

# THE SIGNATURE

4 October 1915.

Number 1.

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# The Crown.

by D. H. LAWRENCE.

## I.

The Lion and the Unicorn  
Were fighting for the Crown.

What is it then, that they want, that they are forever rampant and unsatisfied, the king of beasts and the defender of virgins? What is this Crown that hovers between them, unattainable? Does either of them ever hope to get it?

But think of the king of beasts lying serene with the crown on his head. Instantly the unicorn prances from every heart. And at the thought of the lord of chastity with the crown ledged above his golden horn, lying in virgin lustre of sanctity, the lion springs out of his lair in every soul, roaring after his prey.

It is a strange and painful position, the king of beasts and the beast of purity, rampant for ever on either side of the crown. Is it to be so for ever?

Who says lion? — who says unicorn? A lion, a lion!! Hi, a unicorn! Now they are at it, they have forgotten all about the crown. It is a greater thing to have an enemy than to have an object. The lion and the unicorn were fighting, it is no question any more of the crown, We know this, because when the lion beat the unicorn, he did not take the crown and put it on his head, and say "Now Mr. Purity, I'm king." He drove the unicorn out of town, expelled him, obliterated him, expurgated him from the memory, exiled him from the kingdom. Instantly the town was all lion, there was no unicorn at all, no scent nor flavour of unicorn.

"Unicorn!" they said in the city. "That is a mythological beast that never existed."

There was no question any more of rivalry. The unicorn was erased from the annals of fact.

Why did the lion fight the unicorn? Why did the unicorn fight the lion? Why must the one obliterate the other? Was it the *raison d'être* of each of them, to obliterate the other?

But think, if the lion really destroyed, killed the unicorn; not merely drove him out of town, but annihilated him! Would not the lion at once expire, as if he had created a vacuum around himself? Is not the unicorn necessary to the very existence of the lion, is not each opposite kept in stable equilibrium by the opposition of the other.

This is a terrible position: to have for a *raison d'être* a purpose which, if once fulfilled, would of necessity entail the cessation from existence of both opponents. They would both cease to be, if either of them really won in the fight which is their sole reason for existing. This is a troublesome thought

It makes us at once examine our own hearts. What do we find there?—a want, a need, a crying out, a divine discontent. Is it the lion, is it the unicorn?—one, or both? But certainly there is this crying aloud, this infant crying in the night, born into a blind want.

What do we find at the core of our hearts?—a want, a void, a hollow Want. It is the lion that must needs fight the unicorn, the unicorn that must needs fight the lion. Supposing the lion refuses the obligation of his being, and says, "I won't fight, I'll just lie down, I'll be a lion couchant."

What then is the lion? A void, a hollow ache, a want. "What am I?" says the lion, as he lies with his head between his paws, or walks by the river feeding on raspberries, peacefully, like a unicorn. "I am a hollow void, my roaring is the resonance of a hollow drum, my strength is the power of the vacuum, drawing all things within itself."

Then he groans with horrible self-consciousness. After all, there is nothing for it but to set upon the unicorn, and so forget, forget, obtain the precious self-oblivion.

Thus are we, then, rounded upon a void, a hollow want,

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like the lion. And this want makes us draw all things into ourselves, to fill up the void. But it is a bottomless pit, this void. If ever it were filled, there would be a great cessation from being, of the whole universe.

Thus we portray ourselves in the field of the royal arms. The whole history is the fight, the whole *raison d'être*. For the whole field is occupied by the lion and the unicorn, These alone are the living occupants of the immortal and mortal field.

We have forgotten the Crown, which is the keystone of the fight. We are like the lion and the unicorn, we go on fighting underneath the Crown, entirely oblivious of its supremacy.

It is modest common sense for us to acknowledge, all of us, nowadays, that we are built round a void and hollow want which, if satisfied, would imply our collapse, our utter ceasing to be. Therefore we regard our craving with complacence, we feel the great aching of the Want, and we say, with conviction 'I know I exist, I know I am I, because I feel the divine discontent which is personal to me, and eternal, and present always in me.'

That is because we are incomplete, we stand upon one side of the shield, or on the other. On the one side we are in darkness, our eyes gleam phosphorescent like cat's eyes. And with these phosphorescent gleaming eyes we look across at the opposite pure beast, and we say, "Yes, I am a lion, my *raison d'être* is to devour that unicorn, I am moulded upon an eternal void, a Want. Gleaming bright, we see ourselves reflected upon the surface of the darkness and we say: "I am the pure unicorn, it is for me to oppose and resist for ever that avid lion. If he ceased to exist, I should be supreme and unique and perfect. Therefore I will devour him."

But the lion will not be devoured. If he were, if he were swallowed into the belly of the unicorn, the unicorn would fly asunder into chaos.

This is like being a creature who walks by night, who says: "Men see by darkness, and in the darkness they have

their being:" Or like a creature that walks by day, and says: "Men live by the light."

We are enveloped in the darkness, like the lion: or like the unicorn, enveloped in the light.

For the womb is full of darkness, and also flooded with the strange white light of eternity. And we, the peoples of the world, we are enclosed within the womb of our era, we are there begotten and conceived, but not brought forth.

A myriad, myriad people, we roam in the belly of our era, seeking, seeking, wanting. And we seek and want deliverance. But we say we want to overcome the lion that shares with us this universal womb, the walls of which are shut, and have no window to inform us that we are in prison. We roam within the vast walls of the womb, unnourished now, because the time of our deliverance is ripe, even overpast, and the body of our era is lean and withered because of us, withered and inflexible.

We roam unnourished, moulded each of us around a core of want, a void. We stand in the darkness of the womb and we say: "Behold, there is the light, the white light of eternity, which we want." And we make war upon the lion of darkness, annihilate him, so that we may be free in the eternal light. Or else, suddenly, we admit ourselves the lion, and we rush rampant on the unicorn of chastity.

We stand in the light of Virginity, in the wholeness of our unbroached immortality, and we say: "Lo the darkness surrounds us, to envelop us. Let us resist the powers of darkness." Then like the bright and virgin unicorn we make war upon the ravening lion. Or we cry: "Ours is the strength and glory of the Creator, who precedes Creation, and all is unto us." So we open a ravening mouth, to swallow back all time has brought forth.

And there is no rest, no cessation from the conflict. For we are two opposites which exist by virtue of our inter-opposition. Remove the opposition and there is collapse, a sudden crumbling into universal nothingness.

The darkness, this has nourished us. The darkness, this is a vast infinite, an origin, a Source. The Beginning, this is the great sphere of darkness, the womb wherein the universe is begotten,

But this universal, infinite darkness conceives of its own opposite. If there is universal, infinite darkness, then there is universal infinite light, for there cannot exist a specific infinite save by virtue of the opposite and equivalent specific infinite. So that if there be universal infinite darkness in the beginning, there must be universal infinite light in the end. And these are two relative halves.

Into the womb of the primary darkness enters the ray of ultimate light, and time is begotten, conceived, there is the beginning of the end. We are the beginning of the end. And there, within the womb, we ripen upon the beginning, till we become aware of the end.

We are fruit, we are an integral part of the tree. Till the time comes for us to fall, and we hang in suspense, realising that we are an integral part of the vast beyond, which stretches under us and grasps us even before we drop into it.

We are the beginning, which has conceived us within its womb of darkness, and nourished us to the fulness of our growth. This is ours that we adhere to. This is our God, Jehovah, Zeus, the Father of Heaven, this that has conceived and created us, in the beginning, and brought us the fulness of our strength.

And when we have come to the fulness of our strength, like lions which have been fed till they are full grown, then the strange necessity comes upon us, we must travel away, roam like falling fruit, fall from the initial darkness of the tree, of the cave which has reared us, into the eternal light of germination and begetting, the eternal light, shedding our darkness like the fruit that rots on the ground.

We travel across between the two great opposites of the Beginning and the End, the eternal night and everlasting day, and the transit is a stride taken, the night gives us up for the day to receive us. And what are we between the two?



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But before the transit is accomplished, whilst we are yet like fruit heavy and ripe on the tree, we realise the delirious freedom of the end, the goal, and we cry: "Behold, I, who am here within the darkness, I am the light! I am the light, I am Unicorn, the beam of chastity. Behold, the beam of Virginitv gleams within my loins, in this circumambient darkness. Behold, I am not the Beginning, I am the End. The End is universal light, the achieving again of infinite unblemished being, the infinite oneness of the Light, the escape from the infinite not-being of the darkness."

All the time, these cries take place within the womb, these are the myriad unborn uttering themselves as they come towards maturity, cry after cry as the darkness develops itself over the sea of light, and flesh is born, and limbs; cry after cry as the light develops within the darkness, and mind is born, and the consciousness of that which is outside my own flesh and limbs, and the desire for everlasting life grows more insistent.

These are the cries of the two adversaries, the two opposites.

First of all the flesh develops in splendour and glory out of the prolific darkness, begotten by the light it develops to a great triumph, till it dances naked in glory of itself, before the Ark, naked in glory of itself in the procession of heroes travelling towards the wise goddess, the white light, the Mind, the light which the vessel of living darkness has caught and captured within itself, and holds in triumph. The flesh of darkness triumphant circles round the treasure of light which it has enveloped, which it calls Mind, and this is the ecstasy, the dance before the Ark, the Bacchic delirium.

And then, within the womb, the light grows stronger and finds voice, it cries out: "Behold, I am tree, I am not enveloped within this darkness. Behold, I am the everlasting light, the Eternity that stretches forward for ever, utterly the opposite of that darkness which departs backward, backward for ever. Come over to me, to the light, to the light that streams into the glorious eternity. For now the darkness is revoked for ever."

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It is the voice of the unicorn crying in the wilderness, it is the Son of Man. And behold, in the fight, the unicorn beats the lion, and drives him out of town.

But all this is within the Womb. The darkness builds up the warm shadow of the flesh in splendour and triumph, enclosing the light. This is the zenith of David and Solomon, and of Pericles and of Plato. Then the light, wrestling within the vessel, throws up a white gleam of universal love, which is St. Francis of Assisi, and Shelley.

Then each has reached its maximum of self-assertion. The flesh is made perfect within the womb, the spirit is at last made perfect also, within the womb. They are equally perfect, equally supreme, the one adhering to the infinite darkness of the beginning, the other adhering to the infinite light of the end.

Yet, within the womb, they are eternally opposite. Darkness stands over against light, light stands over against dark. The lion is reared against the unicorn, the unicorn is reared against the lion. One says, "Behold, the darkness which gave us birth is eternal and infinite: this we belong to." The other says, "We are of the Light, which is everlasting and infinite."

And there is no reconciliation, save in negation. From the present, the stream flows in opposite directions, back to the past, on to the future. There are two goals, at opposite ends of time. There is the vast original dark out of which Creation issued, there is the Eternal light into which all mortality passes. And both are equally infinite, both are equally the goal, and both equally the beginning.

And we, fully equipped in flesh and spirit, fully built up of darkness, perfectly composed out of light, what are we but light and shadow lying together in opposition, or lion and unicorn fighting, the one to vanquish the other. This is our eternal life, in these two eternities which nullify each other. And we, between them both, what are we but nullity.

But this is because we see in part, always in part. We are enclosed within the womb, we are the seed from the loins

of the eternal light, or we are the darkness which is enveloped by the body of the past, by our era.

Unless the sun were enveloped in the body of darkness, would a cast shadow run with me as I walk? Unless the night lay within the embrace of light, would the fish gleam phosphorescent in the sea, would the light break out of the black coals of the hearth, would the electricity gleam out of itself, suddenly declaring an opposite being?

Love and hate, light and darkness, these are the temporary conquest of the one infinite by the other. In love, the Christian love, the End asserts itself supreme: in hate, in wrath like the lions, the Beginning re-establishes itself unique. But when the opposition is complete on either side, then there is perfection. It is the perfect opposition of dark and light that brindles the tiger with gold flame and dark flame. It is the surcharge of darkness that opens the ravening mouth of the tiger, and drives his eyes to points of phosphorescence. It is the perfect balance of light and darkness that flickers in the stepping of a deer. But it is the conquered darkness that flares and palpitates in her eyes.

There are the two eternities fighting the fight of Creation, the light projecting itself into the darkness, the darkness enveloping herself within the embrace of light. And then there is the consummation of each in the other, the consummation of light in darkness and darkness in light, which is absolute: our bodies cast up like foam of two meeting waves, but foam which is absolute, complete, beyond the limitation of either infinity, consummate over both eternities. The direct opposites of the Beginning and the End, by their very directness, imply their own supreme relation, And this supreme relation is made absolute in the clash and the foam of the meeting waves. And the clash and the foam are the Crown, the Absolute.

The lion and the unicorn are not fighting *for* the Crown. They are fighting beneath it. And the Crown is upon their fight. If they made friends and lay down side by side, the Crown would fall on them both and kill them. If the lion

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really beat the unicorn, then the Crown pressing on the head of the king of beasts alone would destroy him. Which it has done and is doing, As it is destroying the unicorn who has achieved supremacy in another field,

So that now, in Europe, both the lion and the unicorn are gone mad, each with a crown tumbled on his bound-in head. And without rhyme or reason they tear themselves and each other, and the fight is no fight, it is a frenzy of blind things dashing themselves and each other to pieces.

Now the unicorn of virtue and intact virginity has got the Crown slipped over the eyes, like a circle of utter light, and has gone mad with the extremity of light: whilst the lion of wrath and splendour, its own Crown of supreme night settled down upon it, roars in an agony of imprisoned darkness.

Now within the withered body of our era, within the husk of the past, the seed of light has come to supreme self-consciousness and has gone mad with the flare of eternal light in its eyes, whilst the fruit of darkness, unable to fall from the tree, has turned round towards the tree and is become mad, clinging faster upon the utter night whence it should have dropped away long ago.

For the stiffened, exhausted, inflexible loins of our era are too dry to give us forth in labour, the tree is withered, we are pent in, fastened, and now have turned round, some to the source of darkness, some to the source of light, and gone mad, purely given up to frenzy. For the dark has travelled to the light, and the light towards the dark. But then they reached the bound, neither could leap forth. The fruit could not fall from the tree, the lion just full grown could not get out of the cave, the unicorn could not enter the illimitable forest, the lily could not leap out of the darkness of her bulb straight into the sun. What then? The road was stopped. Whither then? Backward, back to the known eternity. There was a great, horrible huddle backwards. The process of birth had been arrested, the inflexible, withered loins of the mother-era were too old and set, the past was taut around us all.

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Then began the chaos, the going asunder, the beginning of nothingness. Then we leaped back, by reflex from the bound and limit, back upon ourselves, into madness.

There is a dark beyond the darkness of the womb, there is a light beyond the light of knowledge. There is the darkness of all the heavens for the seed of man to invest, and the light of all the heavens for the womb to receive. But we don't know it. How can the unborn within the womb know of the heavens outside; how can they?

How can they know of the tides beyond? On the one hand murmurs the utter, infinite sea of darkness, full of unconceived creation: on the other the infinite light stirs with eternal procreation. They are two seas which eternally attract and oppose each other, two tides which eternally advance to repel each other, which foam upon one another, as the ocean foams on the land, and the land rushes down into the sea.

And we, in the great movement, are begotten, conceived and brought forth, like the waves which meet and clash and burst up into foam, sending the foam like light, like shadow, into the zenith of the absolute, beyond the grasp of either eternity.

We are the foam and the foreshore, that which, between the oceans, is not, but that which supersedes the oceans in utter reality, and gleams in absolute Eternity.

The Beginning is-not, nor the eternity which lies behind us, save in part. Partial also is the eternity which lies in front. But that which is not partial, but whole, that which is not relative, but absolute, is the clash of the two into one, the foam of being thrown up into consummation.

It is the music which comes when the cymbals clash one upon the other.: this is absolute and timeless. The cymbals swing back in one or the other direction of time, towards one or the other relative eternity. But absolute, timeless, beyond time or eternity, beyond space or infinity, is the music that was the consummation of the two cymbals in opposition.

It is that which comes when night clashes on day, the

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rainbow, the yellow and rose and blue and purple of dawn and sunset, which leaps out of the breaking of light upon darkness, of darkness upon light, absolute beyond day or night, the rainbow, the iridescence which is darkness at once and light, the two-in-one, the crown that binds them both.

It is the lovely body of foam that walks forever between the two seas, perfect and consummate, the revealed consummation, the oneness that has taken being out of the two.

We say the foam is evanescent, the wind passes over it and it is gone, he who would save his life must lose it.

But if indeed the foam were-not, if the two seas fell apart, if the sea fell departed from the land, and the land from the sea, if the two halves, day and night, were ripped asunder, without attraction or opposition, what then? Then there would be between them nothingness, utter nothingness. Which is meaningless.

So that the foam and the iridescence, the music that comes from the cymbals, all formed things that come from perfect union in opposition, all beauty and all truth and being, all perfection, these are the be-all and the end-all, absolute, timeless, beyond time or eternity, beyond the Limit or the Infinite.

This lovely body of foam, this iris between the two floods this music between the cymbals, this truth between the surge of facts, this supreme reason between conflicting desires, this holy spirit between the opposite divinities, this is the Absolute made visible between the two Infinities, the Timelessness into which are assumed the two Eternities.

It is wrong to try to make the lion lie down with the lamb. This is the supreme sin, the unforgivable blasphemy of which Christ spoke. This is the creating of nothingness, the bringing about, or the striving to bring about the nihil which is pure meaninglessness.

The great darkness of the lion must gather into itself the little, feeble darkness of the lamb. The great light of the lamb must absorb elsewhere, in the whole world, the small,

weak light of the lion. The lamb indeed will inherit the world, rather than the lion. It is the triumph of the meek. But the meek, like the merciless, shall perish in their own triumph.

The crown is upon the perfect balance of the fight, it is not the fruit of either victory. The Crown is not prize of either combatant. It is the *raison d'être* of both. It is the absolute within the fight.

And those alone are evil, who say, "The lion shall lie down with the lamb, the eagle shall mate with the dove, the lion shall munch in the stable of the unicorn." For they blaspheme against the *raison d'être* of all life, they try to destroy the essential, intrinsic nature of God.

But it is the fight of opposites which is holy. The fight of like things is evil. For if a thing turn round upon itself in blind frenzy of destruction, this is to say: "the lamb shall roar like the lion, the dove strike down her prey like the eagle, and the unicorn shall devour the innocent virgin in her path." Which is precisely the equivalent blasphemy to the blasphemy of universal meekness, or peace.

And this, this last, is our blasphemy of the war. We would have the lamb roar like the lion, all doves turn into eagles.

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# Autumns.

By MATILDA BERRY.

## I.

There were two orchards belonging to the old house, One, that we called the 'wild' orchard lay beyond the vegetable garden; it was planted with bitter cherries and damsons and transparent yellow plums. For some reason it lay under a cloud; we never played there, we did not even trouble to pick up the fallen fruit; and there, every Monday morning, to the round open space in the middle, the servant girl and the washerwoman carried the wet linen; grandmother's night-dresses, father's striped shirts, the hired man's cotton trousers and the servant girl's 'dreadfully vulgar' salmon pink flannelette drawers jiggled and slapped in horrid familiarity.

But the other orchard, far away and hidden from the house, lay at the foot of a little hill and stretched right over to the edge of the paddocks — to the clumps of wattles bobbing yellow in the bright and the blue gums with their streaming sickle-shaped leaves. There, under the fruit trees the grass grew so thick and coarse that it tangled and knotted in your shoes as you walked and even on the hottest day it was damp to touch when you stooped and parted it this way and that looking for windfalls — the apples marked with a bird's beak, the big bruised pears, the quinces, so good to eat with a pinch of salt, but so delicious to smell that you could not bite for sniffing...

One year the orchard had its Forbidden Tree. It was an apple discovered by father and a friend during an after-dinner prowling one Sunday afternoon.

"Great Scott!" said the friend, lighting upon it with every appearance of admiring astonishment: "Isn't that a



— —?” And a rich, splendid name settled like an unknown bird upon the little tree.

“Yes, I believe it is.” said father lightly. He knew nothing whatever about the names of fruit trees.

“Great Scott!” said the friend again: “They’re wonderful apples. Nothing like ’em — and you’re going to have a tip-top crop. Marvellous apples! You can’t beat ’em!”

“No, they’re very fine — very fine,” said father carelessly, but looking upon the tree with new and lively interest.

“They’re rare — they’re very rare. Hardly ever see ’em in England nowadays,” said the visitor and set a seal on father’s delight. For father was a self-made man and the price he had to pay for everything was so huge and so painful that nothing rang so sweet to him as to hear his purchase praised. He was young and sensitive still. He still wondered whether in the deepest sense he got his money’s worth. He still had hours when he walked up and down in the moonlight half deciding to “chuck this confounded rushing to the office every day — and clear out — clear out once and for all.” And now to discover that he’d a valuable apple tree thrown in with the orchard — an apple tree that this Johnny from England positively envied.

“Don’t touch that tree. Do you hear me, children!” said he bland and firm; and when the guest had gone, with quite another voice and manner:

“If I catch either of you touching those apples you shall not only go to bed — you shall each have a good sound whipping!” Which merely added to its magnificence.

Every Sunday morning after church father with Bogey and me tailing after walked through the flower garden, down the violet path, past the lace-bark tree, past the white rose and syringa bushes, and down the hill to the orchard. The apple tree — like the Virgin Mary — seemed to have been miraculously warned of its high honour, standing apart from its fellow, bending a little under its rich clusters, fluttering its polished leaves, important and exquisite before father’s awful eye. His heart swelled to the sight — we knew his heart

swelled. He put his hands behind his back and screwed up his eyes in the way he had. There it stood—the accidental thing—the thing that no one had been aware of when the hard bargain was driven. It hadn't been counted on, hadn't in a way been paid for. If the house had been burned to the ground at that time it would have meant less to him than the destruction of his tree. And how we played up to him, Bogey and I, Bogey his scratched knees pressed together, his hands behind his back, too, and a round cap on his head with 'H.M.S. Thunderbolt' printed across it.

The apples turned from pale green to yellow; then they had deep pink stripes painted on them, and then the pink melted all over the yellow, reddened, and spread into a fine clear crimson.

At last the day came when father took out of his waist-coat pocket a little pearl pen-knife. He reached up. Very slowly and very carefully he picked two apples growing on a bough.

"By Jove! They're warm" cried father in amazement. "They're wonderful apples! Tip-top! Marvellous!" he echoed. He rolled them over in his hands.

"Look at that!" he said. "Not a spot—not a blemish!" And he walked through the orchard with Bogey and me stumbling after, to a tree stump under the wattles. We sat, one on either side of father. He laid one apple down, opened the pearl pen-knife and neatly and beautifully cut the other in half.

"By Jove! Look at that!" he exclaimed.

"Father!" we cried, dutiful but really enthusiastic, too. For the lovely red colour had bitten right through the white flesh of the apple; it was pink to the shiny black pips lying so justly in their scaly pods. It looked as though the apple had been dipped in wine.

"Never seen *that* before," said father. "You won't find an apple like that in a hurry!" He put it to his nose and pronounced an unfamiliar word. "Bouquet! What a bouquet!" And then he handed to Bogey one half, to me the other.

"Don't *bolt* it!" said he. It was agony to give even so much away. I knew it, while I took mine humbly and humbly Bogey took his.

Then he divided the second with the same neat beautiful little cut of the pearl knife.

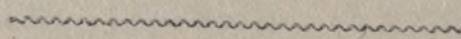
I kept my eyes on Bogey. Together we took a bite. Our mouths were full of a floury stuff, a hard, faintly bitter skin,—a horrible taste of something dry...

"Well?" asked father, very jovial. He had cut his two halves into quarters and was taking out the little pods. "Well?"

Bogey and I stared at each other, chewing desperately. In that second of chewing and swallowing a long silent conversation passed between us—and a strange meaning smile. We swallowed. We edged near father, just touching him.

"Perfect!" we lied. "Perfect—father. Simply lovely!"

But it was no use. Father spat his out and never went near the apple tree again.



## II.

Suddenly—dreadfully—I wake up. What has happened? Something dreadful has happened! No—nothing has happened—it is only the wind shaking the house, rattling the windows, banging a piece of iron on the roof and making my bed tremble. Leaves flutter past the window, up and away; down in the avenue a whole newspaper wags in the air like a lost kite and falls, spiked on a pine tree. It is cold. Summer is over—it is autumn—everything is ugly. The carts rattle by, swinging from side to side; two Chinamen lollop along under their wooden yokes with the straining vegetable baskets—their pigtails and blue blouses fly out in the wind. A white dog on three legs yelps past our gate. It

is all over! What is? Oh, everything! And I begin to plait my hair with shaking fingers, not daring to look in the glass.

Mother is talking to grandmother in the hall.

“A perfect idiot! Imagine leaving anything out on the line all night in weather like this... Now my best little Teneriffe-work tea-cloth is simply in ribbons! *What* is that extraordinary smell? It's the porridge burning. Oh, Heavens — this wind!”

I have a music-lesson at ten o'clock. At the thought the minor movement of my Beethoven begins to play in my head, the trills long and terrible like little rolling drums... Marie Swainson runs into the garden next door to pick the ‘chrysanthus’ before they are ruined. Her skirt flies up above her waist; she tries to beat it down, to tuck it between her legs while she stoops, but it is no use — up it flies. All the trees and the bushes beat about her. She picks as quickly as she can, but she is quite distracted. She doesn't mind what she does — she pulls the plants up by the roots and bends and twists them, stamping her foot and swearing.

“For Heaven's sake keep the front *shut*. Go round to the *back*,” shouted someone.

And then I hear Bogey:

“Mother, you're wanted on the telephone. Telephone, mother. It's the butcher!”

How hideous life is — revolting, simply revolting... And now my hat-elastic's snapped. Of course it *would*, I'll wear my old red tam and slip out the back way. But mother has seen.

“Matilda! Matilda! Come back im—me—diately! What on earth have you got on your head? It looks like a tea cosey. And why have you got that mane of hair on your forehead?”

“I can't come back, Mother. I'll be late for my lesson.”

“Come back im-*me*-diately!”

I won't. I won't. I hate Mother. “Go to Hell,” I shout, running down the road.

In waves, in clouds, in big round whirls the dust comes stinging, and with it little bits of straw and chaff and manure. There is a loud roaring sound from the trees in the gardens, and standing at the bottom of the road outside Mr. Bullen's gate I can hear the sea sob: "Ah... Ah... Ah-h!" But Mr. Bullen's drawing room is as quiet as a cave. The windows are closed, the blinds half pulled, and I am not late. The-girl-before-me has just started playing Mac Dowell's "To an Iceberg."

Mr. Bullen looks over at me and half smiles.

"Sit down," he says. "Sit over there in the sofa corner, little lady."

How funny he is! He doesn't exactly laugh at you... but there is just something... Oh, how peaceful it is here. I like this room. It smells of art serge and stale smoke and chrysanthemums... there is a big vase of them on the mantelpiece behind the pale photograph of Rubenstein... *à mon ami Robert Bullen*... Over the black glittering piano hangs 'Solitude' — a dark tragic woman draped in white sitting on a rock, her knees crossed, her chin on her hands.

"No, no!" says Mr. Bullen, and he leans over the other girl, puts his arms over her shoulders and plays the passage for her. The stupid — she's blushing! How ridiculous!

Now the-girl-before-me has gone; the front door slams behind her. Mr. Bullen comes back and walks up and down, very softly, waiting for me. What an extraordinary thing! My fingers tremble so that I can't undo the knot in my music satchel. It's the wind... And my heart beats so hard I feel it must lift my blouse up and down. Mr. Bullen does not say a word. The shabby red piano seat is long enough for two people to sit side by side. Mr. Bullen sits down by me.

"Shall I begin with scales?" I ask, squeezing my hands together. "I had some arpeggios, too."

But he does not answer. I don't believe he even hears... and then suddenly his fresh hand with the ring on it reaches over and opens Beethoven.

"Let's have a little of the old master," he says.

But why does he speak so kindly — so awfully kindly — and

as though we had known each other for years and years and knew everything about each other.

He turns the pages slowly. I watch his hand — it is a very nice hand and always looks as though it had just been washed.

“Here we are,” says Mr. Bullen.

Oh, that kind voice — Oh, that minor movement! Here comes the little drums...

“Shall I take the repeat?”

“Yes, dear child.”

His voice is far, far too kind. The crotchets and quavers are dancing all up and down the stave like little black boys on a fence. Why is he so... I *will* not cry — I have nothing to cry about...

“What is it, dear child?”

Mr. Bullen takes my hands. His shoulder is there — just by my head. I lean on it ever so little, my cheek against the springy tweed.

“Life is so dreadful,” I murmur, but I don’t feel it’s dreadful at all. He says something about ‘waiting’ and ‘marking time’ and “that rare thing a woman,” but I do not hear. It is so comfortable... for ever...

Suddenly the door opens and in pops Marie Swainson, hours before her time.

“Take the allegretto a little faster,” says Mr. Bullen, and gets up and begins to walk up and down again.

“Sit in the sofa corner, little lady,” he says to Marie.

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The wind, the wind! It’s frightening to be here in my room by myself. The bed, the mirror, the white jug and basin gleam like the sky outside. It’s the bed that is frightening. There it lies, sound asleep... Does Mother imagine for one moment that I am going to darn all those stockings knotted up on the quilt like a coil of snakes. I’m not. No, Mother, I do *not* see why I should... The wind — the wind! There’s a funny smell of soot blowing down the chimney. Hasn’t anybody written poems to the wind?

"I bring fresh flowers to the leaves and showers"... What rubbish!

"Is that you, Bogey?"

"Come for a walk round the esplanade, Matilda. I can't stick this any longer."

"Right-o! I'll put on an ulster. Isn't it an awful day?"

Bogey's ulster is just like mine. Hooking the collar I look at myself in the glass. My face is white, we have the same excited eyes and hot lips. Ah, we know those two in the glass. Goodbye, dears, we shall be back soon!

"This is better, isn't it?"

"Hook on," says Bogey.

We cannot walk fast enough. Our heads bent, our legs just touching, we stride like one eager person through the town, down the asphalté zigzag where the fennel grows wild and on to the esplanade. It is dusky — just getting dusky. The wind is so strong that we have to fight our way through it rocking like two old drunkards. All the poor little pahutukawas on the esplanade are bent to the ground.

"Come on, come on! Let's get near". Over by the break-water, the sea is very high. We pull off our hats and my hair blows across my mouth, tasting of salt. The sea is so high that the waves do not break at all: they thump against the rough stone wall and suck up the weedy, dripping steps. A fine spray skims from the water right across the esplanade. We are covered with drops; the inside of my mouth tastes wet and cold.

Bogey's voice is breaking. When he speaks he rushes up and down the scale. It's funny — it makes you laugh — and yet it just suits the day. The wind carries our voices — away fly the sentences like little narrow ribbons.

"Quicker — quicker!"

It is getting very dark. In the harbour the coal hulks show two lights, one high on a mast, and one from the stern.

"Look, Bogey! Look over there!"

A big black steamer with a long loop of smoke streaming, with the portholes lighted, with lights everywhere, is putting out to sea. The wind does not stop her; she cuts through the

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waves, making for the open gate between the pointed rocks that leads to... It's the light that makes her look so awfully beautiful and mysterious... *We* are on board, leaning over the rail arm in arm.

"...Who are they?"

"...Brother and Sister."

"Look, Bogey, there's the town. Doesn't it look small! There's the post-office clock chiming for the last time. There's the esplanade where we walked that windy day. Do you remember? I cried at my music lesson that day — How many years ago! Goodbye, little island, goodbye..."

Now the dark stretches a wing over the tumbling water. We can't see those two any more. Goodbye, goodbye — Don't forget... but the ship is gone, now.

The wind — the wind!

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# There Was a Little Man...

by JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY.

## I.

...The war has been going on now for a whole year. I suppose that I should have grown used to it. Instead it has lately become a more and more insidious nightmare. It lays wait for me and paralyses me.

Passionately and from the depths of my heart I say "This monstrous thing does not exist"; there is no real relation between it and me. I try to hold myself apart, to deny it, and to work out my own salvation; yet though I bolt and bar every door the miasma creeps in upon me, of shadowy fear and black depression.

Yet it is not real. If it were real, I might acquiesce in the death of my own illusions, acknowledge to my heart that my soul had cheated me with vain promises, and drown it for ever by plunging into the war. That I cannot do. The conscious part of me still rises in bitter revolt against the thought and still proclaims that the war is a truth only to that in me that shivers with vague and unnamed terrors; to that which fights against them in hungry desperation it is a lie,— an active, festering lie coiled in the branches above my head as I struggle on, ready to descend and crush.

And there we stand over against each other, weak feverish truth and bestial lie. For the lie is within me watching when I tire. I cannot keep my hands for ever tight upon its throat. I am not brave, nor of heroic strength. I weaken, my fingers slacken, and the thing puts another coil about me, and another until my struggle grows wild and hysterical. I cannot think any more. My thoughts are now like birds that rise and beat for a brief second against the bars; one falls, another rises and as quickly falls, and another. They lie,

bruised and torn by the terrible beating of their own hearts. They rise again and dash themselves in a fury of weak and dizzy madness against the cage, quicker and quicker, feebler and feebler. At last they are not thoughts at all but the spasmodic twitchings of ungovernable nerves.

And then I am lost. I have no more power in me to resist the Beast. My struggle over, one thought rises clear before me: "What if my Beast be true and my Man a lie?" And I listen to the question. I make no answer, for my own weakness and defeat make answer for me. In the silence, something says: "Give up and enter. Why listen to the Man, that is so easily beaten to his knees? The Beast is in you. Why deny him?" Perhaps I should find release in the surrender of myself to that I loathe and hate. Not surrendering, I am myself, but only for a treacherous moment of self-possession, before the thing returns and takes hold of me again. Why should I fight to be myself, when to be myself is no more than the passionate, vain effort to maintain it? I do not know; and yet I try. I am trying now. I seek to hold myself apart in one place, and to set myself over against the war, which is in another. But the St. George and Dragon effect is childish and ridiculous. I cannot believe in it for a moment. The War is in me: it seizes and chokes me. When I am most valiantly prepared, it enters in like a dark flood at every avenue of sense. It wells up like an ooze above the threshold of my consciousness. It is become a black and bitter contagion in my blood. If I could hold it fairly before my waking mind, and fight it there, I might throttle it and be free. But there I hold only a weak shadow of the thing that works in the dark and sleep, undermining, crawling, establishing its strength, till the appointed time when it will deliver its final assault, unseen, motionless and silent, and I will crumble and collapse.

I will not surrender then. I dare not. I will build up again. And it will be again at its quiet stealthy working: again I will collapse, and again build up...

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How shall I build and with what?

I must build after a purpose and according to a plan, with the full activity of my waking mind. I will search out my own keenest desires. I will exercise the garrison of my fortress, and instruct them, that they may know for what they fight and how they may most hopefully resist. They can conquer only the enemies they see; but they may raise a strength which the unseen enemy will not so easily shake. I know it is a part and only a part. I am compact of unknown no less than known. Perhaps the known Man is by so much weaker than the unknown, as the unknown Beast is stronger and more terrible than the known. It should be so. I will not doubt it: nor will I doubt that the known and the unknown Man are in alliance.

But I must meet the enemy I see. The War has assailed me in my consciousness. Men I knew, of my own age, have met their death. Every time the news of such a death has come to me, I have been plunged for hours, even for days into a cold despondency of horror. Yet the horror was not for them, but for me; not of their death, but of my own. They were like me in their ways, not wholly like me, — some of them little enough — but something like, for they were, or they had been, my friends. They desired to achieve something out of their lives beyond the mere extension of comfortable existence. They were like me in that, which was the chief matter: and when they died, I died with them, for a minute or an hour or a day. I died with all that I dream of and struggle for unachieved. Their achievement was snuffed out with their life. Can it be as light and unsubstantial as that?

No, I believe it is something to live for, without which the life I have lived is just a silly tale, snapped off in the middle, because neither the teller nor the listeners found it interesting. So the War comes near to me again, in the thought that the time is approaching when I shall be taken and made to serve. Then I know that I shall die. There will be no escape. The thought is intolerable to me, that I should die

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in the service of the Beast that I loathe, taken against my will: that the thing I despise should break off my tale as one not worthy to be told; that I should be surrendered to a mechanical process in which I shall find neither satisfaction nor hope, which takes me as that which I am not and forces me to that which I will not be. And even the thought, which once consoled me, that if I am taken by force, I will not mind, because I have done nothing of my own will to bring it upon me, consoles me no longer. I feel now that I must fight against it so long as I have breath.

And yet there are times when the prospect is seductive, to be under orders, to be rid of this tyrannous unsatisfied impatient soul, to die just because I am told to...

But that is only self-deception. I should not be rid of it. It would be always present to torment me. One more chain added to all the chains of my own.

And then I wonder: "What of those others?" Surely they being of my kind, were tortured by these ideas. Surely, they too could not bear to look at death save with the courage of something achieved out of their lives. And yet they died, and I suppose, died gladly. I do not understand it any more. I do not believe that they died gladly: either that or they were not of my kind. What were they then and how were they persuaded?

Two answers come into my mind. One is that they were kindled and caught up into the flame of passionate desire for war as war, which scorched me in those remote days when I waited feverishly for war to be declared, shouted all night long with the crowds in the streets, called *A bas les Allemands!* outside the French Embassy, and stood for days together in a queue at the door of a recruiting-office waiting my turn to be enrolled. It may be so. Or perhaps, seeing as clearly as I what was the motive of their desire for life and what awaited them as soldiers, they chose to meet their death. I cannot believe that they imagined that they would come out alive.

Then they were moved by a deeper passion than that

for achievement in their lives, for theirs was no achievement in life. Perhaps they achieved in their death. I do not know. But I do know that they achieved only a moment, not a condition; an ecstasy, not an activity. They were moved by a deeper passion, by a passionate love for their country for which they were willing to die. Either that, or they were whirled away by a momentary desire for violent and bloody satisfaction, which lay below the yearning for an exciting convulsion of their monotonous lives. If this be true, then they concern me no more, for they are not near to me. I have felt the desire and it has fallen away, because it was not really mine.

But this love of their country?

It means so little to me that I cannot believe that it meant so much to them. I love my country, but I do not love it passionately. I love it in so far as it affords me freedom to work out my own justification. I seek from it the minimum of interference, and if I do not find it, then I will go elsewhere. And if it should happen that my country demand of me with authority that I should give up my life for it, the motive of the love which I bear it would instantly be destroyed.

This is cold calculation. It may be that patriotic love is a hot unreasoning instinct. If it is, I have none of it. Instinct it was that drove me to shout outside the Embassy and to the Putney recruiting-office, but it was not the instinct of love. Moreover I know it was an instinct to which I should think it shame to have yielded, for by it I would have betrayed myself. Then there rose up in me the desire suddenly to break away from the monotonous distortion of my real purposes which is called my life, and to be quit of all responsibility to myself by entering as an obedient part into the fighting-machine. But now I know that the heavy obligation to myself cannot be escaped in this or any other way. So far as in me lies, I must fulfil it. It can never be put off.

Again, I wonder: Is this more than a coward's rhetoric? Am I merely afraid of death?

I know that I am afraid of death, and yet to me there seems a vast difference between this and to be *merely* afraid of death. For death is terrible to me only because it means that nothing of my deep desire will be satisfied or my purpose achieved. Without a consummation my life is barren and meaningless. Death now would be not a consummation, but a stupid discordant finale interpolated by some malignant fool. I say — not knowing what I mean — that I desire to achieve art. Without that achievement, whether I die gently in my bed or in physical agony somewhere in France, death is an equal horror, making the life that I have lived a desolate mockery. I have set my hope in that which shall be. Am I to be denied?

Nevertheless, it may be that the fear of death, whether in peace or pain, whether as the end of life or the killing of something that is carried in the womb of the soul, is cowardice. It may be that others who go bravely to their bodily death have not found more present joy in life than I and wait upon that which they might shape from themselves in the future to be justified. Then by their side I am a coward.

And what of that? Shall I be ashamed that I am such a coward and despise myself? I know but one cause why I should despise myself: if I prefer lower to higher, imperfect to perfect, lie to truth. I hold nothing higher, nothing more perfect, nothing truer than the achievement of art. It is planted in my nature to count all things empty and unprofitable that do not subdue themselves to this end. I will live on for this. I will not die for something which means nothing to me.

I cannot despise myself for this. Yet for other things I do despise myself. I have not yet found the courage to risk the extreme of poverty rather than wear out the little talent that I have in sterile and mechanical occupations. Though the question is not so easily decided, and I can argue as passionately against as I can for poverty that would be abject, yet there remains always a little cloud of self-contempt hovering

within my mind. I can despise myself; yet I do not despise myself for fearing death and refusing to court it against my deeper will.

My deeper will is to live on that I may achieve art. I have written it so often now that it seems to me no more than specious words to deceive myself. Yet, suppose that it is only a word: why then does this word alone have permanent meaning for me, alone give force and sanction to my desires? I desire to be free, but freedom is formless and undesirable unless it be freedom to achieve art; and there is not one of my desires, save those which are physical and momentary, but takes its reality and permanence from this final purpose.

What is it, then, this urgent desire to create art in words? It is not a desire to manipulate words for themselves. I have no pleasure in that, for words come to me always with labour. They, and their beauties, are to me no end at all. They are no more than the means by which I may express something which I feel an imperious need to express. What is this thing?

It is not beauty. Whatever beauty may be, it has no intimate existence in me. I can appreciate what is called the beauty of a vase, a picture, a poem, or a face; yet, though I admire it, I cannot make it mine. It is set over against me. I am here, and there is the admirable thing. I can bring it no nearer to me. I do not even desire to bring it near and make it mine; for it does not profoundly affect me. It is independent and complete and repels me from itself, like a polished wall of steel or stone on which I can find no foothold.

But there are faces and pictures and writings which attract and do not repel me. They allure me and that which allures me in them is somehow akin to that which I desire to express in words. They awaken my active sympathy. I feel with the soul which expressed itself thus and thus, which shows in the face, the picture or the writing. Yes, only that interests me deeply which I can understand as the expression of a striving soul. Then I feel with another soul. It does not

mean that I feel or have felt the same things as the other soul — but I am conscious that I might have the same feelings. I recognise in them an intimate, personal possibility.

What then is this personal possibility in me? It must be that which is most intimately true of myself, for only that which others found inwardly true of themselves could appeal to me as possibly true of myself. Else how could I recognise it for true? There would be no bond between it and me.

Yet there are times when the idea that art consists in the expression of personal truth seems narrow and sterile. Even now I am with effort striving to put into words as much as I can of the immediate truth of me. Is it art? I cannot believe it, nor can I think that art is so easy, nor so hard. But let it not be art, there is nothing lost thereby. Because the only art that I can understand or desire is built upon personal truth, does it follow that all personal truth is art? Rather this truth is as it were the rule and plumb-line by which art is built, or the chemical agent which precipitates it from vaster and more vague imaginations.

It has a common and familiar ring, as though a man might at all times produce at a summons some item of personal truth. Yet to me this is the hardest of all things to hold: so seldom does it emerge into the life a man lives. He works and rests from work, eats and sleeps, and all the while his truth lies dormant, hidden beneath the weight of the actions and reactions of a life that is not life, but an ugly and laborious means of living, and even when the seals are broken and the great stone rolled away and he finds himself careless in the presence of one of those very few whom he has proved his friends, how seldom does he succeed in urging out one single word of his truth! He is compacted of numbed faculties and inhibited desires; he cannot breathe the atmosphere of his unused freedom and he is content to feel between himself and them some current of silent understanding and some assurance that not the words he says will be so much taken for his own as the tone in which he speaks them or



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the smile with which he gives them: which is an acknowledgment that the intimate truth exists in him to be taken on trust, for it cannot, save at the rarest moments struggle into the spoken word. Therefore it is not foolish or paradoxical to conceive of the true life, or the life of art, as the long straining to achieve ever more and more of personal truth.

But, Personal Truth? Is that, too, only words? Can it be just a delusion and a vain mirage, shining on my ever-shifting horizon? Can the Personal Truth of the fainting wavering spirit and the little body, which is me, be no more than the yearning to achieve it?

I cannot believe that my inmost vital part is an empty paradox. And this is not an empty paradox, but a true one; and a true paradox is born of the failure of words by themselves to shape themselves close to the outline of life and truth. In it is enclosed the essential conflict between the living and the dead, the living truth and the dead material word. Behind my paradox something is hidden.

To seek art and express Personal Truth is an activity, particular to me, in so far as I believe that I shall attain more of my truth in this activity than another will of his own. But it is only a part of a larger and more general activity of soul. I try to imagine myself completely achieved: and in that joyful consummation the expression of my truth seems to sink back into one relation with an harmonious whole. It tyrannises over me no more. It is the aspect which my life bears for an hour, a week or a day; but its other aspects are manifold and each no less desirable. It is the very condition of their being that they should be desirable, for, whatever I should be doing, I should be freely doing.

And that, I suppose, is the end and meaning of it all — free activity. I should be freely doing.

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