, intelligent faces. The one who spoke first had the accents of Massachusetts. She said, smiling, "May we see the house? We are teachers of Literature, from Boston. And very great admirers of Henry Hobson Allen."

"Won't you come in?" said Miss Allen, as a hostess might say it, and the phrases she had used over and over all these many years once more marshalled in her mind. "Shall we start with the study to the right?" she asked. "This was my great-grandfather's chair."
Death In Tiflis

BY MARTHA DODD

I went to the Caucasus in July, going across the magnificent mountains down into the south, to Tiflis, in Georgia. We had just come into the hotel, my guide and I. Too exhausted to go upstairs and leave our bags we sat on the sofa in the lobby, weary and burning. We had come by private open car from Ordzhonikidze, exposed most of the day to the scorching winds, the changing mountain temperatures and the hottest sun I have ever felt in the fifty years of my life.

With just enough energy to turn my head I saw a young couple walk through the door, laden with bags and dust. It was apparent they had come the same route and felt the same fatigue. The boy was obviously an American, tall, loosely made, very handsome. Beside him the young wife looked like a doll. He could have held out his husky arm straight from his body, with her underneath it, and scarcely have touched the top of her head. Her body was wiry and small, with lovely, sharp young breasts, full hips that moved by muscle and bone and not by fat. The simple, bright cotton frock, a string sash about the waist, fell loosely about her like a child’s dress. In the triangular, sweet-bitter face, the skin even after such exposure only a pale gold, her nose was prim and charming, her eyes clear, hard, brave. The bright lips were thin but soft.

Around the head of straight, light hair, unevenly bobbed perhaps by her husband, was a ribbon the colour of her dress placed far back on her head and tied
in a bow. She was about his age, twenty-three I guessed, or a little younger. From the gentleness of their bearing, as they walked closely side by side, and the soft and attentive tenderness in their eyes, I felt they must be eager and struggling young Americans on their honey-moon to Russia. At the time I noticed he looked a little flushed and sick around the eyes.

That same night, coming down around ten for dinner (we ate late because of the almost unendurable heat of southern Russia), I noticed she was eating alone at a table near me, hardly aware of her surroundings or food. Worry was pulling down her face at the mouth and eyes. Later, before going for a promenade—as is the custom until all hours of the night in these southern towns—I wandered up to the Intourist Office and saw her talking earnestly to the manager. She glanced at me, but looked frightened and reserved, so I didn’t speak to her, though I overheard part of the conversation.

“Well,” the man was saying, “if he doesn’t get better in the morning we will call a doctor. It often happens that tourists are sick from the heat when they arrive here.” She thanked him and said,

“You know we didn’t travel Intourist because we are residents of Russia and know a little of the language and money business—then you know we travel ‘hard’ class.” As I was almost out of earshot I heard,

“There is another American girl in the hotel if you want company, she is . . .”

The next morning I couldn’t drag myself down to breakfast until very late. I was suffering from the appalling heat and the painful sun blisters I got during the long drive. Their table was empty. I had my favourite breakfast of tomato and cucumbers, served raw, with or without a little sharp cream dressing, with honey and rolls and many glasses of tea. Then I was taken for a tour of the city, driving with a veil over my face, through the ancient Persian and Armenian sections in a maze of
gold and silver domes, up and down the strange streets of this Eurasian borderland. When I got back around noon I saw nothing of the young couple.

Their bad luck and touching love had so interested me I determined to ask the manager what had become of them. He was very friendly, this stiff and curly-haired Georgian, with beautiful dark brick skin. His eyes were liquid and soft—soulless, physical eyes. He spoke English perfectly with a strong Russian accent.

"Yes, those kids, aren't they nice. He is a foreign specialist in a factory near Moscow, but I don't think they have any money, and the girl is worried about his illness. He had a fever and is stiff in the hand. I thought it might be malaria at first, the way she described it. We haven't called a doctor yet, she said she didn't want one until it was necessary because they couldn't afford it. She comes and reports the symptoms to me, and now he seems to be getting better, at least the fever has left him."

I was greatly relieved, knowing that sickness in a foreign land is no fun even if you know the language. We had our lunch quietly around one-thirty and went out into the lobby trying to decide what would be the most effortless way of spending the afternoon.

At this moment the girl came running down the stairs, her ribbon awry, her face flushed and eyes distracted, calling shrilly for the manager. He had stepped out a minute ago.

Not seeing us, she addressed an old man sitting in the lobby in her broken Russian, asking him to help her.

"Can't anyone do anything, won't someone call a doctor?"

My guide and I went up to her. She was still for an instant, as she looked straight at me. She sensed, though her unseeing eyes gave no sign, that we were her friends, that help was being offered. But the temporary quiet we had caused soon vanished and she was again talking
unevenly, her voice a little staccato and hysteric. She looked back and forth at me and my guide, around the room, her body turning and moving with each glance.

"I don't know what to do. I must call a doctor imme-
diately. He feels better and his fever has gone down, but his arm is completely paralyzed. He can't move it. I tell you he can't move it. What can it be, what can I do, won't you get a doctor for me?"

The design of fear and helplessness was drawn inerad-
cably on her young face. I couldn't bear to look at her so I walked away to the door, looked up and down the street hoping to see the now precious figure of the Intourist manager.

My guide, a beautiful simple girl from north Russia, had never before been in the Caucasus, couldn't even understand the dialect of her countrymen in the south. When I came back I knew she had told the girl of her own helplessness, because she was standing alone, a puzzled and lost look on her warm, friendly face.

The young wife was walking over the lobby, pressing her hands together, stopping and trying to talk to strange Russians in her halting tongue. I walked swiftly up to her, put my arm around her shoulders and led her unresistingly to a chair. Though the delay was now almost as harrowing to me as to her, I tried to calm her and speak in a low, reassuring voice. She kept repeating, as she became more aware of me, his condition, emphasizing that his arm was curiously paralyzed. I think she knew then that the paralysis was moving over him, though she didn't say so. She looked quickly at me and said,

"And you know the terrible thing is that he is waiting patiently for me upstairs, knowing I will do something, depending on me."

The Georgian appeared suddenly at the door, and walked casually across the lobby. He stopped, looked
at us, the expression of his face changing as he comprehended the situation. He rushed to his desk and grabbed the telephone. Coming over to us, he pulled up a chair and took the girl's hand. She looked gratefully at him and poured out her story again. He kept smoothing her hand gently.

In a few minutes the specialist arrived, a black-bearded, bright-eyed man, who moved with nervous, quick, bird-like rhythm. The girl rose and shook hands. She was already a little calmer as she swiftly led the two men towards the stairs.

My guide and I remained in the lobby, now too anxious to attempt distraction. While we were quietly talking, the manager rejoined us, his face sombre and serious. Though he felt rather certain that the young couple were too poor to pay their bill, particularly in these circumstances, and though he had known trouble all his life in much more devastating degrees, personally and politically, we could both see that he had been touched in exactly the same manner as had we by the tragic case. Vital, powerful and warm personality that he was, the strange and unusual tenderness between the young Americans both amazed and wrung his heart. He turned to me and said,

"It looks like typhus. But it can't be. The doctor is mystified, and can't diagnose the disease. The lad is getting worse all the time, and must be taken immediately to the hospital. It looks like typhus to me," he repeated, "not the kind you get from water but from lice—they travelled 'hard' from Stalingrad to Rostov."

He didn't say more, and answered our questions with preoccupied mumblings. I was genuinely frightened now, first, for the young couple who had appealed to me so instantly and whose attachment and circumstances seemed so romantic. And I was terribly worried about the possibility of an epidemic. I knew nothing about the disease except that there is no inoculation for it,
and that it spreads rapidly. A feeling of helpless desperation is the only one possible when you are exposed to a disease that is baffling to medicine, and in a country as strange and exotic as distant Georgia.

The ambulance had come with the stretcher. Soon it came down bearing the young man upon it, his eyes closed, his hair dark and tousled against the white sheet, his wife walking slowly by his side, her face bent towards his, fear racing through her. She walked as if she were in a dream, unmindful of where her feet led her.

There was nothing we could do—no expressions of sympathy or practical aid we could offer. So my guide and I went out into the blistering hell of the streets, found a green park that seemed cool only in comparison. Restlessness soon drove us out of the quiet oasis. We stopped on the street corners and drank the delicious Narzan water we had seen only yesterday bubbling over the surface of the weird, barren, glacial Caucasian mountains and into the auto roads. We stared into the curious Asiatic faces, the beautiful graceful women, dark and natural, with coloured and white veils thrown over their faces, the men in white blouses looking almost black by contrast, their black eyes soft and appraising, a preconscious beauty and passion about them. But we were too distracted to find absorption even in this fascinating city or in its exotic people.

We returned every half hour to the hotel to hear news of the boy. They told us he was no better, his condition steadily becoming more serious, though the doctors had not yet given up hope. With love and youth and adventure facing them, it seemed all the more tragic that the mark of death was before their eyes.

Eating practically no supper, we hurried out again to the Intourist bureau. The news of the tragedy had spread quickly, and the other guests were standing or sitting about in the lobby, strained and nervous, the spectre of typhus loitering among them, cancelling
out the dread heat, the gaiety and laughter in the streets.

The manager had just heard again from the hospital. There seemed to be no hope. And the doctors still didn’t know the disease or its cause. It might be typhus. It might not. I asked my Georgian friend what chance a man had against such a plague. Typhus was a rather common disease in Russia’s past and had ravaged these regions many times. He replied meditatively, from his experience, but with his irrepressible liveliness of feature and expression.

“I have seen terrible typhus epidemics in my life, and thousands of victims, but you know I don’t believe in all this science business. If a man’s body can’t fight off its own disease it’s hopeless. It’s not medicine that can cure typhus or any other disease—it is living in the sun and wind and water, drinking a lot of liquids and filling yourself with our warm Caucasian wines. That is the only cure.”

He had a sort of shrewd wisdom, this vital, middle-aged Georgian, and I loved to hear him talk about any subject, but his primitivism at this moment didn’t cheer or even interest me. The telephone rang again, interrupting our conversation. When he had hung up the receiver he put his head in his hands and said sadly,

“The poor lad is near death. The paralysis has been moving steadily through him. It will get his heart in a few hours. No way to stop it, and he is suffering now. They say it isn’t typhus—they call it ascending paralysis, cause unknown, perhaps from some organic trouble, maybe from a poisonous insect bite. It’s horrible, horrible, young kids like that having such a good time together. . . .”

I was sick at heart when I went to bed that night, but I knew I could do nothing. The girl had sent telegrams, one to a friend of theirs in Moscow, another to an older man, an American manager of a factory
near Ordzhonikidze. They were sent "lightning," and we knew they could get there in the night.

It was twelve o'clock. I was not asleep, compassion and the terrible heat making rest impossible. There was a light knock on the door. I opened it quickly. She stood there, very still, her head up.

"May I come in a minute? I don't know where to go. You are the only other American in the hotel. My name is Margaret McKennon. My husband died at ten o'clock to-night — disease unknown, cause unknown. No one knows anything."

She spoke flatly, in dead, staccato sentences. I took her hand and led her into the room. There was no grief on her face, it was a tightened, dazed, tense mask of skin pulled across the bones. She sat down stiffly on the other bed and I tried to make her talk, to ease her.

"Yes, he died. It isn't true but he died. What am I going to do? He is dead. He died in my arms, and he kissed me before he died. What does it mean to be dead?"

The monotonous voice could not go on like that I knew. She would become hysterical later if the warmth and softness of her nature could not be released.

"Tell me, my dear, about it, talk to me. I liked you both so much the moment I saw you. Tell me, talk to me."

Softly and slowly the tears began to fall and I touched her hair gently.

"He loved me so, I loved him. We had been married only four months. This was our honeymoon. No, I can't talk about it. Yes, you are right, I must. I want to." She took my hand for a moment, let it go, rose and sat down again, her voice going on, her tears falling quietly.

When they had married they were too busy and poor to take a honeymoon. They wanted to wait until they could have a full vacation together, a month in the
summer. They had come down to see their friend and his factory and had wanted to remain for a while in the Caucasus before going on to the Crimea.

Travelling “hard” was nothing new to them. They didn’t mind it when they had blankets enough. But “hard” is a pretty beastly thing on the train from Stalingrad to Rostov, as most travellers in Russia know. The next day he had been all right, no cold, no bites. When they had left on the trip over the Georgian Military Highway, he had begun to complain of a sore throat and a stiff neck. She didn’t think it was serious and had kidded him about being a baby. Then later he had a temperature and a few red blotches on his chest. In Tiflis he told her his bowels were bothering him.

“No matter what he tried nothing seemed to help him. It almost seemed as if they were paralyzed.” She shivered a little as she repeated this. “Finally, he felt better and his fever went off.”

He woke up in the morning and was unable to move his hand. He thought it was asleep, so she rubbed and slapped it to make the blood circulate. Nothing had helped. After a bit he had called out, with a curious premonition of death,

“Mitten, I can’t feel anything. I am frightened, my arm won’t move, I am going to die, Mitten. Help me, help me, darling.”

Slowly, with the movement of death, the paralysis had crept down his right thigh and leg and then started up again on the other side. She had watched him there in the hospital dying gradually. It took him about ten hours to die. They put him under oxygen tanks, they did everything possible for him and injected morphine when the pain was bad. He had never been sick a day in his life and he fought like a madman with all his accumulated energy against death.

She had screamed at the doctors, nurses and attendants. “Why can’t you do anything, why do you stand
there like fools and let it go on?” He was talking to her most of the time, at first telling how it felt, the slow numbing, where it was this moment and the next, joking a bit and asking for kisses, saying he wanted to be cremated, commanding her to go back to Moscow or wherever she wanted to and on with her life and interests, thanking her for the months they had had together. Then they said at the hospital that he must not talk any more, it was taking his energy and weakening him.

It got his throat and he choked and gasped like a drowning person, in and out of the oxygen tanks, his breathing a heavy snoring. Next was the heart. She knew that. She leaned over swiftly and kissed his gasping lips and he managed to get out,

“Honey, I can’t stick it through the night. . . .” Unconscious for an hour, the guttural snoring was finally lost in the final rattling murmur of death. After death had finished with him, there was a noisy rushing movement of life in the bowels. “Oh,” she lay rocking on the bed, “my boy, my husband, dying like that, dying without me dying with him.”

I was crying beside her. She suddenly put her head against my shoulder and was calm.

“It’s over now, he’s dead, may I stay here to-night? I can’t go back to our room to sleep—the bed we lay together in last night.”

While she was gone to get a few of her things, I prepared a drink for us. She came back with her bags which she put in the corner of the room, straightened herself and put on a little lipstick from habit. Still her face was not a living face. It never was again, from the time she came back from their room and the experience she must have had being there until I left Tiflis, even when she was crying and moaning later, her face was never alive again, and the tears seemed like glycerine tears rolling off a dead face. She looked at me and said,
“It was nice of you to make a drink for me and now may I have a warm bath? It might make me feel better, at least physically.”

She looked better when her bath was finished, fresher and more relaxed, but as I said her face was gone. There was a slight breeze through the curtains so the air was not stifling. Then she began to sip her drink and talk about her other life, the earlier life with him.

They had been engaged for three years. Last summer he had gone to Russia to get a job. He didn’t know whether they had one for him or not, but he went just the same. He was pretty destitute until they took him on as a specialist in a factory. He liked Russia, was interested in the people and in how things were working out. He knew exactly what he was getting into, had no illusions of comfort or privilege. He had pleaded with her to join him there.

Her parents were violently opposed because she was so young, twenty-two last month. They were rich and didn’t like the idea of Russia. She stood it as long as she could without him, sold some stocks her father had given her and ran away to him. She felt she was doing right. He met her at the Russian border and they were married immediately.

“Oh, how glad I am that I came to him when I did, at least we had that much time together. I got a job too and started to learn Russian. We were poor enough all right, but we had a nice little flat and were meeting attractive people. We didn’t mind much what we saw, and the troubles, because we felt warmly toward the Russians and what they were trying to do.”

She was a little hesitant talking to me about Russia, not knowing whether I was interested and not wanting to offend me. She continued quietly,

“When I first saw him at the border after eight months of absence I thought he had coarsened somewhat, but then later I knew that he didn’t have time or money
or interest for soft things, flowers and fancy food and clothes. He was in dead earnest about his life, and he lived like he believed. So did I."

They had talked of death together. He had said he would die first because he couldn't bear to live on without her. And she had closed his mouth with her hand. But when they had talked seriously he said there was to be no foolishness when he died, he wanted it straight and quick and clean, no mourning, no burial conventions, no other lives stopped even for a day. They talked like all young people do when death seems too far away and they try to bring it nearer.

"Oh, you don't know how he loved me, so gentle and fine, and when my hair was long he used to pretend he was smothering in it. His nose was a little stubby but such a lovely nose..."

The details flowed out from this living child, remembering the living body and love of her dead husband. I took away the cigarette that was burning unnoticed close to her lips and gave her another.

Then slowly I got her to talk of other things and to shift the conversation so I could speak quietly and in a monotone of the things she loved. I spoke of the white nights of Leningrad, the splendid Red Square full of green translucent twilight, the glittering domes of the Kremlin in the noon-bright sun, the fantastic view of the city of Moscow from across the river. I described my trip down the Volga, the wide dreamy blue river, so many times red with blood and horror, the soft curving hills falling away from the banks and the cities on the edge that had seen famine and death and plague for hundreds of years, the strangest and loveliest river in the world. As I talked on I was hoping to quiet her and bring her to sleep, but suddenly she thrust her face in the pillow and moaned,

"He loved life so much, even more than I did. Why couldn't he have left me something of himself. We were
afraid to have a child while we were so poor—his life would have been growing in me now, this would not have been the end. I can't believe it yet. Why do things happen when I am so young and care so much, he can't be dead, we loved each other so much, my dead husband. . . ."

Sleep finally came, the sweet profile clear against the dawn, the bravery and toughness conquering, and she was twisting from side to side in her own sleep of oblivion.

The next morning she got up, as hard as nails, even the soft sun glow off her cheeks, now so pale that the light freckles looked dark around her eyes and cheekbones. Many times I heard people saying during the day as they pointed to her,

"There is the young American who lost her husband last night. She doesn't seem to care much." I wanted to shout out to them what I knew of her, her devastating grief and her courage, but I only looked at them scornfully. And all the time the fear of possible contagion was over her. I knew she was thinking she must get things done for her husband before anything happened to her.

She told me she wanted to cremate the body as he had wished.

"But you know cremation is too expensive, and the nearest crematorium many miles away."

Her next wish was to ship the body back to Moscow, but she learned that for transportation she must buy a zinc coffin, which was too dear. She told me,

"I don't blame them for insisting because they think of every dead body as a typhus-dead-body and they must insure against contagion."

There was endless red tape, certificates, permits, autopsies, the necessary procedure which she bore with whitening face, her voice cold and controlled. She finally called her friend on the phone and he promised
to come immediately from Ordzhonikidze with a private car and plenty of money.

Then the time came for dressing the body. She began unpacking their suitcases to find his best clothes. She took them out carefully and argued with herself pathetically.

"Should I bury him in such nice new warm things, in sturdy American shoes when so many people need them, living people?"

So she took out instead a clean but worn sweater and pants that had seen service. She pressed the clothes to her body and rubbed the yellow sweater against her cheek. She was trembling.

"I must go and brush his hair. I don’t want anyone to do that. They would be sure to part it the wrong way and not comb it back. He always had such a time with his cow-lick."

We took her to the hospital. She okayed the doctor’s certificate, which said simply "ascending paralysis." The doctor told my guide that the disease was rare, practically unknown in medical history, and always fatal. It would have attacked him anywhere, at any time. They knew only it had no connection with typhus. They didn’t think it was contagious, they didn’t know anything for sure.

She was told she couldn’t dress him now, that it might be hours or longer before she could see him—the body was being treated and examined. She said she wouldn’t wait, thrust his clothes blindly into the arms of the nurse and rushed from the room.

We took her back to the hotel, where she repacked her suitcases, smoked endless cigarettes, washed her hair and talked with me.

Strangely, our roles seemed to have been abruptly reversed. It was as if she felt the need for action, the urgent need to forget herself in an absorption in other things.
We walked on the burning pavements and drank Narzan at the street corner booths. She did many things for me, took the lead in everything. There was something so integrated about her, so strong and capable even in her terrible grief, that I felt increasingly ashamed of my weakness. This girl no taller than a twelve-year-old child, with bare legs and her toes sticking out from her sandals, the absurd little ribbon on the top of her golden hair, her narrow, pointed little chin, wide, high cheekbones under the far apart blue eyes, cold as stones, had a power of life and tested courage that I have rarely seen in older and greater men. Maybe it was her grief, or her love or her bravery. I never knew. I was only glad she had made such a life for herself.

Intourist supplied us with a car and we toured the town and drove up to the mountain where it was cooler. We looked over Tiflis, lying below us on hills, another high cliff beyond, golden and quiet and dreamy with waves of heat hovering and burning over it. Her face was turned away, the brows drawn to meeting in an effort of control. The tears dropped silently on her tightly-clasped hands. This was their shared vacation in the Caucasus.

The time had come for me to leave. We were taking the International sleeper to Batoum and she wanted to see me off at the station. All this time, this harrowing night and day we shared, with its fears and turmoils not yet at an end, she had not thanked me or touched me affectionately. There was not time for that, nor room in her broken heart. And she was a hard little thing, with a pride in her austerity. Just before the train left she said, "Don’t worry about me or anything. Everything will be all right, and I will soon be among my friends. You get some sleep to-night."

She suddenly ran down the length of the car and got on. In my compartment she threw her arms around me and kissed me.
"You understand, darling; I know, you understand everything. Write me how the Black Sea looks and about the Crimea. . . ."

All night I thought of her, the sweet-bitter face narrowly peering into the car, no tears, just the ribbon on her head and a line of red on her mouth, bravery like a coat of mail around her. Half her life had been taken away from her and there was never a note of bitterness or resentment. I thought of every minute I had spent with her, of her voice and rapt eyes, her words of love and belief, like fire petals, on her tongue. I turned finally to sleep in this strange land, the moonlight flowing in silvering waves over the fierce gold mountains that spread across the wild earth from Tiflis to Batoum.
Come Follow

BY DACRE BALSDON

1

Come follow, follow, follow, follow, follow,
follow me; Whither shall I follow,
follow, follow, whither shall I follow,
follow thee? To the green-wood, to the green-wood,
to the green-wood, green-wood tree.

September 23, 1938

The geraniums still made a brave show, tumbling over the walls down by the sea at Minecombe, on the North Devon and Somerset border, and the sun was as fierce as it had been in August. Yet it was over three weeks since August had gone, and the visitors with it. On the road there were no longer discarded paper bags, containing, as likely as not, an over-ripe plum, with wasps buzzing round, purposing to raid it; instead fading leaves lay in little drifts—the Town Council
paid off half the scavengers on the first of September—except when an occasional wisp of breeze disturbed them. And on the walls themselves the notices (so clean and gay in early August) of Mario and his Band, of the Grand Carnival, of the Sex Sextette, were mud-stained and peeling, obscured by the announcement of a different sort of distraction. SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28. MINECOMBE UNITED V. ILFRAHEAD WANDERERS.

On the Front at Minecombe the Ilfrahead bus was on the point of starting, its merry red-faced driver and conductor, taking deep, hurried pulls at their cigarettes, as if every millimetre of cigarette unsmoked would be a millimetre of happiness wasted. A month earlier the bus would have been filled and hot mothers would have been clutching their children at the windows. But now it was the fourth week of September, and there were only three passengers and they were all Septemberish, autumnal-looking people.

As Dave, the driver, said to George, the conductor, after a single glance at them and a hefty spit—the cigarette stumps had gone over the wall now, and into the sea—"I shouldn't care to take any of that lot along of me to Barnstaple Fair now, that's sure, I shouldn't," he said, and George spat back to show that he agreed with him.

You could have discovered their names from the labels on their bags. Mrs. Trimbell, passenger to Ilfrahead, Miss Harrywain, passenger to Ilfrahead—and plain Graham.

Mrs. Trimbell, you might have guessed, was the plum-coloured woman—plum-coloured hat, plum-coloured coat and skirt. Her clothes hung a bit loosely on her and she had evidently carried more weight when they were new; yet they looked new still, last year's cut at the earliest. The colour was curiously unbecoming, unless—and then you saw why it was chosen. It distracted
attention from its wearer's hideous complexion which—once you examined it—showed through its thick covering of powder. It was a nasty complexion, puce—like one of those moribund anemones that heartless children in August had scraped from the rocks with their wooden spades and, ten minutes later, in boredom, left to perish on the beach; or like a ripe fig, for sale in one of the fruit shops. Yes, a morbid, an unhealthy, complexion; and it was a sour, distempered face that went with it, a face from which, perhaps, pain had driven optimism. It had evidently had sixty years or so in which to expel it. The greyish eyes, too, had known defeat; and there was something in them which indicated that they still knew fear.

And Miss Harrywain? Had you been sitting behind her, as Graham was sitting, you must have shared his anxiety that she should turn and let you see her face. Her tweed coat and skirt were of an attractive brownish heathery colour and, although it was a hot day for tweeds, Graham knew somehow that she not only looked cool, but was cool. Not a girl to be flustered; a girl with powerful self-control. And then she turned, and Graham drew in his breath with disappointment. For all the straightness of her back and trimness of her shoulders she was not a girl at all; she was a woman of between thirty and thirty-five, and she was not an attractive woman. Wisps of hair escaped in careless disorder from her hat, and there was an almost aggressive self-dispraisement about the naked sallowness of her complexion. She was smoking, but in a graceless manner. And, though she had turned and glanced at Graham, she scarcely seemed to notice him. It was as if she was looking through him into thirty or forty more years of spinsterhood, and found the prospect no more depressing, no more exciting, than any other.

One might, of course, look at Graham without noticing him, but one would have to be fairly
unobservant in order to do so; for his dark face carried the clear marks of the conflict in his personality. His forehead was at war with his mouth—intelligence, almost intellectualism, at war with sensuous self-indulgence. His whole expression was alert for a moment when he noticed Miss Harrywain's figure—but only for a moment. The excitement had gone almost before she turned, and he looked tired again, tired and —were you imaginative, you might have suggested—beaten.

The bus started on its twenty-five mile drive to Ilfrahead, along the sea wall, past the lodging houses and then up the 1 in 6 hill (a mile and a quarter long) on to the level of the cliffs above the sea.

At the bottom of the hill the trouble started.

George advanced to the front of the bus and planted himself firmly on his two legs beside Miss Harrywain.

"Where for, mum, please?"

"Ilfrahead."

"Two shillings, please, mum."

Miss Harrywain opened her mouth, as if to peck at him.

"One and sixpence, you mean," she said.

"No, mum, two shillings."

"But I read the notice in the bus station at Minecombe. I saw distinctly that it was one and sixpence. I looked on purpose to see what the fare was."

"Sorry, mum," George rebutted, obdurate. "Them notices be terrible hard to read. I've always said they be hard to read."

From the back of the bus come Mrs. Trimbell's voice, breaking into the discussion.

"Disgusting," she said. "The man's illiterate."

George had no idea what "illiterate" meant, so he smiled with bland Devonian friendliness. After all, there was no need to hurry, and he was not at all disconcerted: he was used to rudeness in passengers.
COME FOLLOW

"Of course, mum, if you’d like to pay me later when you gets out, it’s O.K. by me."
(By Devonshire, out of Hollywood).
"Here is one and sixpence," Miss Harrywain said, proffering the sum. "Take it or leave it."

George took off his cap, scratched his head, smiled broadly and said to the world at large, "Seems daft to me." Then, thinking that his best hope of assistance lay in his own sex, he turned to Graham, and said, "What’d you do, sir, in a situation like this?"

Graham was direct, mannerless, rude.
"I should stop the bus and tell the woman to get out and walk. That might learn her."

"Oh," George said, fascinated by the boldness of the suggestion, "I’d have to ask Dave about that," so he went forward, slid aside the small glass panel behind the driver’s head and, under the notice IT IS FORBIDDEN TO CONVERSE WITH THE DRIVER WHEN THE BUS IS IN MOTION, began to tell Dave all about it. Dave, who was thinking about taking his girl to the pictures in Ilfracombe that night, was startled by the sudden sound of George’s voice and jerked the steering wheel. The bus swerved across the road and back again.

This was Mrs. Trimbell’s second cue.
"Disgraceful," she said. "A thing like this would never happen in Italy. Fascism and the rod, that’s what our young people need. Bolshevism everywhere."

Graham said, "If the chap doesn’t get the money for the ticket from this lady, he’ll be called on to pay it out of his own pocket. And if one of the inspectors got on the bus and found that we hadn’t been given tickets, the conductor would be sacked, as likely as not. If you call his behaviour Bolshevism, and if you think the country needs Fascism, then it seems to me that what people like you need is the guillotine." He was fiercely offensive.
At this moment George returned.
“Dave says he can’t stop on this ’ere hill,” he told Graham. “He says he’ll stop at the top.”

“Perhaps,” Graham said to Miss Harrywain, “it would save time—and I want to get to Ilfrahead as soon as I can—if I made you a present of sixpence.”

“I shouldn’t dream of taking it,” Miss Harrywain said. “It’s the principle of the thing that matters. The man is deliberately trying to sneak sixpence for himself. I read the notice at the bus station in Minecombe most carefully. Anyhow I don’t see what matter it is of yours. I don’t propose to get out at the top of the hill, and I intend to report the man for ill manners when we get to Ilfrahead.”

“Quite right,” Mrs. Trimbell said.

“Phew!” from George: he’d always said that a bus conductor saw Life with a big L, but he reckoned that this was an ’ell of a big L.

“Here,” Graham called to him. “Here’s six shillings. Give me three single tickets to Ilfrahead. Perhaps this will put a stop to all this nonsense.”

Mrs. Trimbell said, “If you’re trying to pay for me, young man, I shouldn’t think of allowing it. Take this,” she barked, handing George two shillings.

Miss Harrywain handed him two shillings too. If looks could have killed, Graham would have been a corpse twice over.

Then Mrs. Trimbell delivered her coup de grâce, “If people can’t stick together,” she said, “I’d like to know what’s going to happen to the Country.”

George slid the panel back once more and told Dave that the dispute had been settled. For three or four minutes there was peace, as the great bus panted up the hill; and then trouble broke out once more.

Mrs. Trimbell turned to George and said that it seemed suddenly to have turned very cold. The sentence as she spoke it was less a statement than a question
and, when George nodded (delighted that they were all going to be friends again), it was evident that a real anxiety on her part had been assuaged: the healthy conductor had noticed the cold too.

“Yes, mum,” he said, glad to be able to use his voice, “it do turn terrible cold up here sometimes when there be mist about.”

Mrs. Trimbell said, “If the young lady in front closed the window, it wouldn’t be so bad.”

Miss Harrywain appeared not to hear her.

So Mrs. Trimbell spoke again and said, more loudly this time, “There are some people who never think of anybody but themselves.”

At which Miss Harrrywain turned her sallow face and said in even, cold tones, “If you wanted me to shut the window, why didn’t you ask me properly? I’ll shut it, if you like. I hope you won’t mind if I’m sick. I’m always sick in a bus with the windows shut.”

Poor Mrs. Trimbell winced, confronted with this dilemma, and the situation was saved by George who said, “Here she comes, a real blanketer.”

And a real blanketer it was, the mist that came swirling up the coombs, driving down the temperature as fast as an approaching iceberg at sea. In a few minutes it was impossible to distinguish the sides of the road.

“It’s very dangerous driving in a mist like this,” Mrs. Trimbell pronounced.

The conductor knew that it was not dangerous at all, for mists came often at certain times of the year, and Dave, the driver, knew the road like the back of his hand. At the same time he felt thankful that neither of these stranger women seemed to know how near to the cliff edge the road ran. That was the worst of strangers; they got excited about things, lacking the natural calm of westcountry men and women.

The bus crawled through the mist, and the three passengers sat sullen, throwing every now and then an
angry glance at George, as if he were in some way responsible for their plight. Then, suddenly, the bus lurched. For a moment it seemed that it would fall right over on to its side, but it half recovered its balance and then settled down at an uncomfortable, a nightmare, angle. The jolt had thrown Graham out of his seat, and he only saved himself from going through a window by clutching at Mrs. Trimbell. Before he had time to apologize, she said, “I should have thought you would have held on to your seat. You might have killed me.” Her face was no longer shot with purple; it was just hideously grey, the grey of putty. But then, even the ruddy-faced George had lost his colour for the moment. He jumped out of the emergency door at the back and went round to the driver. The passengers in the bus could only hear their voices coming indistinctly out of the blanket of mist. Anyhow, as they were talking in the broadest of Devonshire accents at this moment of excitement, the passengers, had they heard them, would hardly have understood what they were saying.

Dave looked under the bus and said, “Axle broke. Broke proper.”

George said, “Where be us?”

Dave answered, “I don’t know properly where us do be. This bain’t the main road, that’s certain sure.”

They pushed their peaked caps on to the back of their heads and scratched. After debate, question and recapitulation, Dave spat and said, “I see what us have done. Us have gone off thicky road at Woody Corner. I’ve missed the turn, that what I’ve been and done. And us be in the drive of Hopewell House, that’s where us be. It goes straight at the corner, d’you see, and if you was to miss the corner and go straight on, then Hopewell House drive is where you’d get to. You couldn’t help it, if you went straight on.”

From out of the mist a commanding voice called, “Here, driver.”
The passengers had descended from the bus, and Mrs. Trimbell was excited.

"It's a disgrace," she said. "We might have gone right over the edge and have fallen into the sea. I said it wasn't safe, though nobody listened to me."

Dave smiled and said, "All right, there's nothing to worry about, my dears. As soon as the mist clears away, we'll get a lift for you."

Mrs. Trimbell, with fine inconsistency, said, "I demand to go on at once. Why can't you start the bus again? Three men. You ought to be able to push it back onto the road between you."

"Axle's broke, mum. Us'll have to get a lift for you."

Graham caught hold of Dave's arm and said, "Here, let me have a look. All right. It's just a scratch. I should put some iodine on, though. I suppose you carry a first aid set?"

"No, sir, us don't."

"Then you ought to. It's disgraceful that buses shouldn't carry them."

Miss Harrywain raised her eyes and looked sympathetic in a hungry way. He was a good-looking lad, was Dave.

George said, "Us'll have to go and look for help. She'm proper busted, and no mistake about it. Us'll have to telephone some way."

After George and Dave had conferred, George announced their decision.

"This is what us'll do," he said. "Dave'll go up to the main road and try to stop anybody as comes along, and I'll walk along and try to telephone. Do you bide where ee be and make yourselves comfortable. Us'll come back and fetch ee by and by. That's right, my dears."

Left alone, the three passengers sat silent and unfriendly in the bus. They were all cold and, isolated in the mist in strange country, they all felt a little frightened.

"I suppose it isn't a plot," Miss Harrywain said.
“just to get us here, all alone and then to . . One reads such awful things in the papers, doesn’t one? But he had a nice face, the driver. Dave, wasn’t he called?”

Mrs. Trimbell did not answer the suggestion, but said, “Some people are always unlucky when they travel. Clergymen, for instance, on board ship. They are always said to bring bad luck. I wonder if any of you have had experiences like this before?”

Graham did not answer her question, but said, “There must be a house at the end of the drive. After all, you can’t have a drive without a house at the end of it. Why shouldn’t we go there and ask them to give us a cup of tea. Anything’s better than sitting here in the cold.”

Mrs. Trimbell said, “I can’t walk very far nowadays. How far away is the house?”

Graham did not show any irritation, and replied, “I don’t know, but it can’t be far. The sea’s straight below us. You can hear it breaking on the rocks. And the drive is leading straight towards it. So the house can’t be far away.”

And so they set off, despondent and glum. You could not have guessed, looking at them, that they were walking into a new world.

The drive, thick with pine needles, silenced their tread. In their nostrils was the sharp tang of pine trees, freshened by the wet mist. Occasionally drops of rain fell on them as they walked. And through the mist came, regular and monotonous, the sound of the surf breaking on the rocks.

“Funny currents here,” Graham said. “They go straight out to sea. Someone was telling me last night that bodies washed out to sea here are never recovered again.”

Mrs. Trimbell said that there was no need to make the situation more depressing than it was already and, anyhow, couldn’t the other two walk a little more slowly?
They came upon the house very suddenly in the mist. The drive led straight up to the front door, but, so thick was the mist, they were only a yard or two from it when they noticed it. The front door, to which they stumbled, had an iron bell-pull, rusty and evidently little used.

"Not much evidence of life here," Graham said, as he tugged it and the bell could be heard echoing inside the house. "There aren’t any dogs, evidently, or they would have barked."

The door opened suddenly, making them jump, for they had heard no footsteps cross the hall. Inside stood a handsome woman with a curiously waxen complexion. Her fair hair was "bobbed" in the fashion of the Great War days. She was wearing the uniform of a nurse, though she had no cap on her head. Evidently there were rubbers on the soles of her shoes. That was why she had made no noise in crossing the hall to open the door.

She showed no surprise at the sight of the three strangers on the doorstep, but said at once, "You poor things. Come straight in out of the mist. It has turned horribly cold. There is a fire in the drawing-room, and I will have tea sent in to you at once. Then"—she turned to Mrs. Trimbell—"if you like to lie down afterwards, there is a fire in my bedroom, the first door on the right at the top of the stairs."

They followed her into the drawing-room, but before they could thank her or ask her a question, she had left, closing the door behind her. They heard her singing a song lightly as she crossed the hall.

"A nurse," Miss Harrywain said. "Perhaps this is a madhouse."

"Quite a nice one, as madhouses go," Graham retorted.

"No," Mrs. Trimbell said firmly. "There must be somebody ill in the house," and she leant over the fire,
warming her hands. When she stood up again, it seemed that some of the warmth had passed into her own complexion, driving away the lifeless grey tones of her cheeks.

And then tea came, Devonshire cream and jam and an expensive and fragrant China tea. It was brought by an untidy maidservant, who was not wearing uniform. She made no attempt to conceal her interest in the strangers, and evidently had great difficulty in preventing herself from asking them some question. They, for their part, were as anxious to question her and yet, as if restrained by some force, kept silent.

Graham said to Miss Harrywain, after the maid had closed the door, "Why didn't you ask her about this curious reception? They might have been waiting here for us. It looks as if we were expected."

"Why for that matter," Miss Harrywain answered, "didn't you?"

"Funny," Graham said, as if to himself.

"Funny what?"

"I'm sorry. It was rude of me. Funny that you should be able to smile, was what I was thinking. Somehow I had formed the idea that you didn't smile. It didn't seem to fit in with your character. And then you did smile, and it fitted perfectly. I'm sorry. It was rude of me."

"No it wasn't," Miss Harrywain assured him. "You are perfectly right, as a matter of fact. I don't smile, as a general rule. There's so little to smile at. But here, somehow,—oh, I don't know," she broke off.

Mrs. Trimbell said, "Here's a funny thing. The girl has brought four cups. Perhaps the nurse is coming to have tea with us."

But she wasn't. They never saw her again.

Mrs. Trimbell, who seemed to have shed her unfriendliness, said to Miss Harrywain, "Come here, my dear, and sit next to the fire. I've been taking it all myself in a most selfish way," and Miss Harrywain smiled at
her, showing again, suddenly and in a moment, that she was not just a woman on the verge of middle age, sullen, disappointed and hungry, but that she was kind and human, and might find a man to love her yet. And Graham was friendly, too, and talkative.

"It is curious," he said. "We might be in a different world, once we're in this room. Not that there was anything wrong with those two chaps in the bus. They were friendly too. And they will probably get into trouble, poor chaps, for wrecking that bus. Bus companies are not always very kind to their drivers."

"Yes," Mrs. Trimbell said. "I agree. This house has an extraordinary atmosphere. I don't think I have ever been in a house like it. You must not think me silly, but somehow it seems to me to be like—like—heaven."

"Heaven?" Graham asked, but he did not ask it in an unkind way, or even smile. For this expression of Mrs. Trimbell's, which would sound odd in most places, did not, somehow, sound or seem odd at all.

And so they chatted away, happy and friendly, wondering who their strange hostess might be, puzzling themselves as to how they could show their gratitude to her.

Graham talked about the excitement of conversation with strangers, how you started, not knowing at all where you would finish. It was as if you shut your eyes on the platform at Calais, and did not know whether the train you entered was going to carry you to Istamboul or to Madrid.

"Or be a local going to Étaples," Miss Harrywain added.

"Like a doctor opening someone up on the operating table. It might be a simple ulcer; on the other hand it might be something unbelievably malignant and difficult and exciting."

At which Mrs. Trimbell winced.
Then Mrs. Harrywain started. [Conversation was only a part of getting to know people, she said. Conversationalists were like two people in a forest trying to get nearer and nearer to one another, feeling their way to one another by shouting and calling in the dark; or like two people who could see one another and who were trying to meet in a maze. "Sometimes they think that another turn of the corner will bring them into one another's grasp—and then, in a moment, they are further off than when they started. It is awfully hard to know what they would do if they did meet. Just why are they trying to get so near to one another? It is easy enough in the case of lovers. They find one another—or I suppose they do—but then they lose one another again. But ordinary people. What are they in search of? Comfort? Assurance? Help? Escape from loneliness? What?"

"I declare," Mrs. Trimbell said, breaking in on their conversation. "I am more than glad that the accident happened to the bus. I feel that I should have missed something, if it hadn't happened. I know it sounds silly, but then old women get silly, so all young folk tell me. And now," she said, "I'm feeling tired, and I think that I will take the advice of that charming young nurse and go upstairs and lie down. You will be able to amuse yourselves, and you will let me know, won't you, if the telegram comes?"

She went out of the room humming the tune that the nurse had been singing when she left them, and when they were by themselves, Graham and Miss Harrywain did not say, "Telegram? What can the poor old dear be thinking about? She must be a bit dotty." No, though they had both heard her, it seemed to them both the most natural thing in the world that she should have asked to be told when a telegram arrived for her.

"It's funny," Miss Harrywain said, "sitting and waiting like this. Though sometimes I think that waiting is
the best part of all. You can always have the courage to believe that the thing you are waiting for is really going to happen; that the person you are waiting for is going to turn up.”

Graham looked at her. Colour had crept into her cheeks, her eyes were lit up by the fire and there was about her a vigour, an animation, that she had not possessed before.

Graham said, “Five or six years have fallen out of your life since you have been in this room, and—don’t think me rude, will you? I can see that a great sorrow has dropped out of your life. Tut, tut,” he added, as if he were correcting himself, “I’m talking just like a palmist, or like the mystery woman at the fair.”

She looked at him gratefully, took his hand and gave it a small squeeze and said, “How kind you are. I should never have guessed that you were so understanding. It’s a great help to share things, and I’ve had this on my shoulders alone for too long. For six years, in fact. That’s why it is so marvellous that it is all going to end now. Now,” she repeated excitedly. “At any moment he may come. I can hardly bear to wait for him. And the last time was so awful. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Five minutes, ten minutes, two hours—and I wouldn’t believe he wasn’t coming. Then I began to imagine things. Footsteps, you know. Then the bell rang—but there was nobody there. And ever since, for six years, I have just lived that night and lived it again and again and again. Horrible,” she said, wringing her hands, “and yet not horrible, really. It’s been something to remember, and lots of women haven’t even got that. And I’ve always been able to imagine that it had ended differently, that he had come, when he said he would. However that makes it all the greater fun waiting. I knew somehow that he would come in the end. It must have been a mistake. And now to-night he’s coming. I think he’ll be here at any moment.”
Graham showed no surprise.
"I'm glad," he said simply. "Tell me all about him."
"He's tall and fair and frightfully boyish, with a
great, ugly mouth which twists up when he laughs, and
becomes somehow a lovely and grotesque symbol of the
whole of laughter, if you know what I mean. I think
it was really because he was so boyish that I wouldn't
marry him. He was twenty-four, you see, and I was twenty-
nine, and not frightfully attractive into the bargain.
No, you needn't interrupt and be polite. He had just
been called to the Bar and he was terribly poor. I have
money of my own—which reminds me: I'm terribly
sorry I behaved so badly to that poor boy in the bus—
and some of my friends went out of their way to make
it clear that it was my money that he wanted to marry.
Men aren't supposed to marry women older than them-
selves, you see, and twenty-nine seemed a whole genera-
tion older than twenty-four. I was terribly in love with
him—and he was always asking me to marry him. I
kept on saying No. I couldn't get over the idea that he
might really want my money more than he wanted me.
Il y a toujours un qui baisse. . . . I used to imagine
wonderful novelette heroics. He would rescue me from
a burning house, or save me from drowning or do some-
thing to show that he really wanted me for myself alone.
In the end I couldn't stand it any longer, and I gave in.
I said that he was not to come near me for a month,
and that at the end of the month, if he still wanted me,
he could come and I would say Yes. I was to give a
party on the day; he was to come, and we would an-
nounce our engagement then. I gave the party—I was
so absolutely certain of him by this time. Yes, I gave
the party—and he never turned up."

She rolled and unrolled a handkerchief in her hand.
"You can't imagine what I endured in those two
hours," she said. "Ten minutes, quarter of an hour. I
didn't worry. It was so like him to be late. One hour.
I began to be frightened. Every time a newcomer arrived, I went excitedly to the door. Then people started to go. Some of them looked at me queerly. They suspected that something had gone wrong. In the end they had all gone. No one can know what that night was like. I tried to cheer myself. Perhaps there had been an accident—a slight accident. Or he was ill—nothing at all serious. Or there would be a letter in the morning. There wasn’t.”

Graham took her hand.

“Poor old girl,” he said. “Go on. It helps, I know, to get these things off one’s chest. It’s no good keeping them all bottled up.”

“I never saw him again,” she told him. Then, with a quick catch of her voice. “His engagement was announced two months later to an American girl. Her father was said to be fabulously rich—that was before the American crash. Bob—he was called Bob—wrote me a letter then, but I never read it. I couldn’t bear to. Poor old thing, he had to get me off his conscience and make sure that I should not turn up on the doorstep to spoil his new romance, and I knew that he would do it awfully badly, and that it would hurt me to read it. You see, he wasn’t awfully clever and subtle and good at that sort of thing. I had known all the time that he would never do anything at the Bar, and that we should have to live on my money if we were married. That appealed to a possessive instinct in me—it’s nothing to be proud of. I thought that I should always keep a hold on him that way. You see, I’m not really much more attractive in character than I am in appearance—a grasping old maid in the making.”

“Don’t be silly,” Graham said. “Is that the end of the story?”

“Yes, nearly. Except that his wife is dead. I saw it in a paper the other day. She was drowned somewhere in the south of France. Poor old boy. Anyhow that’s over.”
She shivered, pulled herself together and then, suddenly, her face alight again with happiness, she said, “And so he’s coming back to me. It’s wonderful isn’t it? It makes the whole of this agony worth while. I couldn’t have known what happiness really was, if I hadn’t had this sorrow to endure. I thought that I was doomed to be a lonely old maid, unloving and unloved—and then, suddenly, it’s all over and he’s coming to fetch me. I’m waiting again now—but waiting with a difference. This time I know that he is coming. And one of these days—not now—you and he shall meet one another. You’ll be bound to like him, and he will like you. He likes friendly, understanding sort of men, and you’re like that too. Ah,” she jumped up, “There he is. I’d recognize his step anywhere.”

She rushed to the door. Then, pausing a moment, she came back, leaned over and kissed Graham on the top of his head.

“Bless you,” she said, “for being so kind. I hope that things will go right for you too,” and she went out of the door, whistling the tune that the nurse had sung when she left them. She was transported, wild with fierce happiness, like Diana.

Graham smiled, drew out his pipe and lighted it. It was wonderful to feel so happy. And then the door opened again, and Mrs. Trimbell came into the room. She took the chair that Miss Harrywain had just vacated by the fire.

“I feel beautifully rested,” she said. “There is something extraordinarily stimulating and comforting about this house. I should think that my telegram might come at any moment now. I suffer from cancer, you know,” she concluded suddenly.

Graham said, “Yes, I knew that.”

She said, “How extraordinary. You haven’t that dull, depressed look that most people cannot succeed in driving from their faces as soon as they discover that
one has cancer. Animals forsake their fellows, when they know that they are dying. Human beings don’t. I think, though, that I’d rather be forsaken than looked at in the pitying way in which most people do look at me, when they learn what is the matter with me. I suppose you are a doctor?”

He nodded.

“I have been to Sir Crimp Fitzmark,” she told him.

He said, “You could not have gone to anyone better. There is nobody living to touch him.”

“Yes,” she said. “He told me that, if I was lucky, I should live about two more years. Two more years. This year, yes. Next year, all right too, perhaps. And then the year after—to have autumn coming, as it is coming on a day like this, and to know that one is never going to see the miracles of spring again—unless one experiences something of a miracle oneself. It is an unendurable thought.”

“I’m dreadfully sorry,” Graham said quietly.

She smiled.

“Ah, but you needn’t be. That is the whole point,” she said. “You are wrong about Sir Crimp Fitzmark being the best man living. He isn’t. There is a German—he was an Austrian before—called Von Klopp. He is marvellous. He has cured hundreds of people whose lives have been given up by other doctors everywhere; and I am going to him. He has a home in Vienna. I am to receive a telegram as soon as there is a bed free; I shall go there straight away. He does his cures by treatment. There is no operation. And then in three months—six months—who knows?—I shall be cured and I shall be able to look forward to spring after spring, tea by daylight, snowdrops, daffodils, the early morning song of the birds—all those things that you take for granted when you are young and at which you clutch for comfort, once you realize that the best part of your life lies behind you. I may be a silly old woman—but I
never knew that such happiness could come into life as has come into mine with the certainty that I am going to be cured."

"I am glad," Graham said quietly. "I don't know about Von Klopp—but, then I have dropped out recently, and I don't know about the newest people and things."

"You have had some trouble yourself, haven't you?" Mrs. Trimbell asked him. "You have the face of a man who has suffered."

"That is true," Graham said. "I haven't talked about it much; but I don't mind talking now. After all, my troubles are over, at last—or, at any rate, very soon will be. You see, my name is Graham. Does that mean anything to you?"

She gasped, and for a moment her face lost all its colour.

"Graham," she spluttered. "Dr. Graham. What, not the Dr. Graham?"

"Yes," he answered quietly. "The Dr. Graham. I haven't even changed my name. And here you are, sitting all alone, helpless, with the monster. A frightening thought, isn't it? A monster, the devil incarnate, a fiend—those are a few among the names that I have been called by our public-spirited newspapers. Being struck off the Register was quite a mild blow by comparison. But I'm sorry. I ought not to have frightened you."

She placed a hand on his knee.

"No, my dear boy," she said. "There is nothing evil in your character. May God forgive me for having thought it. And may He forgive me, too, for my selfishness in imagining that the worst horror in the world could be the thought of death for an old woman, who ought to be dead anyhow. Tell me, if it would help you."

He smiled at her in a tired way.

"You are kind," he said. "Yes, it seems to belong to a different existence, almost. I was a young doctor,
and Mary Stanhope was my patient. My only defence can be that I was very young in those days. I did not know that she had played the same game before—with this difference, that she had never fallen in love seriously with any of her other partners, as she fell in love with me. We went off for week-ends together. I can remember vividly the last one—the quiet and peace of it all. We had a cottage on the river. Moorhens, wild roses, ruminating cows and, everywhere, the intoxicating smell of honeysuckle. The escape was so wonderful. Our life was something so intimate—a secret shared by two people. A month later it was shared by thirty-five millions. Why she killed her husband in such an imbecile way, I can’t imagine. The poison had been taken from my surgery. The prosecution was right there. But I swear now, as I swore then, that she had never breathed a word to me about her plans. The jury that had her hanged believed me there, though probably in their heart of hearts they like all the other millions of my fellow citizens, regretted that the incriminating evidence of conspiracy was lacking. The newspapers were like wolves, howling for my blood. And there I was—acquitted, and unemployable. A doctor struck of the Register, without work, a fish out of water. A fish does at least die, and that is that. A doctor doesn’t. What does this rotten Society of ours do? It tries to reform a prisoner, and then sends him out into a world which dare not employ him. We give a man the cat, so that he may carry its mark for the rest of his days. And myself—everything I knew, all my skill (because I was a good doctor) all wasted, all gone by the board. I am an outcast from my profession. Why couldn’t I be given a chance of making good?"

Mrs. Trimbell said, "How strange that I should be listening to you like this. I often said—and may God forgive me—that you ought to have been hanged. And here you are—kind, honest, sympathetic—and ruined."
“No,” he retorted quickly. “Not ruined. I was ruined, but now I am to be restored. I am expecting a telephone message at any moment. The Medical Council is sitting on my case, and I know for certain that I am going to be re-instated. They’ve brought the case up again, and I am told that there is no doubt about my being put back. And then I’ll get back into hospital again to rub off the rust—and then, thank God, I’ll be able to look the world, look men of my own profession, in the face again. I’m sorry,” he concluded. “I don’t know why I’ve told you all this.”

“I’m glad you did,” Mrs. Trimbell said in a kindly voice. “It’s wonderful our all having these happy prospects ahead. Where’s the girl gone to?”

“She went out a minute or two ago. Her boy has come for her.”

“I’m glad,” Mrs. Trimbell said. “I’m glad she’s happy too. Ah, did you hear anything?”

“Hear what?”

“The bell. That will be the boy with the telegram. It is sure to be. I’ll go out and get it myself. At last, after all these years, to have happiness in sight. It is wonderful, indescribably wonderful,” and she went out of the room, humming again that same tune.

Left by himself, Graham lay back in the warm armchair, sighed contentedly and in a drowsy fashion, and when the little maid came in about ten minutes later, she found him almost asleep.

“Sorry to trouble you, sir,” she said. “but they’ve come from the bus to ask if you’re here, and where it is you’ve got to.”

“Right,” he answered, drawing himself up from his chair. “I’ll come.”

“This way, sir,” she said, when they were in the hall, indicating the direction of the back quarters of the house, but Graham did not follow her. He suddenly pricked up his ears, like a dog picking up the scent of game.
"All right, my girl," he said, feeling for his note case. "You're a good girl, and here's a present for you. But that's my telephone call. I'll go and take it."

"Telephone?" she asked, surprised. "There's no telephone here."

But he paid no attention to her. Whistling the same happy tune, he opened the front door and walked out into the blackness of the mist and the pounding of the breakers at the foot of the cliffs, far below. Out of the house he went, out of her life, and out of everybody else's.

II

That is the story, exactly as I heard it from Dr. Arbuthnot. I was staying with him at Minecombe and on a hot July afternoon we had taken the car to the top of the hill on the Ilfracombe road, left it and walked on to the cliffs. I had noticed, through some pine trees, what appeared to be a red brick house on the very edge of the sea.

"Is that a house?" I had asked him.

"It was," he had answered and, after a pause. "I'll tell you a story about that house; and a strange story at that."

And so he told the story which I have described to you.

When he finished, I said, "But you can't stop a story right in the middle, like that. What happened to the three people? Where did they go?"

"I don't know," he said, a little sadly. "I don't know at all. They were never seen again."

"Do you mean that they had fallen over the cliff? That they had walked over in a kind of hallucination?"

"They may have done," he answered mysteriously. "The current runs straight out to sea here. Bodies don't always come ashore again."

"Poor devils," I said.

"No," he answered, almost with ferocity. "Not poor
devils. Happy, happy people. It is one of the most wonderful things that I have ever known to happen. Consider what they escaped—one from thirty or forty years of starved spinsterhood, one from a hideously painful death, and one from living in gloomy repentance for the folly—the venial folly—which meant that all his potentialities for good, his benevolence, his skill, should to the end of his days be frustrated. They died happy, all of them, not merely grasping at, but attaining, their one, their complete, desire. Didn't some philosopher say, 'Call no man happy until he is dead?' Well, I call these three overwhelmingly, absorbingly, transcendently happy.'

Arbuthnot looked transfigured himself. In a way I felt that it was indecent to question him further; yet I could not help asking him to disentangle the story for me. The whole thing seemed such utter and complete nonsense.

"Look here," I said, suddenly seeing the flaw in his story, "I can't let you get away with a tale like this. I mean to say, if they were never seen again, how could you tell the story in such detail—unless they were all people that you knew?"

"No, I had never heard of them. I made enquiries afterwards because, for certain reasons, the story intrigued me. I discovered about their background. And, further, I had George, the conductor of the bus (he's an old pal of mine) and the half-witted servant girl, Elizabeth (whom I had not seen before) to help me. She had listened at the door and had heard a lot of their conversation. The rest I have composed out of my imagination. If it is not the truth, it is so near the truth as to make no difference."

I looked at him out of the corner of my eyes. Arbuthnot was a good age, sixty-five, probably, or even a year or two older, but he was as sensible and hard-headed a man as you could wish to meet. A story of
this mysterious, irrational sort, did not agree at all with my previous impression of his character, and I wondered if, perhaps, his mind was beginning to lose its grip and whether, like so many old men, he was no longer conscious of the firm borderline between the imaginary and the real.

He interrupted my gaze, and for a moment his serious face relaxed in a smile.

"No, old man," he said, "I haven't had a stroke, and my brain is not softening. The explanation is not as easy as all that."

I had the decency to blush. Like many other laymen, I failed to reckon with the subtlety of the medical mind.

"I'm afraid," he said gravely, "that if you do not find the beginning of the story credible, you are hardly likely to believe the rest."

"I'll believe whatever you tell me," I said, "and please finish the story. I can't bear inexplicable happenings—and so far your story sounds altogether inexplicable."

"Yes," he said, "it seemed inexplicable to the sergeant too—but I explained things to his satisfaction; so I may hope to explain them to yours."

"The sergeant?"

"Yes, our local inspector sent the sergeant to call on me. The police, you see, were baffled. There could be no question that the three passengers had disappeared. Elizabeth, the little girl, had a five pound note, which had been given to her, by her own account, by Graham, but which started the suspicions of the police. She is not a very full-witted child, at the best of times. But the real trouble was that both driver and conductor and Elizabeth agreed—and no amount of bullying and cross-examining could stop them—in telling a story which was physically impossible."

"How?"

"Elizabeth said she had gone to the house in the
course of the afternoon. That she had met a nice, kind-looking nurse in the road and had followed her and that, once they were in the house, this nurse had given her orders to prepare the tea, as strangers were coming. Dave, the driver, and George also said that, in answer to their telephone call, a relief bus had been sent, and that, being unable to find the three passengers in the bus, they had gone down the drive to look for them, and so had found their way later to the house. But, you see, the thing is impossible. They could not have got to the house, any of them.”

“Why?”

“Because the house isn’t a house any longer. It looks all right from here, but when you get nearer you can see that it is a mere ruin. And, anyhow, there isn’t a road to it. You could only reach it by jumping fifteen feet over a gap, with the sea breaking fifty feet below you. The house used to stand on the edge of the cliff, and then, five years ago, there was a landslide, and the cliff broke off from the headland. Nobody has been able to get to it since.”

“And yet these three people, driver, conductor and Elizabeth, to say nothing of the three travellers, swear that they were there that night, and in the house itself?”

“Three of them do. They can’t understand it themselves. ‘Seems us must be proper mazed, it do,’ Dave said to me. It was too much for the Inspector. So he sent one of his constables up to me. You see, I used to own the house—I still do, I suppose, for what it is worth. The inspector is a rational man. He has no use for the inexplicable. And so he postulated a neat alternative. Either the three of them were lying, or I must have built a bridge over the gap, by which they all crossed; and, if the second explanation was the right one, I think he hoped that there might be some little known chapter of the penal code by which he might get me for having built a bridge without previously notifying
the police. You see, he was a little bit frightened by the whole story. He suspected himself that the answer might not be found in the simple alternative that he had postulated. And his suspicion was right, as I explained to the sergeant after he told me the story. The story, as it was told, was perfectly true—as true as it was, to anyone but myself, inexplicable.”

“But you could explain it?”

He smiled sadly for a while.

“I could,” he said. “In fact I did. Even the inspector, unimaginative Scotsman as he is, believed me. It was the girl’s insistence on the tune that they had all whistled or hummed in their moment of happiness which convinced me—that, and the nurse.”

“What was the tune?”

“That was the trouble. The girl could not remember it. When I told the constable, and later the inspector, that I knew what it was, after dithering for a moment or two as to whether they ought to arrest me as a magician practising without a licence, they agreed to go with me to the girl and see if she recognized the tune when I whistled it.”

“And did she?”

“She did.”

“But, look here,” I said. “This is fantastic. It might have been any tune in the world. You couldn’t have guessed it. You must be pulling my leg.”

He shook his head.

“And the nurse, how did she come in?”

He looked at me gravely.

“She was my daughter.”

“Daughter? I didn’t know you had one. You don’t mean Madge?”

“I do mean Madge,” he said. “Would you like me to finish the story?”
"September 23, 1918.

"Twenty years ago, on September 23, there was also a mist. It came, as it came twenty years later, suddenly at five o'clock in the evening. My daughter, Madge, was living at Hopewell House; I had given it to her for a wedding present. Her husband was expected home on leave that day. There had been a wire three days earlier from France, warning us to expect him and, although we had heard nothing since then, we expected him by the afternoon train—the train by which in those days people always arrived from London. Nowadays they come by car, and arrive at all hours. I had finished my round in the afternoon and went to my daughter's for tea, expecting to find my son-in-law—he was called Henry—there already. Just as I arrived, the mist came, and I can remember the disappointment on my daughter's face when the car drew up, bringing nothing more interesting than her father, instead of the handsome young husband, that she was waiting to greet. She had not gone to the station to meet him, for she had only just come off duty at the hospital—she was a V.A.D.—and she was still in her nurse's uniform. She insisted on our having tea at once, as I had to return soon to my surgery. I can remember the meal well. Neither of us said much. We were listening, both of us, for the sound of a car on the gravel outside; waiting, both of us, like that poor girl at her party, waiting for her boy to turn up. With this difference, that we neither of us felt the smallest vestige of uncertainty about Henry's coming. I have never known Madge more cheerful, and I felt in unusually high spirits myself.

"We finished tea, and Madge went off to the kitchen to give the cook some instructions for dinner. Food was not as scarce in Devonshire during the War as it
was in other parts of England, and she was determined that Henry should enjoy his first night at home. While she was away, I went to the library to fetch a book that I wanted to borrow. When I was there I was half-conscious myself of hearing the sound of a car outside. Not fully conscious, you know. That is to say, I couldn’t have sworn to it in a court of law, and the sound may have been suggested to me by what happened afterwards. For I heard Madge shout, ‘Hullo, Henry, I’m coming,’ and I heard her cross the hall, singing the tune of a round that she was very fond of, and Henry too, *Come Follow*—you know the tune—and then I heard the front door slam. I stayed in the library. After all, there are times when a parent knows his place: they had only been married on Henry’s last leave. But after a bit I thought it strange that they didn’t come into the hall. So I went down. They were not in the hall. I opened the front door. There was no sign of them outside; nor, indeed, was there any car. The servants could tell me nothing. They, too, had heard Madge cross the hall, singing ‘as happy as a lark in the springtime,’ as the old cook said. I can hear her singing now. We searched with growing alarm. Then we tried to invent explanations, as a means of calming our own nerves. Perhaps she had taken her bicycle and set off for the station, or even gone to the hospital. But no, her bicycle was there. We could not telephone (there was not a telephone in the house) and as we were standing in the hall, debating what we should do, there was a ring at the door—a telegraph boy. I can still see the maid opening the door, letting in the roar of the breakers from the foot of the cliffs below, and wisps of mist stealing into the hall. I opened the telegram. It said that Henry had been killed two days earlier at the front. Next morning a letter arrived, sent three days earlier, written by him to Madge, telling her that his leave had been cancelled.”

“’And Madge?’ I asked.
"She was never seen again. Her body was never recovered from the sea. Of course, one couldn’t be certain that that was where she had gone, though I had a feeling that it was. I kept servants for years in the house, hoping that perhaps she might return—but then the cliff began to move, and the house had to be abandoned. Five years ago, after a tremendous storm, it fell right out, severed from the mainland, as it is now. And all the time my grief for Madge—she was the only one of my children that I had left, until she went—was wonderfully lightened by a feeling that she had ended her life in a moment of ecstatic happiness. I can hear still the gladness of her voice as she sang, crossing the hall. And the servants evidently felt this, too; otherwise they would never have consented to stay on, as they did, for years in a house where such a thing had happened. And then, as if to prove it, came this curious story of the three passengers in the bus, exactly twenty years later: their happiness, their song—you see now how easy it was for me to identify it—and Elizabeth’s description of my daughter, whom, of course, she had never seen."

Arbuthnot’s eyes were on the sea. He was looking far out into the Channel. I did not know what to say.

Then, very gently, he quoted, “If I take the wings of the morning and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

And still he looked out, over the sea.

Then, suddenly, he turned to me.

“That is what they have done, all four of them,” he said. “They have taken the wings of the morning.”
CONTRIBUTORS

RICHARD ARMSTRONG was born in 1903 on the edge of the Northumbrian fells and attended the village elementary school. His great desire was to become a school teacher. At the age of twelve he won a scholarship to a secondary school, but was unable to take advantage of it since his father, a blacksmith, was in France fighting in the War. He left school when he was thirteen and worked for three years as errand boy, greaser, labourer and crane driver in a Tyneside steelworks. After the War he went to sea and sailed for seventeen years in tramps, liners, colliers and tankers under four different flags. Two years ago, realising that he was sinking into a rut and beginning to stagnate mentally he left the sea and began to earn his living as a typist, writing in his spare time. This is his first story to be accepted.

FAITH BALDWIN was born in New Rochelle, New York, and educated, she tells us, “at Brooklyn Heights Seminary, Ossining School for Girls, Mrs. Dow’s School, Briarcliff, and Europe.” She is the daughter of Stephen C. Baldwin, New York trial lawyer, grand-daughter of Stephen L. Baldwin, Missionary Bishop of China, and a direct descendant of Robert Treat, founder of Newark. She began to write verses at the age of nine but the appearance of a Hymn to Death in a Church paper resulted in her being forbidden by her parents to submit further work for publication until she was eighteen. Since then she has published much verse, numerous articles and short stories and a half score of novels. She has an ex-aviator husband, who is an engineer, and is the mother of four children of whom two are twins. She is, presumably by a coincidence, usually engaged on two novels at a time. From Spring, 1914, to Spring, 1916, she was in Germany, but refrained from writing a book
about her experiences. When the United States entered the War she worked with the Y.M.C.A., and later with the War Camp Community Service. She lives near Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn.

DACRE BALSDON was born in 1901 and educated at Exeter School and Exeter College, Oxford. He was a master at Sedbergh School for two years and has been a Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford since 1928. By profession he is an ancient historian, and has published a number of articles on Roman History and a book, *The Emperor Gains* (Caligula) which came out under the imprint of the Oxford University Press in 1934. He has also published three novels with Eyre & Spottiswoode, *Have a New Master* (1935), *Sell England?* (1936) and *Charity Bizarre* (1938), and a few of his short stories have appeared in *The London Mercury*. He says: "The novels, unlike the short stories, try to be funny. They are what publishers call 'extravaganzas'."

REYNER BARTON was born in 1893. Son of a Lincolnshire doctor. Educated at Epsom College. Trained for the stage, and was on tour in Musical Comedy at age of seventeen. Served in Salonica and Palestine during the War. Invalided out of the Army a few months before Armistice, and advised medically that health would not stand stage work. Went up to Oxford for two years, and took Honours B.A. in history. Played Napoleon in *The Dynasts*—the first post-war production of the O.U.D.S. Decided to return to the stage, and was for several seasons with the Old Vic Company, playing such parts as Henry IV, Malvolio, and Wolsey. Since played in various West End productions—the Archbishop in *Richard of Bordeaux*, etc., also in America. Has filmed, broadcast and televised. Took up short story writing two years ago, and has had several stories published by various London daily papers—chiefly in *The Evening News*. Also in Australia. Wrote *I Killed My Granny* while playing in *Mourning Becomes Electra* at the New Theatre.

T. O. BEACHCROFT is considered by many judges to be one of the best English short story writers now writing. His stories deal with a remarkable variety of themes, scenes,
and people. Some of the best are stories about workers or country people—but he writes with knowledge of all sorts and conditions of men and women.

His method is usually quiet and unobtrusive—though he can be violent on occasion. His style of treatment is not noticeably modern or experimental—but this unshowy treatment conveys complete awareness of the contemporary scene.

The story we print in this issue is, perhaps, too subdued and controlled in mood, but it shows his power of conveying in a short story, the complete picture of a man, suggesting from a single incident his typical problems and the pattern of his whole life. As with all Beachcroft stories, the hero is intensely English.

Beachcroft's output is not very large. His first book of collected short stories *A Young Man In A Hurry* was published in 1934. This has been followed by *You Must Break Out Sometimes* and an unusual novel *The Man Who Started Clean*. Some of these stories have already been widely anthologised and translated.

William Rose Benet writes of something in his work which makes "much of the best writing of to-day look insignificant."

DORA BIRTLES was born in Newcastle, N.S.W., and educated there and at Sydney University. In 1923 she married a fellow student who, she says, "at this time was expelled by the proctorial board for 'indecency in writing a poem.' The poem was a love poem published in the *Hermes*, the University Undergraduates Magazine. Very foolishly I had a poem in the same issue, a Dowsenish kind of thing called *Moon-Shadows*, and for it I was unofficially rusticated for two years. My husband's case caused a stir at the time. Our punishments were proportional to the merits of the poems I suppose."

After taking her degree she became a history mistress for the Department of Education of N.S.W. and in 1932 got leave of absence to do research on the early European navigators in Australian waters, and made the journey described in *North-west Passage*. During her two years of leave legislation was brought in that caused her dismissal as a married woman teacher, and so, she says, "I became
a nomad, and did a few odd things, a walking tour by myself in Japan in winter time—I had only three words of Japanese, but they did very well; then I got a passage to England as a nurse on a troopship. After that I gipsied through Europe in a car with my sister. We met a revolution in Spain and were nearly arrested in Germany. I became temporarily a journalist and a fashion expert in Vienna, and then came to England. Now I am doing an historical book and thinking of going somewhere else.”

DOROTHY CARUS was also a contributor to *Penguin Parade* 5 and figures in the Notes about Contributors in that issue.

TOM CHADWICK was doubly represented in *Penguin Parade* 5 which contained a biographical note.

VICTOR CLARKE is the subject of a biographical note in *Penguin Parade* 4.

MARTHA DODD is twenty-nine years old, was the Book Editor of the *Chicago Tribune* before her father’s appointment as American Ambassador in Berlin. She has published a number of short stories in *Story Magazine* and similar publications, and one article “My Years In Germany,” in *Woman’s Home Companion* in the States and *Britannia and Eve* over here. Her book on Germany will be published by Harcourt Brace in the States and by Gollancz in England, some time in the Spring.

NINA GIFFORD was born in 1918. She is a pupil at the Slade School. A biographical note appears in *Penguin Parade* 3.

CHRISTINA HOLE was born in 1896. When four years old her parents went to South Africa and she went to live with grandparents in a riverside house at Kingston-on-Thames.

She says, “I was educated by a governess, who was feared and admired by the whole household, and later at St. Bernard’s Convent, Slough. During the War, I was a Welfare Officer in the Land Army for the county of Northamptonshire,
CONTRIBUTORS

doing work which I thoroughly enjoyed because it kept me in the country. After the War was over, I went into politics, and became an Organiser and Speaker for the Conservatives for a number of years. During twelve years of that time, I lived in Lancashire and Cheshire, and got to know that part of England thoroughly. Two years ago, I decided that I wanted rather more liberty than such a job allowed me, and I am now running a typewriting business in Oxford.

My main interest is folk-lore, particularly the folk-lore of the British Isles and Scandinavia. I have done a good deal of lecturing on this subject; whilst in the North, I made a collection of Cheshire folk-lore, and the result was published in 1937 as Traditions and Customs of Cheshire. Before that I had written two other books, Wonder Tales of the British Empire and Folk-Tales of Many Nations as well as a good many stories for children, some of which have been broadcast."

GERALD KERSH had a story published in Penguin Parade 4 and a biographical note appears in that issue.

CAROLINE LEE was born on October 3rd, 1892, in Edwardes Square, Kensington, and educated at Kensington High School and Berkhamsted Grammar School for Girls. She was a probationer at Middlesex Hospital, London, from 1915–1916, and worked at the Admiralty from 1916–1919. In 1919 she married a Government official and went to Trinidad, British West Indies, and subsequently to Central Africa. She is living at present in Kenya Colony. She has four children, two grown-up daughters and two sons at a Preparatory School in England. Her brother is J. L. Hardy—novelist, playwright, broadcaster and “escape merchant” in the Great War.

Tastes are sight-seeing, lawn-tennis, pathology, the theatre, the ballet, the screen, classical and swing music. Passions are the compositions of J. S. Bach, the works of Jane Austen and Rachmaninoff’s Concerto in C minor.

FRANCIS MUNRO was born in 1897 in Evanton, Ross-shire. He completed his education at Invergordon Academy,
CONTRIBUTORS

where he won the 1914 Magazine Prize for prose and verse. He worked in the North of Scotland Bank from 1914 to 1924 with a break of two-and-a-half years when he served in the ranks of the London Scottish in France. His first story was sold in 1924 and about the same time he went to Canada where he existed precariously for over a year, finding employment for a time on a farm and subsequently in a Vancouver tannery. He returned to the Scottish Highlands in 1925 where he now works in an office and writes in his leisure. The Boulder is his fourth story to arrive in print; it was written last November during a week-end spent in bed to cure a cold.

J. WOOD PALMER was born in 1904 of a family long resident in Somerset. He was educated at Blundell’s and started life as a brewer and maltster. For the last six years he has lived at Steyning, Sussex. His recreations are travel, gardening and breeding borzois. At the age of thirty, after a severe illness, he began to write short stories and his first work to be published in England appeared in the Manchester Guardian. This was followed by stories and serials in the London Mercury, News Chronicle, Christian Science Monitor, etc., and two stories have been reprinted from the London Mercury in Edward O’Brien’s Best Short Stories (English and American) of 1936 and of 1937. He contributes also to Continental, American and Canadian publications. His first novel, The Deep Root, was published by Methuen’s in September 1938.

META MAYNE REID was born in 1905 of Northern Irish parents. She took her English degree at Manchester and helped to edit the University magazine. When later she came to London she worked in the office of the Civil and Military Gazette, writing sports paragraphs, fashion articles and “cablese.” On returning to Ulster she took a keen interest in the Youth Hostel movement which was just starting, helping its funds by selling her own stories in typescript at sixpence apiece and trying her hand at carpentering bunk beds, cleaning out old wells, and mixing concrete, but decided that it was on the whole easier to write stories. She is married to an Ulsterman, and has one young son.
CONTRIBUTORS

She has broadcast some of her own poems and fairy stories from the Northern Ireland station, and has published two novels The Land is Dear and Far-off Fields Are Green, both with North Irish themes, and is at work on a third. She says: "I am not happy unless hatching out an idea, though I will do anything to postpone the act of writing. This is my first published short story and it was suggested—quite illogically—by a countryman's wonder at Woolworth's when he was up in town for the first time."

BENN SOWERBY was born in 1906 and educated at Tonbridge School and Pembroke College, Cambridge. Originally intended to enter the medical profession, but changed his mind, and on leaving Cambridge became a publisher, but after a few years abandoned publishing for writing and travelling. He has had a number of stories published in Time and Tide and other periodicals.

FREDA M. WINTER spent the first twelve years of her life at Lowestoft, in Suffolk. In view of her passion for music and mountains it was, as she says, lucky it was no longer. Since then she has lived in London, apart from three years spent at Royal Holloway College, in Surrey. Goes to the mountains of Cumberland or the Western Highlands for holidays. Her work has always been mixed up with print. Has held secretarial and editorial jobs, and has for the past three years been editorial secretary on the staff of a London evening newspaper—"an insignificant but interesting and entertaining job." Has had articles and short stories published, but so far has signed all but two with a pseudonym.
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All Except One

When I stepped on to the platform at Nairobi I hadn’t the very least idea of what I was in for. The train for which we were waiting was due from Kisumu, bringing with it a number of Indian sepoys, captured at Tanga and Jasin, whom the Belgian advance on Tabora had freed. It was my job to see them into the ambulances and send them off to hospital. But when I got to the station I found the platform swarming with clerical hats and women who looked religious, all of whom couldn’t very well have been swept into this degree of congregation for the sake of an odd sepoys’s soul. These mean and ill-dressed people kept up a chatter like starlings under the station roof. It was a hot day in November, and the rains were due. Even six thousand feet of altitude won’t stimulate you then. It had all the atmosphere of a sticky school treat in August at home. . . . Baptists on an August Bank Holiday. That was how it struck me.

And anyway it was a nuisance: I couldn’t get my ambulances on to the platform. “You see, sir, it isn’t a nospital train,” said the military policeman, “only an ordinary passenger train from the lake.”

I asked him what all the crowd was about.

“They say,” he replied cautiously “as the missionaries is coming down. Them that was German prisoners.”

So that was it. And a few minutes later the clumsy train groaned in, and the engine stood panting as though it were out of
All Except One (continued)

breath, as do all the wood-fuel engines of the Uganda Railway. The shabby people on the platform sent up an attempt at a cheer. I suppose they were missionaries too. My wounded sepoys had to wait until these martyrs were disgorged.

Poor devils... They were a sad-looking crowd. I don’t suppose Tabora in war-time had been a bed of roses: and yet one couldn’t help feeling that these strange-looking creatures invited persecution. The men, I mean. Oh, yes, I was properly ashamed of myself the next moment: but there’s something about long-necked humility in clerical clothes that stirs up the savage in one, particularly when it moves slowly and with weak knees. Now to the cheers tears were added. They wept, these good people, and were very fluttered and hysterical; and the prisoners, poor souls, looked as if they didn’t know where they were. It wasn’t they who did the crying. I dare say, after all, they were quite admirable people and felt as sick at being slobbered over by over-emotional women as I did watching the process. Gradually all of them were whipped off into cars that were waiting outside and conveyed, no doubt, to Christian homes where the houseboys come in for evening prayers. All of them except one...

I had noticed her from the first: principally, I imagine, because she seemed horribly out of it, standing, somehow, extraordinarily aloof from the atmosphere of emotionalism which bathed the assembly as in weak tea. She didn’t look their sort. And it wasn’t only that her face showed a little tension—such a small thing—about the eyes, as though the whole business (very properly) gave her a headache. I think that if she hadn’t been so dreadfully tired she would have smiled. As it was, nobody seemed to take any notice of her, and I could...
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All Except One (continued)

have sworn that she was thankful for it.

But that wasn’t the only reason why I was interested in her. In spite of the atrocious black clothes which she wore, and which obviously hadn’t been made for her, she was really very beautiful, and this was a thing which could not be said of any other woman on the platform. But the thing which most intrigued me was the peculiar type of beauty which her pale face brought back to me, after many years. This girl’s face, happily unconscious of my gaze, was the spring of a sudden inspiration of the kind which is most precious to those who love England and live in alien lands: it brought to me, suddenly and with a most poignant tenderness, the atmosphere of that sad and beautiful country which lies along the March of Wales.

Other things will work the same magic: a puff of wood smoke; a single note in a bird’s song; a shaft of sunlight or a billow of cloud. But here the impression was inconceivably distinct: so distinct that I could almost have affirmed the existence of some special bond between her and that country, and said: “This woman comes from the Welsh Marches somewhere between Ludlow and Usk, where the women have pale skins of an incredible delicacy, and straight eyebrows and serious dark eyes, and a sort of woodland magic of their own. And their voices . . .” I was certain that I knew what her voice would be like so certain that I took the risk of disappointment and passed near her in the hope that soon somebody would speak to her and then she would answer. I didn’t have to wait long. A bustling female who oozed good works drew near. She held out her hand in welcome as she advanced. . .

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