October

The ARGOSY

The World's Best Stories

1/3

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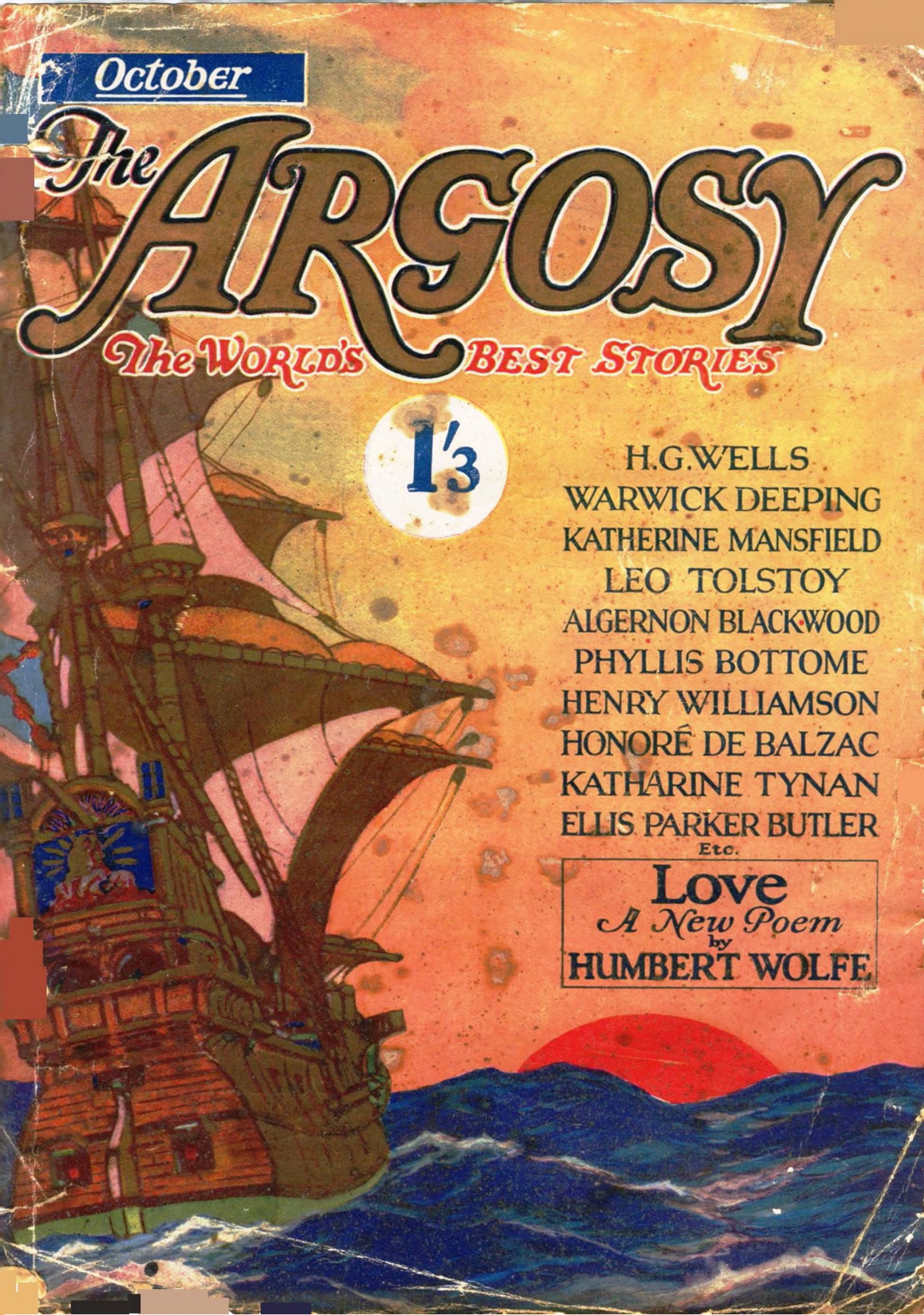
Love
A New Poem
by
HUMBERT WOLFE



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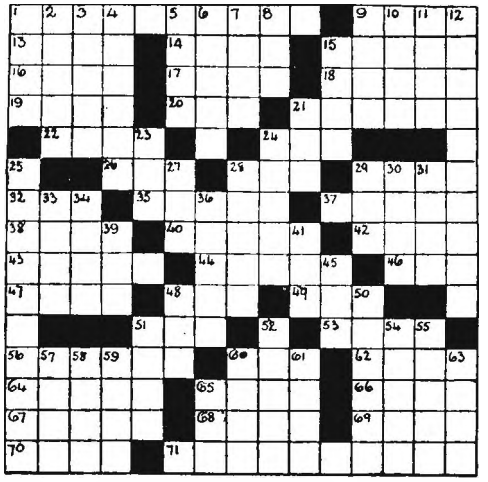
CLUES

Across

1. Infectious disease, warded off by W.C.T.S. 9. Part of the verb to be. 13. Feminine name. 14. Portend. 15. Ointment (Use Wright's Coal Tar). 16. Close. 17. Plunder. 18. Possession. 19. Entrance. 20. Measure. 21. Fittest. 22. Cosy home. 24. From. 26. Apex. 28. Mother. 29. Wash. (Do this with Wright's Coal Tar Soap). 32. Edge. 35. With soap creates 56 across. 37. Stop. 38. Sharp. 40. Designated. 42. Feminine name. 43. Not so cold as 33 down. 44. Attitudes. 46. Affirmative. 47. Paradise. 48. Number. 49. Modern. 51. Spoil. 53. Wiles. 56. Wright's Coal Tar Soap gives a good one. 60. Watering-place. 62. Flower. 64. Tapestry. 65. Related. 66. Departed. 67. Chairs. 68. Removed by Wright's Coal Tar Soap. 69. Great. 70. States. 71. Corrects dislocations.

Down

1. Ballad. 2. Use Wright's Coal Tar Soap and be this. 3. Precious stone. 4. Scarcest. 5. Powerful. 6. Implements. 7. An Image. 8. Mesh. 9. Inner Bark. 10. Otherwise. 11. Evenings. 12. Skin trouble relieved by Wright's Coal Tar Ointment. 15. On a tablet of Wright's Coal Tar Soap. 21. Limb. 23. Pull. 24. Passengers. 25. Used for mirrors. 27. Utensil. 28. Imp. 29. Shelter. 30. Skilfully. 31. Valley. 33. Made very cold. 34. Tube. 36. Become Slenderer. 39. Noise. 41. Lair. 45. Much water here. 48. Product of Coal. 50. Provides the best soap. 51. Confusion. 52. Part of a church. 54. Fish. 55. Burn. 57. Surface. 58. Waiter. 59. Headgear. 60. Cleansed by Wright's Coal Tar Soap. 61. Emmets. 63. Prophet. 65. Fuss.



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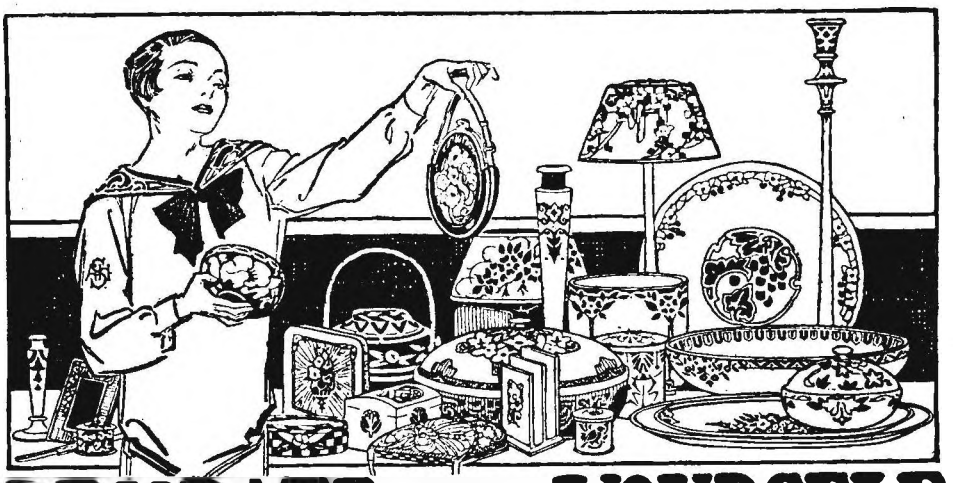

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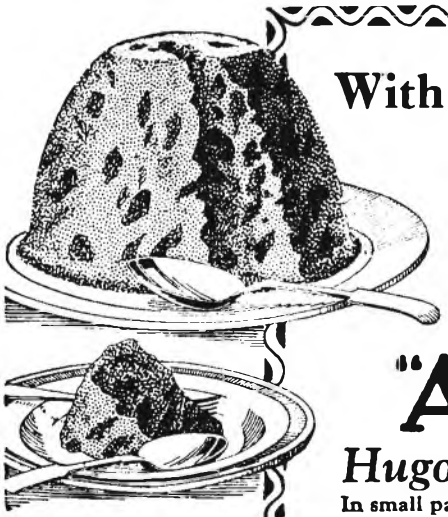

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CONTENTS *for* OCTOBER, 1928

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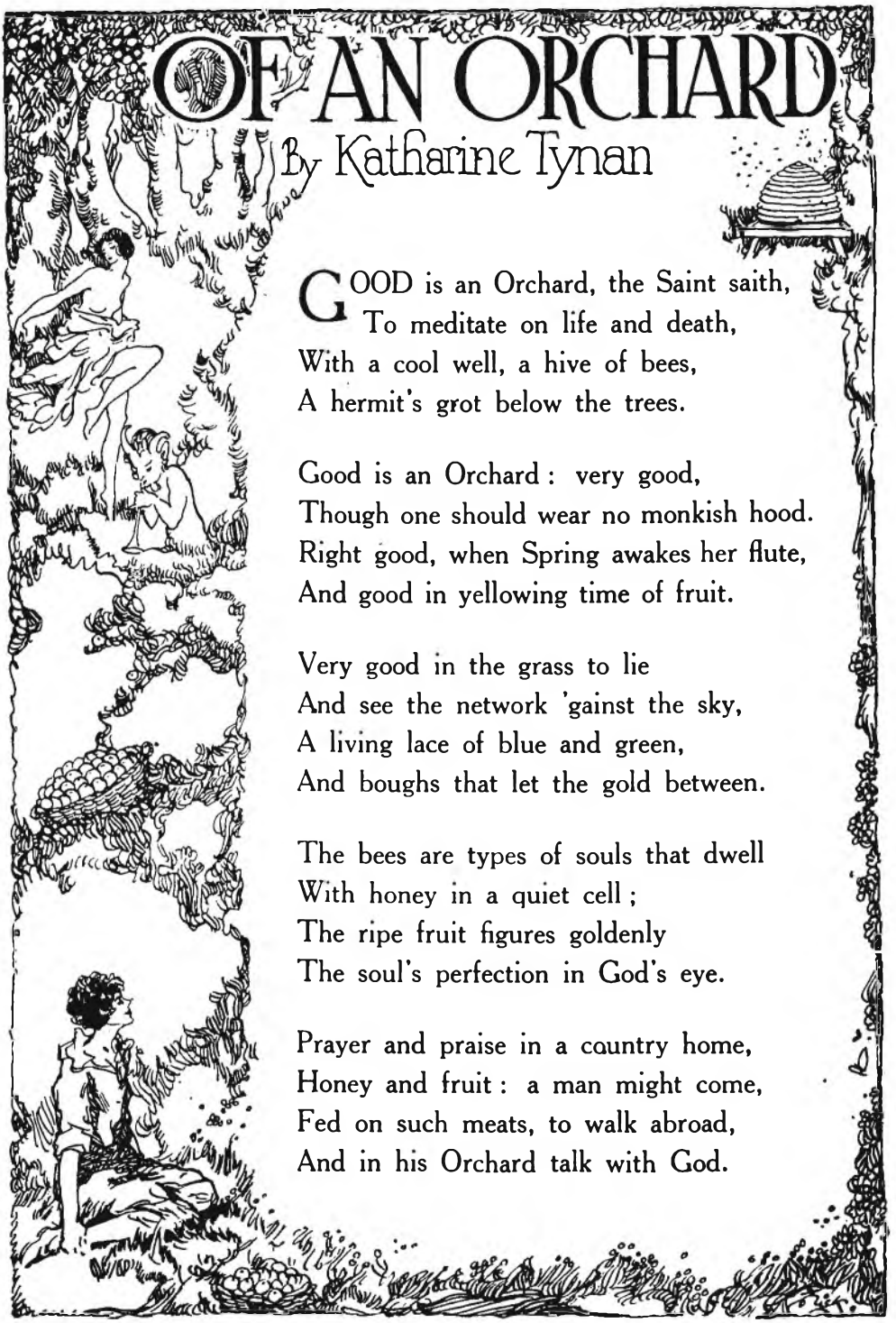


OF AN ORCHARD

By Katharine Tynan

GOOD is an Orchard, the Saint saith,
To meditate on life and death,
With a cool well, a hive of bees,
A hermit's grot below the trees.

Good is an Orchard: very good,
Though one should wear no monkish hood.
Right good, when Spring awakes her flute,
And good in yellowing time of fruit.

Very good in the grass to lie
And see the network 'gainst the sky,
A living lace of blue and green,
And boughs that let the gold between.

The bees are types of souls that dwell
With honey in a quiet cell;
The ripe fruit figures goldenly
The soul's perfection in God's eye.

Prayer and praise in a country home,
Honey and fruit: a man might come,
Fed on such meats, to walk abroad,
And in his Orchard talk with God.

The ARGOSY
The WORLD'S BEST STORIES

Vol. IV.—No. 29. OCTOBER, 1928

Chichester Creek

Of an old man's fearful secret

By Mrs. HENRY DUDENEY

"I'VE got the money handy; it's in the house," whispered Michael. "I don't trust banks; my father didn't."

"But you've been losing interest all the time you've been saving up," his neighbour told him and stared.

"Oh—interest!" Michael laughed: he was happy to-night and a little bit off his head. "If your lawyer and my lawyer will get to work to-morrow morning," he continued.

"Yes, yes; that's all right." Carter threw him a brief nod.

He was casual about this affair, almost detached. He was amused at Michael, who took it so seriously. This was just business: buying and selling a house. What else could you call it?

But upon Michael there lay a fervour and a triumph. He had worked hard, saved savagely, just to have this house and the stonemason's yard adjoining. A roof over your head. In life, a man asked that; in death, decent burial. And he loved this little village with its little harbour: the place and the house where you've been born and lived and wedded and done your work. How it twisted round a man's heart!

The harbour was dead, so far as shipping went. Out there, at the mouth, it was choked with shingle. That was the way upon this bit of coast. And it showed all the wildness, charm, and melancholy of decay.

The two men walked down the garden. They looked through the window. Michael's wife was laying supper for three.

They went and sat upon the boundary wall at the bottom. It was low upon the garden side and, dropping down deep upon the other, was lapped by the tide, and coloured serpent-green by sea drift.

Michael was a monumental mason and, in his yard, seen over the hedge, stretching at the side of his house, there stood up, rigid and terrifying, the tokens of his trade. He was a simple fellow who cut and lettered gravestones, but sometimes he had a wave of ambition and played at being a sculptor. There was a stone angel standing in his yard, also a cherub—too much like Cupid—who shouldered a cross.

The sunset—they had wonderful sunsets here—dabbled this statuary with flame, with amber, with wicked violet. The yard looked like a fragment of the Judgment Day.

Michael was a squat man in his late thirties; his face was rugged, yet very patient and tender. There was a romance upon it and drama; lots of things. Nobody suspected. His neighbours, naturally, never thought about his face, for they had known it all its life. He had a flat nose and, far apart, a pair of honest, widely opened eyes, very bright, joyful, intelligent. They looked strained, they were constantly watchful, and there was always about this man an air of nervous listening.

As to Carter! Nothing to say about him. He was the village grocer and he meant to get on in the world. Thousands like him—everywhere.

They sat upon the wall. Michael jubilantly swung his legs. His legs were very short and thick ; his arms were long and powerful. So was his neck. He swung his legs and curled up his toes, looking at them, smiling. He was like a child to-night.

The tide was out. The ferry boat lay upon the other side, beached high upon the mud.

Little ragged tamarisk bushes, their roots bared by the constant suck of salt water, yet bloomed their shell-like, delicate pink.

Michael never knew which he loved best, the tide in or the tide out. In—with blue water ; with the boatman in his blue jersey ferrying across—was that loveliest ? Out —just mud that was rose-coloured ; just water-weeds of all the colours, making little gardens. Which ?

Low tide, perhaps—as now. Yes, he would always love low tide ; for it now watched his most triumphant moment. And the smell of it ! And the seductive sound of slipping water ! He was going to remember everything. These moments were eternal. He was adoring all that he saw, his heart pounding inside his Sunday jacket. Carter, also wearing a black coat—for they were to have a festive supper to mark the occasion—looked disdainfully at the village and the departing tide. He was thinking, " What a dreary hole ! "

For this landscape which filled Michael with mysterious, tear-racking rapture, irritated Carter more than words could say.

He remarked, almost as if he wished to pick a quarrel, " I can't think why you've pestered me to let you buy the house. Your father was a weekly tenant here with my father as his landlord. Why can't you be the same with me ? "

As he said this, Michael's wife came down the garden to tell them supper was ready. She also wore her Sunday clothes ; about the three of them there was stiffness, ceremony. Margaret's skin was crinkled, one of those skins that wither early. Her face, always pale, to-night looked sulphur-coloured. " Perhaps," thought Carter, looking at her apprehensively, " it is only the effect of sunset." Her eyes had in them the same look as her husband's—appealing, expectant. These two were dreadfully afraid. When she had returned to the house, and, as they walked after her, Carter said, " Your wife's a bad colour. She doesn't seem healthy."

" Worried ; that's all," the stonemason sounded absent, " always worried."

" Her brother George, you mean ? "

Michael nodded and he said, " He's been gone ten years ; he may never come back. But we don't know where he is, nor what he may have done. Margaret feels sure that he'll turn up and disgrace us. A good name means everything. There's always the dread of George. She's got it and I've caught it." He laughed rather desolately.

" Got into trouble of some sort, didn't he ? " asked Carter indifferently. " A woman ? Or money ? Which ? "

" Both. Have you forgotten ? "

" More or less. Lots of things happen, you know, in ten years. Why can't you forget him too ? He's dead, I reckon."

" If you ask me "—Michael was grim— " I think he's in prison, and I hope it's a life sentence."

" Which means only twenty years, old fellow."

Carter was facetious.

" If ever he does come," returned Michael, " I hope he'll be drunkish and take the wrong turning. Easy enough to get drowned ; caught by the tide, swallowed by the quicksands—if it's a dark night, and if you've had too much."

Carter looked into his rent, bright face and felt uncomfortable. He was almost afraid of this mild stonemason, his lifelong neighbour.

Then—both—they looked behind them, towards Chichester Channel. They thought of deadly creeks, little whirlpools, sodden sand, the treacherous tide that sometimes pounced on you from behind. In dumb agreement they quickened step and hurried towards the lighted house.

It was a small, square cottage, the front looking on the village street, the back across the harbour.

One room—their living-room—ran from front to back, a long, narrow room. At the garden end of it was a door, the upper half glass. It led out of doors. To the right was a comfortable angle of the wall. Sitting there, you saw the sunsets.

When they reached it, the stonemason excitedly twitched his friend back.

" Be careful as you go in. There's a hole. I dug it just now, before you came. This is a pretty place to sit out. I'm going to put up a trellis. There will be a rose one side, a honeysuckle on the other. Sweet-smelling things ! But Margaret says her feet would

get damp, so I'm paving it. Dug the hole and there's the stone."

He laughed blissfully, and he looked back at the last dirty bubbles of the retreating tide and he snuffled up the sea smell.

Margaret came to the door and she said, smiling as she peered round the corner at the hole, " Michael's like a baby. Might be a little girl with a doll's house, the fuss he makes."

Then her arch smile at the visitor faded and she looked pinched.

" But you *think*, my dear," Michael looked at her, laughed shyly, then kissed her, ravishingly, under Carter's nose.

" How comfortable we'll be, all our lives. Safe, Margaret; nobody to turn us out. Whatever happens—here we are ! "

" I shouldn't turn you out," protested Carter.

" No ; of course not, but life is uncertain. And when I retire, Margaret——"

" Retire ! " his friend turned waggish. " We can't spare you, for we're always dying in these parts and we want a proper lettering on our stones."

They went indoors to supper, all laughing at Carter's joke. When they started eating—and Margaret had provided good things—her husband said, the fire in his eyes devouring her, " The first thing will be paint—inside and out. Then papering. What fun choosing wall papers ! I want them gay. Pink flowers, green leaves ! "

¶

THE other two smiled indulgently. Yet Margaret was ashamed ; for he was making a fool of himself before Carter, who was so practical.

Yet, underneath, Michael was—as always—deadly, tragically serious. For this affair of being his own property owner had long obsessed him and, before he had saved enough and before he was in a position to make Carter an offer, he had sometimes waked in the night, quaking. For he dreamed that Carter had sold the place to somebody else, that he and Margaret had a week's notice to quit. Just a little, double-fronted house about eighty years old ! A parlour, a living-room, a kitchen ; two bedrooms and—up a ladder—a loft, where you could store things and hide things. At the side, the stonemason's yard, where he worked, where his father had worked. Oh, he loved his small, straitlaced house that overlooked the harbour, that was bathed in sunsets ! And—beyond his house, in the direction of the open sea—were fields, vividly green, always wet and in winter flooded. They were part of his passionate landscapes. As the meal proceeded, Margaret got more yellow and the guest uneasily thought, " She looks like puckered wash-leather." He would warn Michael seriously, when he got him alone.

He looked up from his plate and said, speaking in a pause of the stonemason's rhapsodic plans, " You'll be all right unless they build in the field beyond your yard and block the view. That would spoil everything."

" Build ! Too damp, old fellow."

" Drain it. Easy enough. Everything's damp in this place, and I don't think it's healthy, if you ask me."

He repeatedly stared at Margaret. She had finished eating ; she sat with her hands folded, docilely waiting for the men.

They were toasting each other, the woman sipping like a bird—when the front gate creaked.

" Must get that gate oiled," said Michael irritably.

And—instantly—he put his glass down, stood up, looked across at his wife. She, also, had risen. They were afraid. Carter watched them and he said inconsequently, " It's late. We're all early birds in this place."

Michael and Margaret were in a funk—but what fools ! Even if George came back and if he had disgraced them afresh—who'd blame them for that ? The neighbours knew all about him, as it was. No good trying to hide anything in a little place like this.

There were feet along the bricked path, there was a knock at the front door. Margaret said to her husband, " You go, it's only the washing come home. They're often late on a Friday." She stared wildly into his face ; as wildly he stared back. Carter leaning forward, his face red, his eyes bulgy told her, " This is only Tuesday."

She had dropped her arms. They hung, they swung. Her neighbour was absently admiring the dainty convolutions of her ear as her head turned towards the door. She was a pretty woman ; but sickly.

Michael was speaking ; by his voice, they at once knew the worst. He said, " You'd better come in."

And the front door banged.

Carter was feeling devilishly uncomfortable, and when Michael entered with Margaret's brother George—yes, it was that scamp, right enough !—he blundered up ; wiping his mouth, flinging down his napkin. And—idiotically—for why did you notice those things that do not matter—he was staring at a handkerchief, spotted blue and white, knotted round the Prodigal's neck. Blue and white—bird's-eye pattern !

The fellow was in rags—he was more disreputable than a drunken sailor. He seemed more terrible even than a tramp. There was something else. What was it ?

Uncomfortable for Michael and his wife. But the neighbours would sympathise ; they'd understand.

" I'll be off," he said. " You'd like to be alone. I'll look round in the morning, Michael, over that little matter. Good night, good night."

So far from trying to stop him, they ignored him ; were not listening. He opened the door, went down the path, walked down the deserted street to his own house. The last thing that he saw and the thing that he would remember was Margaret's wash-leather face.

He left them all three standing up, herding close, not saying a word. What would they say when his back was turned ?

Michael stared into the dangerous face of his wife's brother as they all stood, in stark quietude, between the untidy supper table and the cheerful, tiny fire (for Margaret was cold in June).

He thought, " This is what we've been afraid of ever since we got married, and it's here ! "

And his alert brain told him that their dread—so apparently overweighted—was prophetic. For you had only to look into the man's face to know that the worst had happened. So he waited. Margaret was the first to move. She lumped back into her chair, clasping her hands beneath her two breasts, taking short gulps of breath.

¶

GEORGE spoke, " I was in for fifteen years—burglary. I've escaped, but—in escaping——"

He broke off, grinned round, curbed his deplorable hands, clasped them round his throat, flung back his head with a choking noise.

" I killed a man—the warder. Had to. You've got to hide me."

" The loft," said Margaret almost inaudibly.

" The loft ! " Michael froze her by his laugh. " First place they'd think of."

" Under bundles and things, or in a box. The loft's full of old rubbish."

" No good. He must get away. You want us to help you ? "

" Naturally. I must have money. And I must be quick."

" Money ! " Michael's jaws snapped. " No good coming here. Not a penny."

But Margaret instantly looked at the bureau in the recess by the fire-place. Her brother saw that look and he interpreted.

Michael had always loved his wife dearly. Yet, then, he hated her. She had betrayed him ; given away their secret ; was proposing to rob him of his overwhelming joy. He saw it in her face as she walked to the bureau, George behind her.

He felt, with implacable rage, " The house won't be mine after all."

And these words made the most terrible sentence he had ever put together.

" They'll get me. I shall be hanged," said George.

Margaret foolishly picked at the locked flap of the bureau. He must have the money—he must have the money.

" Could you "—she looked at her brother, then shrank—" get a passage on a ship ? Somewhere far off ? So that they'd never find you ? "

He nodded.

Michael also was at the bureau. His wife, pulling at him, shaking, chattering, weeping, said, " Give him the money—all of it. We can't be disgraced and ruined."

She put her hands in his pocket, got the keys. She was finding the secret drawer.

George watched, almost imperturbably. Yet he listened, how he listened ! Always, there was listening in this small house.

" Enough then," Michael said, with agony, " to pay his passage. Australia, say."

" No ; everything—all of it. A hundred pounds, more or less—that might make all the difference. And what good is money to us now ? "

She looked dying—and beside herself. But these two men could not bother about the colour of her face !

She'd got the secret of the drawer, although her husband had never taught her. He had kept that to himself.

Then—paralysed, chained, as it seemed—

he watched her take the money out; saw George snatch it, hide it away. Gone—his five hundred! Lost—his house! Over—the bewitching dream of years!

And he didn't feel that he could stop her. What had happened to him? What had come to her—taking the lead! He looked at her—seemed to think a bit—then said quietly, "Now you go to bed. You've done enough for one night."

"Yes," she nodded, "I'll go upstairs."

At the door she added, looking at George with awful aversion, "Get out of the house. Go away before they catch you."

So Michael was alone with George and he was rapidly thinking. His thoughts ran: "If I can keep him here, make him drunkish——" For he didn't care if they hanged him or not. All he wanted was his money back.

All he wanted was to see the last of this thief, this murderer—gallows-haunted. Why had he come to ruin the righteous tranquility of their lives? And to-night—this night of utter joy!

Yet—a new thought—in any case, their good name was tainted; never again would he and Margaret lift up their heads.

It would be in the newspapers. The village would know that Margaret's brother was a murderer.

George—did he then see through his skull!—guessed these thoughts and he said bitterly, "Don't be afraid. Your respectability is safe enough. I've been living under another name all these years."

He looked at the supper table, loaded, disordered, very tempting.

"Not much extra risk if I stay for a snack," he added.

"Yes, stay." Michael turned eager. "You'd better."

He looked at the clock.

"The policeman goes his round at eleven. Until then, you are safer here. Sit down."

He bustled about, his face getting red, his eyes sparkling.

George, at the table, piled up his plate without ceremony, helping himself in a ravenous way, eating with disgusting haste and recklessness.

Michael filled his glass with wine, watched him drink, filled again. Several times they repeated this process, neither speaking.

The clock struck eleven, then ticked on.

Michael had seated himself. They were close together, these two men, averting their eyes, should glances chance to meet. Sometimes Michael stared at the ragged coat within whose breast was his five hundred pounds.

Why did he allow Margaret to do it? He had been made to let her. He had been incapable of opposition, and, should those moments occur again, he would do the same. She had looked so awful, livid, deathlike—irresistible in her resolve and her terror.

And, many times, he now filled her brother's glass. And every time George drank off the wine with a happy smack.

"I must keep my legs," he said, with a foolish, blissful grin. "Not another drop, old chap. Look here"—turning violent—"none of your tricks!"

But Michael answered smoothly, "Come now! Just one more wouldn't hurt you."

And he poured.

Carter could not sleep that night; he kept thinking of those three. At dawn he did the unexpected thing, cursing himself for a fool as he slithered about the bedroom—afraid of waking his wife as he shivered into his clothes. Though why a man should shiver in June! "This," he murmured, "beats me."

He would slip down the street and just look at their house.

In the front all was as usual: the bedroom

window of the married pair open a crack, at the top in the usual way; the blind discreetly drawn. The second bedroom window was shut up tight. What had they done with George? The ground-floor rooms were shrouded. They were not fools—Michael and Margaret—as he was a fool. They were in bed and asleep.

Yet he prowled round to the back, going through the stonemason's yard, shrinking from the accusing whiteness of the stone angel and of the ribald cherub with the cross.

He went round to the back, and the first thing he saw was Michael, with his working overall covering his Sunday suit. He was sitting in that sunny angle near the garden door, staring out across the harbour. The tide at this hour was up; the water clean and blue and frisky.

It was a gay morning that already piped the ecstasy of June. He had covered in the hole he'd dug, placing the stone which last night stood ready. His tools leaned against the wall.

"It's you?" He looked up and saw his staring neighbour. "Neat job, isn't it? Only just finished thumping down the stone. Back-aching business, I can tell you."

"But at this time of the morning——"

"Well, I might say the same to you," Michael rallied him.

"I couldn't sleep; felt sure I shouldn't—so I never went to bed."

"Margaret's off nicely. I went up and had a look at her. My idea was to get it all done—trellis up and painted; rose all blooming—before she got down. Impossible, of course—but you know how lightheaded you get when you can't sleep. Doing funny things—like you, sneaking round to my back door before it's daylight."

"Sneaking!"

"No offence meant, old chap. I'm glad to see you. Come inside. No; we'll sit out here. Talking underneath might wake Margaret. She was dead tired last night."

He darted into the sitting-room—his impulsive way—not waiting for consent. He brought out another chair.

"There!" he stamped his feet upon the stone, sitting down. "Good idea, don't you think? When the trellis is up and when——"

"Look here—what happened about George? I couldn't sleep for thinking of you three."

"Yes, yes—George." Michael turned vacant; he left off drumming his feet.

Carter, staring at the brilliant spots upon his cheek-bones, said, "You're feverish. You're not yourself. It's upset you—for all your trying to carry things off with a high hand."

"You're right. I'm upset. But"—Michael leaned and whispered—"he's gone, you know. Got away all right. I'll tell you in confidence. Keep it to yourself. He's hiding from justice."

"I guessed as much."

"And if they catch him—see."

Michael put up his hands. He gripped them round his throat. Carter dropped back, scrooping his chair upon the stone. "Don't do that. Confound it, you'll wake her. I went a little way along the road with him. If he takes the wrong turning. Well! You know what the tides are!"

He stretched up his long arms and yawned. When this was done he said, with a total change of manner, "And I can't buy the house. Haven't got a penny. He took it all. Margaret gave it him. She insisted."

"The deuce she did! Why did you let her? Why didn't you take it from him when you'd got him alone?"

"I thought of that, of course I did. My first thought." Michael looked contemplatively at the salt water. "But he was armed; a knife and a revolver. He showed them to me. Useless, useless! So the money's gone. He's got it."

He actually smiled, and Carter thought, "He doesn't seem to care. What an odd chap he is! You never really know him."

And he thought—he also staring at the innocent blue water—he thought of deadly tides that came tigerishly behind you. And he thought of the man—drunkish—going along in the dark. If he was drowned, that was no worse than hanging. For they would have caught him. But five hundred pounds in the sea, sodden within the breast of a corpse. What foolishness!

Michael was saying, "I can't buy the house. But you'll let me stay? You said last night that you never would have turned me out. I hold you to that, mind."

"Turn you out!" Carter was almost devout. "Not for worlds. And I'm sorry, Michael, sorry."

"Yes; it's a pity." Michael's mildness was absurdly inadequate. "But he's Margaret's brother after all. And at least—now"—he yawned again—"we know the worst about George. She won't be frightened any more, poor soul. I may,

later on, be able to save enough to buy the house after all. I could pay a little and raise the rest on mortgage."

"Don't bother about it. Why bother? I'm a man of my word."

"I know you are. But if a lease—say twenty-one years——"

"Don't think about a lease. Quite unnecessary," said Carter huffily.

He had been sensitive throughout; for he felt that Michael did not trust him. This was unfriendly.

¶

LATER on that same day Margaret was found dead in bed. Shock, acting on a weak heart, the doctor said. Michael whimpered to Carter, when they came back from her funeral, "She was a dying woman when she went to the bureau for the money. I see it now. That was why I couldn't stop her. You can't stand up against death."

He changed utterly from this day. He became to his neighbours at first a sign of pity, then of awed derision. He was a finger-post. He did very little work, lived alone, allowed no one inside his house. He was hardly ever in there himself. If he was not in the yard at work, he sat in the angle of the wall near the garden door, his feet upon a stone. The sitting-out place which he had merrily planned, the trellis never made, the sweet-smelling climbers never planted!

Carter, who looked him up, who sat sometimes upon the stone with him, said casually one night, "You've never put up the trellis, as you said you would."

"A trellis!" Michael stirred. "So I did. You think it would be nicer? I'll do it."

But the next time Carter came, Michael said, looking craven:

"I couldn't bring myself to make that trellis. You don't mind?"

He sat staring at the harbour; he did not speak again. Carter left him there, as he left him always. People wondered if he slept there. In the moonlight they would see him, stars winked upon him; and, on moonless nights, his presence was felt.

In streaming rain there he would sit, his hat over his brows, his collar turned up. Heavy drops fell from the eaves. Sometimes he would be seen with his head upflung; and they swore that he was drinking rain. In sea mist, too! Who but a fool would sit outside in fog! Dripping, dreary days with the fog horn sounding. And a day so cold that it pecked your bones. There he would sit, peering perhaps for the shrouded form of a ship.

And the years went on.

He puddled and muddled about, lettering gravestones when they wanted it done; moving slowly about his negligent yard amid the stones and the stark figures—an old man, a broken, silly man.

And Carter left off coming. For he'd grown oldish. Sitting outside with your feet upon a stone—where was the sense?

The day came when the village, as they said, "developed." Some artist discovered their famous sunsets. The place became dotted with easels. A row of bungalows got built. The railway advertised the village. There was some talk of a big hotel, of golf links, of a pier.

Carter was enchanted, and his covetous side developed with the village.

He had always said of the place, "What a dreary hole!" But now they were making it brisk, habitable, a place where you could make a fortune. He thought of nothing but increasing his business; making money quickly.

And he bought land whenever he got the chance; for land was going to be valuable.

Michael never stirred. It made no difference to him. He worked—enough to earn bread. He ate—enough to keep life. He slept—enough for sanity. Throughout, he knew that he must keep his wits.

For the rest! He just sat upon the chair, his feet upon the stone. Sunset, every evening, found him; wrapped him austerely in flames.

They built the hotel. They put it in the field beyond his yard. Carter had bought those fields at the beginning of the boom. So Michael's view was blocked. He no longer looked out to sea. He stared at a red, dead wall, very high.

Neighbours put their heads together, whispering, nodding, winking, grinning. They said, "Michael won't sit there any more." But he did.

Carter went to him one night and said, with blustering embarrassment, "I want to have a business talk. But I'm hanged if I stay here, staring at a dead wall. I get lumbago when I sit out of doors."

Michael arose lingeringly and he said, "Come along in."

So they went into that room where years ago they, with Margaret, had so merrily

supped; where Michael had made his grandiose plans—for flowered wall-paper, a greenhouse, a trellis.

Life had been fast, warm, gay, violent then. Now they were two old men, cold, bleached. And the room was dirty. Carter shuddered, and he disdainfully twitched his nostrils.

The room smelt stuffy. Outside air was better. Michael knew best. He sat down, squaring himself, looking up at the stone-mason, who remained standing, and who was looking steadfastly through the glass of the garden door.

" Look here, Michael, old man, you must have saved enough to retire on. You want shaking up. This place is killing you. I hope you'll look at things sensibly. I came to tell you that I'm thinking of selling this house and yard. The hotel people want it. They'd build over the garden."

" I'll buy it," said Michael, speaking very coldly. " I've got five hundred. I've saved it up again."

" Five hundred! I'm asking three thousand, and I shall get it—easy. You forget how the place has developed. You, sitting there against the wall! "

" Let me buy, let me buy." Michael burst suddenly into ferocious weeping. " I'll kill you if you don't. I could kill you. I'm strong enough still."

" Don't be a fool, talking of killing. This is a matter between old friends. Sit down. Let's talk it over."

Michael rubbed his sleeve across his cheeks and he sat down, staring at Carter cunningly, pleadingly. At last he said, " Five hundred down and the rest—the rest—I could save it, if you only give me time."

" You'll never earn up to three thousand in the rest of your life, old fellow. To say nothing of saving. No; you can't—not even enough to pay interest on a mortgage. Yet I give you my word that personally I never wished to turn you out. My son urged me. When we get old we have to do what the young people tell us. The world is theirs; not ours any longer. And that's only fair. For we've had our time."

" I'll buy it." Michael was crying again; he put up his fingers and sobbed through them. " I'd burn it to the ground before I let anybody else have it."

" Oh, you would! Then let me tell you that I've sold it already. I wished to break things gently to you, as we're such old friends. The hotel syndicate has bought it. You've only got a weekly tenancy. You won't mind them coming round to have a look at things and make their plans for building the new wing? "

Carter was exasperated, brutal—because he knew that he had behaved in a blackguardly way. And he glared at Michael, whose sinewy fingers spread like fans across his clayish cheeks.

That slobbering face! How horrible when an elderly man wept! Carter was dismayed, disgusted. He felt ashamed, and as firm as a rock. To see a man so forget himself. It was an outrage, a disgrace. It was also a menace, and Carter felt affrightedly, " I trust and pray I shall never come to that." Before he ever came to that, he hoped that he'd be underground.

Michael was in his second childhood. Could you wonder, playing the fool all these years? When a man lost his wife he sometimes went to pieces. Better if Michael had married again.

Carter got up suddenly and walked out of the house. He walked as he had walked before, in drama, in discomfort. As he went home he said again and again, " In a world like this, you can't afford to let chances slip."

At the doctor's gate he pulled up, went briskly in. He sent the doctor to have a look at Michael; for that was only decent towards an old friend.

And he said grandiloquently, " You know what he is! Look after him. Get him everything he wants. And—look here—the bill to me, please."

For to play the good Samaritan eased him.

¶

MICHAEL did not care what they did—so long as they did not do one thing! He lay abed. The doctor sent him there; the nurse kept him there. He did not know who was paying; he did not care. Nobody ever asked him for a penny. It was rapture to lie still; to be washed, fed daintily; to spread himself—cold, aching, stiff—in a freshly made bed. He slept a great deal, and after each sleep his brain was clearer.

Yes; they might do anything they liked down there in the garden, so long as they did not do the one thing. Just to curl his toes up and feel the glossy coolness of the sheet, wasn't that better than stamping gently—to ease your numbness—on a stone?

Since Margaret died he had slept at the

back of the house. The nurse at this moment was asleep in the front room, for he had worn her out with his bad nights. She had said, half jestingly, half irritably, " I never knew such a one as you are for nightmares. And you keep on shouting about gravestones over and over again. I suppose it's natural ; for that's your trade."

She was asleep in the front ; he lay at the back, in a mood of blissful dazement. It was evening, summer evening, and a shave of the sunset lay shaftlike on his quilt. Only a shave ; for the hotel had stolen sunsets.

There were voices outside. But what did it matter ? Carter—for one—was talking at the top of his voice. They were talking underneath the window. Carter's voice, giving orders.

People speaking ; also, other sounds. What sound ? He sat up briskly. They were digging. How dared they ?

Prying about his place directly his back was turned. Years had they waited for this chance ; and Carter was the worst of them all.

He sat up, gaunt, in the bed and the sweat poured down him. His shirt was limp ; it clung. He never should have left that stone ; not by day, never by night. His resolve had always been to die upon it.

It took him a long time to crawl from the bed to the window. He peeped out. He could hear the voices and that manual sound which was more monstrous, more pregnant than any voice.

He opened the window. God—what an effort ! Where was the strength of his wrists ? He—who had always been powerful.

Nobody looked up—to see that distraught face bob forward.

There they were : Carter, with his bald head and big stomach ; Carter's son, who was a younger edition of his father ; the hotel manager, who was rather like both of them. And there were a couple of workmen. Michael recognised them. They had worked for him ; been in his pay. Now they were doing this !

The thing that they were doing ! He stared at the spades and the pickaxe.

He crept across the room, swaying, holding on to things. His feet reeled, funny things happened in his head. His eyes—were they bleeding ?

And every bone started from its socket and every hair stood. Yes ; these things that you read about—they happened !

He got into the living-room, Getting downstairs—what a hell it had been ! And it had taken so long. Was he too late to stop them ? He went on all fours—for it seemed easier that way—to the garden door. He put up a purple claw, unlatched the door, crawled out into the red light of sunset.

He remained there like an animal just behind them all. And they did not see. They had the stone up and they were looking into the hole beneath.

Carter squatted down, his back humped, his thick hands, one with the big diamond ring, spread upon his plump thighs. And he saw what was left of a man's body. And he saw the remains of a handkerchief, spotted blue and white ; bird's-eye pattern.

Michael shuffled up, quite close, and he said, his awful and his last glance darting from one red face to the other as they all twisted round towards him, " They can't take me. They can't hang me. I'm too old."

He said it in a terrified ecstasy, as if freedom had come.

Then he rolled over.

The Flower Fairies

HIGH up on a mountain there was a place where many beautiful flowers grew, mostly peonies and camellias, often to a height of ten or twenty feet. A young man named Hwang, who wanted to study, built himself a little house near by ; and one day he noticed from his window a young lady dressed in white, wandering about amongst the flowers. When he went out to see who she was, she ran behind a white peony and disappeared. After this, he began to watch for her ; and before very long, he saw her come back again bringing with her another young lady dressed in red. But when he got near to them, the young lady in red gave a scream, and away they went in a fright with their skirts and long sleeves fluttering in the wind, and scenting all the air around. Hwang dashed after them, but they soon ran behind some flowers and vanished completely.

That evening, as he was sitting over his books, he was astonished to see the white girl walk in, and with tears in her eyes implore him to help her. Hwang asked what was the matter, and tried to comfort her ; but she did not seem able to tell him exactly what the danger was, and by and by she got up and wished him good-night. This appeared to Hwang as very strange ; however next day a visitor came, who, after wandering round the garden, was much taken with a white peony which he dug up and carried away with him. Hwang now knew that the white girl was a flower spirit, and became very sad in consequence of what had happened. Later on, he heard that the peony had only lived a few days after being taken away, at which he wept bitterly ; and going to the hole from which it had been dug up, he watered the ground with his tears. While he was weeping over this loss he suddenly saw the young lady of the red clothes standing besides him, and wiping away her tears. " Alas ! " she said, " that my dear sister should be thus torn away from me ; but the tears, sir, which you have shed may perhaps be the means of restoring her to us." That night he dreamt that the red girl came to him again and said that she also was in trouble, begging him to try to rescue her.

In the morning he found that a new house was to be built close by, and that the builder, finding a beautiful red camellia in his way, had given orders that it should be cut down. Hwang managed to prevent the destruction of the flower ; and the same evening the red girl came to thank him, this time accompanied by her white sister. The red girl explained that the Flower-God, touched by Hwang's tears, had allowed the white girl to come back to life. At this, Hwang greatly rejoiced, but when he grasped the white girl's hand, his fingers seemed to go right through it, and to close only on themselves, not as in the days gone by. The white girl said to him, " When I was a flower spirit, I had a body ; but now I am no longer a real person, only a kind of ghost as seen in a dream, though I still have my home in the white peony, beside the red camellia, my sister." Hwang, however, was so grieved at the loss of the white girl, that soon after he fell ill and died. He was buried by his own wish alongside of the white peony, and before very long another white peony grew up, straight out of Hwang's grave.

Chinese Fairy Tale, told in English by Dr. HERBERT A. GILES.

Culot Infernal

About the audacity of Hector Lequellec

By JOHN RESSICH

WE are told that there are only two ways of making money. One of them is by sheer nine-to-six industry and the other by knowledge—the knowledge that comes through having friends who whisper to let you know when the moment is propitious to step in and, more important still, the exact moment to step out.

Having stated these profound truths, let me now present for your consideration Anton Duprez, native of Auvergne but quite a Parisian, having lived in Paris nearly all his life. He is short, stoutish and, let us call it, a little over middle age. We must not be too exigent, for he feels, the good Anton, that the years of life ahead are all too short to enjoy the precious things to be found in it and tries to cheat the Three Sisters by affecting a sprightly youthfulness.

Now Monsieur Duprez could have told you that there is still another way of making money although what precisely it is might puzzle him to explain. Born comparatively poor, beyond a hazard he is wealthy to-day. It was not through slaving at a desk from nine to six—*sale métier d'un serf.* Nor was it from knowledge. Yet, there it is and there he is as you see him this April morning passing down from his luxurious villa in the western outskirts of Nice. In a few minutes he will reach the end of the promenade. He is on his way to offer himself his daily *apéritif* and being, as has been delicately hinted, inclined to embonpoint, he is able by much walking and seasonal visits to Vichy and Evian to limit this tendency to a pleasing plumpness. Still alert, he wears his hat with a knowing tilt. His narrow, low-heeled yellow boots look as if made of paper and his alpaca suit would bring Savile Row out with guns, yet his diamond scarf-pin, inserted sufficiently low not to be covered by his pointed beard, and the diamond shooting sparks from its bed in the plump little finger of his left hand, with which he twists his moustache so that all may benefit, would be cheap at fifteen thousand francs the pair, even if the bottom fell out of every exchange in Europe. With right hand in his jacket pocket holding the silver-headed cane upright at his shoulder, he does his best to square his back and turns his toes out as he hums a catchy air.

Yes, the world has gone very well with Anton since that amazing day when Fate in one crowded hour used him as a shuttle, finally slugging him hard on the *mâchoire* with a sickening right-cross, and straightened him with a left swing as he fell; then, steadying him, set him in his corner and handed him the prize while still too dazed to realise his good fortune.

And who, think you, is this interesting personage? Whence his vast wealth? and it is vast, *parole d'auteur.* Has he nothing beyond that to justify this appearance? *Ma foi*, yes! You, Sir, as a mere man, may not be interested—you may justifiably hate him when you know—but you, Madam, will experience a happy thrill of surprise, for in him you see no other than the chief proprietor of the most famous fashion paper in the world. I return to you, Sir, in your ignorance—there is no need to explain to Madam—the magazine which revolutionised the creation of fashions and is the world's arbiter of *La Mode.*

By now he has reached his favourite *café* and while we leave him with his *apéritif* you will learn his secret.

¶

THE worship of the golden calf is the most potent mundane force to-day. It has swept the world like a plague. No other worship, no religious movement, ever matched its intensity as it sets false standards, inspiring unworthy ambitions, giving power to venal demagogues and infecting even the Chinaman—that placid epitome of age-long contentment. In the sunny Italian *compartimenti* the care-free, happy peasant stirs

uneasily as he has read to him a letter from his brother Giacomo, who emigrated to harvest on the River Plate, and who has found his way to New York, where he is now a capitalist with real money and many banana stalls.

It is not likely that Paris would have escaped the plague infection and Georges Lafont, artist, and Hector Lequellec, journalist, both still in the early twenties, had long realised that whilst the pursuit of wealth may be a sordid aim, it was a mighty pleasant one. Fine raiment with good food and wine and the cheerful *appartement meublé* which they shared in the Rue Alboni, was to them a better game than emulating Rudolph and Marcel, while their lady friends would have smiled incredulously and considered it pure viridian simplicity of Mimi to allow herself to die in a garret. Scorning the sloppy untidiness of Murger's characters, Lequellec wasted no time writing immortal odes to his lady's eyebrows, neither did Lafont go hungry in rags while he laboured at a portrait of his adored one which—when finished—would bring him undying fame. Well content were they to follow Omar's advice and, taking the cash wherever they could, to allow the credit to wander whither it cared. As smart as a confiding London tailor, who travelled twice a year to Paris, could turn them out, scattered racecards of Longchamps and Auteuil meetings showed where they sought the inspiration which they subsequently converted into coin. To spend a whole night over one bock in the Boul' Mich', even with a fair if tousled head on your shoulder, although possibly picturesque, seemed to them commonplace and lacking *chic*. Their tastes ran more to a starched shirt in the Rue Royale and romance in silk stockings.

But it is seldom that the earthen dish long survives the contact of brass vessels and the promising scheme on which they had toiled all summer, hunting gold-lined financiers, instead of coming home, looked like sinking and taking them down with it.

Their lunch was over and Georges Lafont, perched on the window-sill of the sitting-room, gazed preoccupied through the clear, bright air across the roofs of Paris. Through the open window floated the acrid smell of petrol, and the faint hum of the distant busy streets was pierced with the shrill cries of scurrying newsvendors. He toyed idly with an orange stick, for the finger nail in mourning was no longer fashionable in an artist. At the table in the middle of the room sat Hector Lequellec. Suddenly he banged the top with his hand, rose, crossed to his friend and, placing two fifty-centime pieces on the window-sill, said, " Georges, my friend, it is not yet time for the funeral face. See then, if by night I convert these two coins, which represent every sou I have in the world, into the relatively small but undoubtedly necessary capital for our venture, what then will you say ? "

Fast disappearing in France is the nineteenth century cheek-kissing and excitability. British phlegm with London clothes had become the correct smart pose, so Georges merely shrugged his shoulders and waited.

" My friend," continued the other, " we have been hunting the wrong ground, or is it that I should say that we have hunted over the same ground too long ? We have the energy but we lack the aim. If, by example, one shot elephants always in the same meadow, how long think you the elephants would last ? It is to laugh."

" Oh ! may you and your elephants die of thirst ! " said Georges, wearily. " My poor Hector, it is too serious. See, I have but one piece of two francs left to me. All summer have we neglected our legitimate work to try to launch this wonderful magazine which is to make revolution in the world of fashion-designing, and now, as you know it, we find ourselves ruined. May I never sit again in La Rue's but I have blistered my feet walking and my tongue talking and now you place elephants before me. You disgust me of you."

" That makes nothing and it is just that, my friend," said Hector. " Our methods have been too stereotyped, too *clichées*. We explain, we ask and we receive—nothing. They all see but they lack the courage, so we must, as your American friends say, we must ' bounce ' someone."

Lafont's eyebrows nearly disappeared in his sleek black hair. " You propose . . .? " he began slowly when Lequellec raised a hand.

" Remain tranquil, Georges, the methods of Claude Duval do not look at me. You jump too soon and you do not understand the American language. First, you must trust me. Next we must have old clothes : that, alas, is easy. I by example will disembarrass myself of a collar—you will wear a cravat. We now become poor artisans of a respectability." Having effected the

change and handed his mystified friend one of the fifty-centime pieces, the pair sneaked past the *loge* of the concierge—to have let him see them thus attired would have damned them forever. They then took a taxi, and told the man to drive to the other side of the river. " You, my dear Georges," continued Hector as they entered, " will now gaze fixedly on the meter until your two francs are about to expire and then we descend. Meantime, I shall expound."

¶

ALIGHTING in the Boulevard du Montparnasse, they walked to a corner where they waited till they found a 'bus going to Les Gobelins, sufficiently crowded for their purpose. On entering the inside, they separated: Georges sitting by the door while the arch-plotter, passing up, seated himself at the farther end and, after cursing the government, entered into friendly converse with those round him. Ground bait is always useful: " preparing the street " he called it. In due course the conductor moved along collecting fares. He reached Hector, who ignored him. On his repeating his request for the fare, Hector began.

"*Penses-tu !* How then, what authority have you to take my money ? " The conductor stared.

" Authority ? " he stammered, " but I am the conductor, me."

" Aha ! " said Hector loudly, gazing round the bus and bringing the other passengers into it. " The conductor is he ! Who knows how he has acquired this very accursed uniform and uses it to rob us—your authority if you please ! " he demanded, returning to the bewildered man, while from the other end of the 'bus came Georges' contribution.

" It is shameful: thus to exploit us honest people ! But what will you, with such a government ? "

The other passengers being bored with staring at each other, and fatigued with reading about the virtues of this *sirop* or that *apéritif* and at being advised not to scratch but to use Bulac ; and over waiting for the rampant Lion to upset the pot of the famous blacking he has been guarding so long—while all of them who could afford it were already wearing the renowned and much-advertised *bretelles*—readily welcomed the diversion, and began to find relief in making sympathetic noises.

Had the conductor been a man of any character probably he would have stopped the 'bus at the outset and pushed Lequellec off. Then to-day Anton Duprez would no doubt still be a minor government official or a retired *rentier* of modest income, instead of being able to luxuriate on the Riviera with large diamonds and to marry brilliantly his daughters. Yet, were you to tell him that at one moment his fortune depended on the lack of *savoir faire* on the part of a Parisian 'bus-conductor, he would stare incredulously. So soon and so easily do some people become accustomed to the position which riches give.

But the conductor made the fatal error of arguing and instantly the whole inside of the 'bus was in the thick of it, while Georges in the background provided the sustained accompaniment by steadily cursing the government. The value of this was quickly apparent as Lequellec foresaw. As a journalist it was his occasional *métier* to launch what his tribe call stunt phrases—the catchword that starts the modern public on the run.

¶

THE Senegal crisis was then at its height and a war, a wholly unnecessary war, was more than a faint possibility. Now the country did not desire a war—the people were content with things as they were. The government of the day, as is usually the fate of even the best-intentioned government, had achieved great unpopularity, and already more than one minister had been " demonstrated " against. This was not the old trick of French governments, wanting to avoid doing something, organising demonstrations against it, then declaring that they must bow to public opinion.

As a matter of plain truth, at that precise moment, close together at one end of a large room of the Ministère de l'Intérieur, overlooking the garden of the Ministère behind the Place Beauvau, stood three obviously perturbed ministers. Two were average types of stout, middle-aged citizens. The third, who stood between them, was younger. Tall and lean, with a thick shock of long black hair, he clutched the lapels of his frock-coat in his fists and frowned as he gazed at the ground. All were well dressed, but more than one collar was limp. The strain, whatever it might be, was clearly beginning to tell.

For a moment the trio stood silent, the

two older men staring alternately at each other and at their more youthful colleague. It was fairly evident that his was the master mind and that the other two looked to him for inspiration. Raising his head and gazing earnestly at each in turn, he began to speak in the deep voice one would have expected from him.

" My friends, it is almost too much. If those ' demonstrations ' spread we are done. We must change our tactics. We must climb down, but to seem to do so at the bidding of a rabble . . ." he raised his shoulders in a prolonged shrug. " That brigand, Bécasse, is behind it all. It is not foreign politics that interests them but the chance of loot. We hear to-day that they have laid him by the heels and he is at this moment at the *Troisième Dépôt*, but what then ? The scoundrel has a following and the air is electric. If we punish him we make a martyr—and then ? No : we here run round in little circles talking—we must act," and he took two long strides to a bell-push. " Ask Monsieur Duprez to come," he said to the attendant who appeared, and presently our friend entered moving quickly and bowed.

" Listen, my good Duprez," said the tall man, " You know fully the position with this individual Bécasse. You will take twenty thousand francs and proceed at once by auto to the Depot number three. There you will see this Bécasse alone."

Duprez started ever so slightly.

" Have no fear, we do not think him dangerous in that way. You will arrange matters : not only with him but with his associates if there are any. Should he imagine that this will be but the beginning of a nice game of blackmail for him, good : let him think so. You see," he went on, turning to his colleagues, " if we reach the end of the week, we are safe : after that we can deal with this one as we like." Turning again to Duprez, he recommenced his instructions. " You will give no explanation to anyone. I myself will prepare them by telephone from here, and there, for the moment, your word will be law."

Anton Duprez swelled as he drew a deep breath of pride.

" Twenty thousand should be sufficient for such a one, but the money does not matter. Be discreet," continued the Minister, and with a wave of the hand Duprez was dismissed.

With bursting chest he sallied forth, but in truth his feelings sank as he stepped into one of the cars waiting outside. Although the weather was mild he shuddered. It must be confessed that the worthy Monsieur Duprez was no Bayard. " Bécasse and alone," he murmured to himself. It was all very well to be told that he was not dangerous " in that way," but here was a man who had actually scared official Paris. He felt inclined to stop the car and bolt. " Twenty thousand francs," one could do a lot with that . . . *Zut !* he was becoming timid and yet . . . He removed his hat and wiped his forehead. A little cognac now—if only he dared stop, but through the coupé glass the forbidding-looking neck of the driver made him hesitate. Ha ! He had it ! ! This route would take him quite near his home in the Boulevard Raspail. He seized the speaking tube.

" My little cabbage," he murmured as he dashed into the house and embraced Madame Duprez. The cognac, quick ! It is an important mission I undertake, but yes ! Ask me no questions but fill a small bottle with cognac. Figure to yourself the importance. Hasten ! "

Realising like a good French wife that her temperate husband had some reason for his behaviour, Madame Duprez wisely wasted no time, but with a steady hand filled a medicine bottle with brandy, and, stoppering it with the cork which she had held in her teeth, gave it without comment to her agitated spouse. With a hand that rattled the brandy bottle on the glass he held, Duprez helped himself to a heartening dram which he tossed off at a gulp, then, kissing Madame, he rushed away.

Thrice blessed grape ! He was quite truculent when the *Commissaire* received him at the Depot. " I see the ruffian quite alone," he pompously announced. " I require no guards. But let them be at hand, of course," he added hastily, " and—er—armed." " They always are," grunted Mr. the Commissary, who resented political intrusions.

As he waited alone in the silence of the small, plainly furnished room Duprez looked from one door to another. In Paris all such places have two doors : sometimes three, and occasionally other inconspicuous things, and his spirits began to droop. Thrusting his hand into his trouser back pocket he pulled out his emergency supply and drained it. His spirits rose and—oh ! blessed cordial—an inspiration came. Skimp and save as

they might, the *dots* of the two somewhat homely-looking daughters Duprez mounted but slowly. Twenty thousand francs—what if he could manage . . . He hurriedly commenced to divide the money into four packages of five thousand and placed each in a separate pocket.

The door facing him opened. Propelled forward none too gently from behind the notorious one appeared and they were alone.

" See you, scoundrel," Duprez said as impressively as he could, " we, the Government, have had enough of this. If for ten thousand francs you will call off your dogs and cease your demonstrations—you and your confederates—it is yours." Bécasse cleared his throat vulgarly and leered at Monsieur Duprez.

" Fifteen," said he.

" You are no fool," said Duprez, trying to hide his eagerness as he pulled out the notes.

" It will suffice for a month," Bécasse growled, " and then you will see me again."

"*Bien*, my friend," said Duprez to himself as he touched the bell, " in another month we will have your head in the basket."

Two detectives appeared.

" You will release this man," ordered Duprez loftily, " and in a closed auto return him instantly to where you took him from. You will touch nothing in his possession ! "

As he sank back in a chair Duprez mopped the perspiration on his face. It was his first lapse, but in the thought of a contribution of five thousand francs to his daughters' *dots*, the struggle with his conscience was short and feeble. " Money does not matter," he had been told—the result only mattered. He had achieved the result. But had he ? He pressed the bell nervously. " Have they gone ? " he asked the agent who opened the door.

" They went at once, Monsieur," he was told.

Still doubts assailed him. Suppose the rascal forgot to see his confederates, or refused to share with them, or told someone. *Zut !* No person would take the word of such a one. Yet, the doubts persisted. "*Nom de Dieu !* " he exclaimed, rising from his chair with a jump. He had forgotten to telephone the result of his errand. Only when he had got through and announced the complete success of his mission did his apprehensions begin to subside.

He had hardly set down the telephone receiver, when a noise outside caused him to hold his breath and listen. The noise increased. He looked round, but the room was only lighted by a high window giving on to a well ; so, fearing to go out, he could only move about and wonder. What had the scoundrel done ? Assuredly it must be one of his confederates causing more trouble, and he had just telephoned to report complete success. Thrice accursed grape ! Had he not touched that cognac . . . and he clenched his pudgy fists and shook them beside his ears as he agitatedly paced up and down. He pulled out the medicine bottle, and after a glance to see if it were quite empty, made as if to throw it into the stove, but, recollecting in time that he was in the midst of police and detectives he replaced it in his pocket. Then he felt for the remaining packet of five thousand francs. Should he burn them—the stove was empty, but a match now—yet these sons of devils, the detectives—suppose there were a secret spy-hole ?

He glanced round furtively and, collapsing in his chair, he groaned.

Banging doors and voices—many voices—in the room of the *Commissaire* behind him made him turn. Cautiously he moved to the door, opened it a fraction of an inch, and listened in a moist anxiety.

¶

WHEN we left him, Hector had risen to his feet in the 'bus, holding his fifty-centime piece for all to see.

" Look you then ! " he shouted. " I am poor but I am honest, me. I hold my money, but I shall know where it goes," and several passengers also rose to express their views.

" It marches well," thought Georges and launched a louder and a more comprehensive curse at the government. Then the driver, hearing and then seeing the tumult inside, stopped the 'bus and came round to assist his colleague whose ineptitude was producing such confusion.

" See then," cried the alert Hector pointing, " he calls his confederate to support him. Two to rob one poor young man—but, what assassins ! "

The Place d'Italie is at all times a crowded centre, and with the outside passengers climbing down to investigate the noise and the cause of the stoppage, and to add their voices to the argument, the excitement quickly spread to the street.

" Let us descend, my friends," said Hector, loudly. " Let us have justice ! " and with difficulty he and the dumbfounded conductor pushed through the people inside the 'bus, Georges closing in with them as they passed. On the platform outside Hector stopped and harangued the crowded street. " Look, then, my friends, I am an honest fellow. I travel and I pay. I hold my money," and once more the fifty-centime piece was held aloft. " See, he displays his money," cried voices from the now interested and ever-gathering crowd. " And now comes this species of robber dressed doubtless in a stolen uniform and with no authority would take my money ! Are we then serfs ? " he shouted.

" What will you with such a dirty government ? " cried Georges, and in an instant the street rang with cries against the government.

Two policemen were seen making their way through the crowd in the wake of the 'bus driver. " See there ! " declaimed Hector, dramatically throwing out his empty hand, " his confederate brings more of the brigands in stolen uniforms. Four to make war on one innocent citizen."

At the word " war " the crowd burst into an angry roar, and surged threateningly round the mystified policemen, who with difficulty reached the 'bus steps.

An abiding faith in, and respect for, the majesty of the law and its minions can hardly be laid at the door of the Parisian public. Witness the widely-appreciated efforts of all motor-car drivers to run down at least one policeman daily, and as history amply testifies, the populace there is the most combustible human material in the world. Almost pleadingly the older of the two *agents* asked Hector to pay his fare and go away or he would have to come to the Depot. The journalist was relentless, yet with due caution. The plot had gone well, but remembering his countryman's dictum that the greatest enemy of the good is the better, he decided that the time had come to stage the next scene. Holding up both hands he shouted, " I yield me to force, my friends. I go but these sacred robbers must leave their stolen 'bus and accompany us. You will see justice done, my friends ! But I am honest, me ! " and stepping down he placed himself between the two *agents* who, with shouts of "*Circulez donc, circulez !* Move on there ! " pressed forward, the 'bus conductor and driver following.

Without in the least knowing what it all was about, but hearing the wildest rumours and taking its cue from the indefatigable Georges, who brought up the rear of the group, voicing imprecations against the government, the crowd began to utter menacing threats.

As they surged down the street leading to the Depot, several of the police in pairs ran out and, meeting the crowd, endeavoured to stem it. As well might they have whistled to Niagara to stop. Quickly they followed their well-known manœuvre. Flattening themselves against the wall they allowed part of the crowd to pass, then, pressing across the street in line, they faced round and struggled to split the crowd in two and to drive the leading portion down the street. Too late. A few moments sooner they might have succeeded, but not now, and as blows began to be exchanged, the sergeant in charge of the squad collected his men and they fought their way to the entrance of the Police Station.

Inside, between the two dishevelled *agents*, with the sheepish conductor and scowling driver, Hector Lequellec was orating—and indeed he has a voluble tongue—to the Commissary. " Look you, then ! " he said indignantly, " why am I here ? Demonstrate to me your authority ! Of what is this building and who are you ? I am an honest traveller, me. I travel and I pay my fare —see then ! " and with an air, he deposited his trump card, his little coin, on the table before the astounded official, who rubbed the top of his bald head and stared.

" Who then are these men ? " demanded Lequellec as with a theatrical gesture he indicated the conductor and driver, then folded his arms. Both the 'bus company's employees commenced to speak volubly and loudly : they appeared to be overflowing with emotion and to have much to say. *M. le Commissaire* half closed his eyes and averted his head while he waggled the palms of his hands at them. The *agents* each held up a warning finger and the pair stuttered into silence.

" You there," began the Commissary, an inadequate, melancholy-looking man, the monotony of his sallow visage broken only by a long, drooping moustache, " what . . ." when the main door to the street opened letting in a roar from outside and the sergeant. "*Monsieur le commissaire,*" he blurted out as he gathered up his torn cape. " It is too much, this. The streets are

blocked in every direction. There is nothing to be done," and he turned examining ruefully his cape.

Without pausing to reflect, his superior stepped to a window and looked over the obscured lower half. He was greeted with yells from the mob outside. " Down with the robbers ! " they shouted, knowing nothing of the cause of the trouble. " Down with the government ! *Mort aux vaches !* "

" Quick—we must get more men. Telephone to . . . no, no, wait ! " said the Commissary as the door opened behind him and our agitated Monsieur Duprez appeared, livid with rage and fear.

¶

" DOLT ! Imbecile !" he hissed. " Would you then bring on us a new Affaire Dreyfus, sacred name of a sacred name! Bring that young man in here—hold the others—let no one go out," and he whisked back to the other side of the door, through which Lequellec was immediately bundled by the policemen awakened to swift action by this unexpected development.

" Leave us," snapped Duprez to the *agents* as they pushed after him into the room. " Get out ! Go ! " he shouted, and moved his arms as if he were swimming breast stroke. Then he turned to Hector. " Silence, rascal ! " he snarled, shaking his fist at him as the other attempted to declaim. " A word from me and you will see Devil's Island to-morrow ! "

"*Ma foi*," said the irrepressible Lequellec to himself, " he clearly intends to send me by aero."

" See then," said Duprez, " this must be stopped. Is it money ? Speak sense, fool."

Hector Lequellec's heart jumped till it momentarily choked him. " What luck ! Success : success," he murmured, then pulling himself together he replied, " It is Monsieur. You see before you," and he struck his chest, " one who will make your fortune with his own, had he but a miserable ten thousand francs. For that sum, Monsieur, your future and mine will be assured."

" May your future be in prison," said Duprez savagely, thinking of the vanishing *dots*. " One thousand francs will you receive to stop that rabble. Not another sou."

" Pooh ! " said Hector, making a circle with his hand, " that would not let us make a start."

Duprez stared. " Yes : this must be one of Bécasse's accomplices proposing some sort of nefarious partnership of blackmail . . ." The telephone bell cut into his thoughts. It was his chief ! " Yes, yes, I come at once . . . some matters to adjust . . . I come now ! " he bleated humbly and the receiver dropped. Utterly unable to comprehend what Lequellec was driving at, he turned towards him. That person, alert although equally bewildered, seeing money in the offing, wondered what his next move should be. He could hardly credit his good fortune, but fearing to make a false move, kept silent.

"*Mais vous avez un culot infernal ;* your cheek is the limit," said Duprez viciously, as he turned from the telephone, realising that his innocent daughters must suffer, but, in the hopes of retrieving a corner, " See then ! " he said resignedly, " If for four thousand francs you will cause to disperse this crowd—it is yours."

" Never ! " replied Hector. " It would not pay our printers. Rather than take less than five thousand francs, I will go to this Devil's Island you promise me," and he folded his arms with a well-assumed air of pride, while the hubbub outside increased.

" Printers ? " repeated the distracted Duprez. " May *le bon Dieu* help me to understand. Rogue or lunatic you may be, but here are the five thousand." Groaning inwardly, he handed over the wad of notes, adding, " and may you . . ."

" Stop, Monsieur ! " cried Hector. " I will not receive this money under any misapprehension," he said, carefully stowing away the notes. " I am neither thief nor blackguard. Gratitude exists, although the uneducated may desire to disbelieve it," he continued, raising his voice as the trembling Duprez took him by an arm and began to push him towards the door. They waltzed across the room. Their hands met at the handle, Duprez striving to open it as Hector checked the turn. " With this sum —small—though—it—be," he panted, while they struggled, " you become—joint proprietor—of a fashion journal which—will—revolutionise—all—such—and bring you a fortune beyond your *dreams !* " He positively shouted the last word to the bewildered occupants of the outer room, as the door was finally torn open and he was thrust through by the frantic Duprez, who fervently consigned him to all known and several unknown devils.

Culot Infernal

But it was even so, and if you are sceptical let us follow the good Anton Duprez as he makes one of his monthly trips to Paris. Ah no ! Not that : no tales out of school. But watch him as he descends with dignity from the luxurious *wagon lit* of the P.L.M. and enters a taxi. Straight to the Rue Taitbout he is driven and stops at the palatial offices of the world's most famous fashion paper. Up he goes in the lift, then presently enters a nobly-furnished room and Hector Lequellec it is who comes forward to meet him. The same irresponsible Hector, although the War had flecked his once jet-black hair with white and lined his merry face. More slowly because of the leg he left at Verdun, Georges Lafont rises.

" My priceless buffoons " is the unvarying greeting of Anton Duprez as he goes to them with outstretched hands.

"*Bonjour, cher oncle de l'argent,*" they always reply.

A Sage on Idleness

WHEN Socrates maintained that to be busy was useful and beneficial for a man, and that to be unemployed was noxious and ill for him, that to work was a good, and to be idle an evil, he at the same time observed that those only who do something good, really work, and are useful workmen, but those who gamble or do anything bad and pernicious, he called idle ; and in this view the sentiment of the poet Heriod will be unobjectionable :

" Work is no disgrace, but idleness is a disgrace."

XENOPHON.

Woman and Smoking

HE who doth not smoke hath either known no great griefs, or refuseth himself the softest consolation, next to that which comes from heaven. " What, softer than woman ? " whispers the young reader. Young reader, woman teases as well as consoles. Woman makes half the sorrows which she boasts the privilege to soothe. Woman consoles us, it is true, while we are young and handsome ; when we are old and ugly, woman snubs and scolds us. On the whole, then, woman in this scale, the weed in that, Jupiter ! hang out thy balance, and weigh them both ; and if thou give the preference to woman, all I can say is, the next time Juno ruffles thee, O Jupiter ! try the weed. LORD LYTTON.

Necessary To Pleasure

OF the laws of nature, on which the condition of man depends, that which is attended with the greatest number of consequences, is the necessity of labour for obtaining the means of subsistence, as well as the means of the greatest part of our pleasures. JAMES MILL.

Idea of Travel

A MAN who leaves home to mend himself and others is a philosopher ; but he who goes from country to country, guided by the blind impulse of curiosity, is a vagabond. GOLDSMITH.

The Pikestaffe Case

A tale of mystery

By ALGERNON BLACKWOOD

THE vitality of old governesses deserves an explanatory memorandum by a good physiologist. It is remarkable. They tend to survive the grown-up married men and women they once taught as children, hang on for ever, as a man might put it crudely—a man, that is, who, taught by one of them in his earliest schoolroom days, would answer inquiries fifty years later without enthusiasm: "Oh, we keep her going, yes. She doesn't want for anything!"

Miss Helena Speke had taught the children of a distinguished family, and these distinguished children, with expensive progeny of their own now, still kept her going. They had clubbed together, seeing that Miss Speke retained her wonderful health, and had established her in a nice little house where she could take respectable lodgers—men for preference—giving them the three B's—bed, bath, and breakfast. Being a capable woman, Miss Speke more than made both ends meet. She wanted for nothing. She kept going.

Applicants for her rooms, especially for the first floor suite, had to be recommended. She had a stern face for those who rang the bell without a letter in their pockets. She never advertised. Indeed, there was no need to do so. The two upper floors had been occupied by the same tenants for many years—a chief clerk in a branch bank and a retired clergyman respectively. It was only the best suite that sometimes "happened to be vacant at the moment." From two guineas inclusive before the war, her price for this had been raised, naturally, to four, the tenant paying his gas-stove, light, and bath extra. Breakfast—she prided herself legitimately on her good breakfasts—was included.

For a long time now this first-floor suite had been unoccupied. The cost of living worried Miss Speke, as it worried most people. Her servant was cheap but incompetent, and once she could let the suite she meant to engage a better one. The distinguished children were scattered out of reach about the world; the eldest had been killed in the war; then a married one, a woman, lived in India; another married one was in the throes of divorce—an expensive business; and the fourth, the most generous and last, found himself in the Bankruptcy Court, and so was unable to help.

It was in these conditions that Miss Speke, her vitality impaired, decided to advertise. Although she inserted the words "references essential," she meant in her heart to use her own judgment, and if a likely gentleman presented himself and agreed to pay her price, she might accept him. The clergyman and the bank official upstairs were a protection, she felt. She invariably mentioned them to applicants: "I have a clergyman of the Church of England on the top floor. He's been with me for eleven years. And a banker has the floor below. Mine is a very quiet house, you see." These words formed part of the ritual she recited in the hall, facing her proposed tenants on the linoleum by the hat-rack; and it was these words she addressed to the tall, thin, pale-faced man with scanty hair and spotless linen, who informed her that he was a tutor, a teacher of higher mathematics to the sons of various families—he mentioned some first-class names where references could be obtained—a student besides and something of an author in his leisure hours. His pupils he taught, of course, in their respective houses, one being in Belgrave Square, another in The Albany; it was only after tea, or in the evenings, that he did his own work. All this he explained briefly, but with great courtesy of manner.

Mr. Thorley was well spoken, with a gentle voice, kind, far-seeing eyes, and an air of being lonely and uncared for that touched some forgotten, dried-up spring in Miss Speke's otherwise rather cautious heart. He looked every inch a scholar—

" and a gentleman," as she explained afterwards to everybody who was interested in him, these being numerous, of unexpected kinds, and all very close, not to say unpleasantly close, questioners indeed. But what chiefly influenced her in his favour was the fact, elicited in conversation, that years ago he had been a scholar at the house in Portman Square where she was governess to the distinguished family. She did not exactly remember him, but he had certainly known Lady Araminta, the mother of her charges.

Thus it was that Mr. Thorley—John Laking Thorley, M.A., of Clare College, Cambridge—was accepted by Miss Speke as tenant of her best suite on the first floor at the price mentioned, breakfast included, winning her confidence so fully that she never went to the trouble even of taking up the references he gave her. She liked him, she felt safe with him, she pitied him. He had not bargained nor tried to beat her down. He just reflected a moment, then agreed. He proved, indeed, an exemplary lodger, early to bed and not too early to rise, of regular habits, thoughtful of the expensive new servant, careful with towels, electric light, and ink-stains, prompt in his payments, and never once troubling her with complaints or requests, as other lodgers did, not excepting the banker and the clergyman. Moreover, he was a tidy man, who never lost anything, because he invariably put everything in its proper place and thus knew exactly where to look for it.

¶

MISS SPEKE, in the first days of his tenancy, studied him, as she studied all her lodgers. She studied his room when he was out " of a morning." At her leisure she did this, knowing he would never break in and disturb her unexpectedly. She was neither prying nor inquisitive, she assured herself, but she *was* curious. " I have a right to know something about the gentlemen who sleep under my roof with me," was the way she put it in her own mind. His clothes, she found, were ample, including evening dress, white gloves, and an opera hat. He had plenty of boots and shoes. His linen was good. His wardrobe, indeed, though a trifle uncared for, especially his socks, was a gentleman's wardrobe. Only one thing puzzled her. The full-length mirror, standing on mahogany legs—a present from the generous " child," now in the Bankruptcy Court and, being a handsome thing, a special attraction in the best suite—this fine mirror Mr. Thorley evidently did not like. The second or third morning he was with her she went to his bedroom before the servant had done it up, and saw, to her surprise, that this full-length glass stood with its back to the room. It had been placed close against the wall in a corner, its unattractive back turned outward.

It gave me quite a shock to see it," as she said afterwards. " And such a handsome piece, too ! "

Her first thought, indeed, sent a cold chill down her energetic spine. " He's cracked it ! " But it was not cracked. She paused in some amazement, wondering why her new lodger had done this thing ; then she turned the mirror again into its proper position, and left the room. Next morning she found it again with its face close against the wall. The following day it was the same—she turned it round, only to find it the morning after again with its back to the room.

She asked the servant, but the servant knew nothing about it.

" He likes it that way, I suppose, mum," was all Sarah said. " I never laid a hand on it once."

Miss Speke, after much puzzled consideration, decided it must be something to do with the light. Mr. Thorley, she remembered, wore horn-rimmed spectacles for reading. She scented a mystery. It caused her a slight—oh, a very slight—feeling of discomfort. Well, if he did not like the handsome mirror she could perhaps use it in her own room. To see it neglected hurt her a little. Not many furnished rooms could boast a full-length glass, she reflected. A few days later, meeting Mr. Thorley on the linoleum before the hat-rack, she inquired if he was quite comfortable, and if the breakfast was to his liking. He was polite and even cordial. Everything was perfect, he assured her. He had never been so well looked after. And the house was so quiet.

" And the bed, Mr. Thorley ? You sleep well, I hope." She drew nearer to the subject of the mirror, but with caution. For some reason she found a difficulty in actually broaching it. It suddenly dawned upon her that there was something queer about that full-length glass. She was by no means fanciful, Miss Speke, retired governess ; only the faintest suspicion of

something odd brushed her mind and vanished. But she did feel something. She found it impossible to mention the handsome thing outright.

" There's nothing you would like changed in the room, or altered ? " she inquired with a smile, " or—in any way put different —perhaps ? "

Mr. Thorley hesitated for a moment. A curious expression, half sad, half yearning, she thought, lit on his thoughtful face for one second and was gone. The idea of moving anything seemed distasteful to him.

" Nothing, Miss Speke, I thank you," he replied courteously, but without delay. " Everything is really *just* as I like it." Then, with a little bow, he asked : ' I trust my typewriter disturbs nobody. Please let me know if it does."

Miss Speke assured him that nobody minded the typewriter in the least, nor even heard it and, with another charming little bow and a smile, Mr. Thorley went out to give his lessons in the higher mathematics.

" There ! " she reflected, " and I never even asked him ! " It had been impossible !

From the window she watched him going down the street, his head bent, evidently in deep thought, his books beneath his arm, looking, she thought, every inch the gentleman and the scholar that he undoubtedly was. His personality left a strong impression on her mind. She found herself rather wondering about him. As he turned the corner Miss Speke owned to two things that rose simultaneously in her mind : First, the relief that the lodger was out for the day and could be counted upon not to return unexpectedly ; secondly, that it would interest her to slip up and see what kind of books he read. A minute later she was in his sitting-room. It was already swept and dusted, the breakfast cleared away, and the books, she saw, lay partly on the table where he had just left them and partly on the broad mantelpiece he used as a shelf. She was alone, the servant was downstairs in the kitchen. She examined Mr. Thorley's books.

The examination left her bewildered and uninspired. " I couldn't make them out at all," she put it. But they were evidently what she called costly volumes, and that she liked. " Something to do with his work, I suppose—mathematics, and all that," she decided, after turning over pages covered with some kind of hieroglyphics, symbols being a word she did not know in that connection. There was no printing, there were no sentences, there was nothing she could lay hold of, and the diagrams she thought perhaps were Euclid or possibly astronomical. Most of the names were odd and quite unknown to her. Gauss ! Minowski ! Lobatchewski ! And it affronted her that some of these were German. A writer named Einstein was popular with her lodger, and that, she felt, was a pity, as well as a mistake in taste. It all alarmed her a little ; or, rather she felt that touch of respect, almost of awe, pertaining to some world entirely beyond her ken. She was rather glad when the search—it was a duty —ended.

" There's nothing there," she reflected, meaning there was nothing that explained his dislike of the full-length mirror. And, disappointed, yet with a faint relief, she turned to his private papers. These, since he was a tidy man, were in a drawer. Mr. Thorley never left anything lying about. Now, a letter Miss Speke would not have thought of reading, but papers, especially learned papers, were another matter. Conscience, nevertheless, did prick her faintly, as she cautiously turned over sheaf after sheaf of large white foolscap, covered with designs, and curves, and diagrams in ink, the ink he never spilt, and assuredly in his handwriting. And it was among these foolscap sheets that she suddenly came upon one sheet in particular that caught her attention and even startled her. In the centre, surrounded by scriggly hieroglyphics, numbers, curves and lines meaningless to her, she saw a drawing of the full-length mirror. Some of the curves ran into it and through it, emerging on the other side. She knew it was *the* mirror because its exact measurements were indicated in red ink.

This, as mentioned, startled her. What could it mean ? she asked herself, staring intently at the curious sheet, as though it must somehow yield its secret to prolonged, even if unintelligent inquiry. " It looks like an experiment or something," was the furthest her mind could probe into the mystery, though this, she admitted, was not very far. Holding the paper at various angles, even upside down, she examined it with puzzled curiosity, then slowly laid it down again in the exact place whence she had taken it. That faint breath of alarm had again suddenly brushed her soul, as though she approached a mystery she had better leave unsolved.

It's very strange——" she began, carefully closing the drawer, but unable to complete the sentence even in her mind. " I don't think I like it—quite," and she turned to go out. It was just then that something touched her face, tickling one cheek, something fine as a cobweb, something in the air. She picked it away. It was a thread of silk, extremely fine, so fine, indeed, that it might almost have been a spider's web of gossamer such as one sees floating over the garden lawn on a sunny morning. Miss Speke brushed it away, giving it no thought, and went about her usual daily duties.

¶

BUT in her mind was established now a vague uneasiness, though so vague that at first she did not recognise it. Her thought would suddenly pause: " Now, what is it ? " she would ask herself. " Something's on my mind. What is it I've forgotten ? " The picture of her first-floor lodger appeared, and she knew at once. " Oh, yes, it's that mirror and the diagrams, of course." Some taut wire of alarm was quivering at the back of her mind. It was akin to those childhood alarms that pertain to the big unexplained mysteries no parent can elucidate because no parent knows. " Only God can tell that," says the parent, evading the insoluble problem. " I'd better not think about it," was the analagous conclusion reached by Miss Speke. Meanwhile the impression the new lodger's personality made upon her mind perceptibly deepened. He seemed to her full of power, above little things, a man of intense and mysterious mental life. He was constantly and somewhat possessingly in her thoughts.

It was just before luncheon, as she returned from her morning marketing, that the servant drew her attention to certain marks upon the carpet of Mr. Thorley's sitting-room. She had discovered them as she handled the vacuum cleaner—faint, short lines drawn by dark chalk or crayons, in shape like the top or bottom right-angle of a square bracket, and sometimes with a tiny arrow shown as well. There were occasional other marks as well that Miss Speke recognised as the hieroglyphics she called squiggles. Mistress and servant examined them together in a stooping position. They found others on the bedroom carpet, too, only these were not straight; they were small curved lines; and about the feet of the full-length mirror they clustered in a quantity, segments of circles, some large some small. They looked as if someone had snipped off curly hair, or pared his finger-nails with sharp scissors, only considerably larger, and they were so faint that they were only visible when the sunlight fell upon them.

" I knew they was drawn on," said Sarah, puzzled, yet proud that she had found them, " because they didn't come up with the dust and fluff."

" I'll—speak to Mr. Thorley," was the only comment Miss Speke made. I'll tell him." Her voice was not quite steady, but the girl apparently noticed nothing.

" There's all this too, please, mum." She pointed to a number of fine silk threads she had collected upon a bit of newspaper, preparatory to the dust-bin. " They all stuck on the cupboard door and the walls, stretched all across the room, but rather 'igh up. I only saw them by chance. One caught on my face."

Miss Speke stared, touched, examined for some seconds without speaking. She remembered the thread that had tickled her own cheek. She looked inquiringly round the room, and the servant, following her suggestion, indicated where the threads had been attached to walls and furniture. No marks, however, were left; there was no damage done.

" I'll mention it to Mr. Thorley," said her mistress briefly, unwilling to discuss the matter with the new servant, much less to admit that she was uncomfortably at sea. " Mr. Thorley," she added, as though there was nothing unusual, " is a high mathematician. He makes—measurements and—calculations of that sort." She had not sufficient control of her voice to be more explicit, and she went from the room aware that, unaccountably, she was trembling. She had first gathered up the threads, meaning to show them to her lodger when she demanded an explanation. But the explanation was delayed, for—to state it bluntly—she was afraid to ask him for it. She put it off till the following morning, then till the day after and, finally, she decided to say nothing about the matter at all. " I'd better leave it, perhaps, after all," she persuaded herself. " There's no damage done, anyhow. I'd better not inquire." All the same she did not like it. By the end of the week, however, she was able to pride

herself upon her restraint and tact; the marks on the carpet, rubbed out by the girl, were not renewed, and the fine threads of silk were never again found stretching through the air from wall to furniture. Mr. Thorley had evidently noticed their removal and had discontinued what he had observed was an undesirable performance. He was a scholar and a gentleman. But he was more. He was frank and straight-dealing. One morning he asked to see his landlady and told her all about it himself.

"Oh," he said in his pleasantest, easiest manner when she came into the room, "I wanted to tell you, Miss Speke—indeed, I meant to do so long before this—about the marks I made on your carpets"—he smiled apologetically—"and the silk threads I stretched. I use them for measurements—for problems I set my pupils, and one morning I left them there by mistake. The marks easily rub out. But I will use scraps of paper instead another time. I can pin these on—if you will kindly tell your excellent servant not to touch them—er—they're rather important to me." He smiled again charmingly, and his face wore the wistful, rather yearning expression that had already appealed to her. The eyes, it struck her, were very brilliant. "Any damage," he added—"though, I assure you, none is possible really—I would, of course, make good to you, Miss Speke."

"Thank you, Mr. Thorley," was all Miss Speke could find to say, so confused was her mind by troubling thoughts and questions she dared not express. Of course—this *is* my best suite, you see."

It was all most amicable and pleasant between them.

"I wonder—have my books come?" he asked, as he went out. "Ah, there they are, I do believe!" he exclaimed, for through the open front door a van was seen discharging a very large packing-case.

"Your books, Mr. Thorley——?" Miss Speke murmured, noting the size of the package with dismay. "But I'm afraid—you'll hardly find space to put them in," she stammered. "The rooms—er"—she did not wish to disparage them—"are so small, aren't they?"

Mr. Thorley smiled delightfully. "Oh, please do not trouble on that account," he said. "I shall find space all right, I assure you. It's merely a question of knowing where and how to put them," and he proceeded to give the men instructions.

A few days later a second case arrived.

"I'm expecting some instruments, too," he mentioned casually, "mathematical instruments," and he again assured her with his confident smile that she need have no anxiety on the score of space. Nor would he dent the walls or scrape the furniture the least little bit. There was always room, he reminded her gently again, provided one knew how to stow things away. Both books and instruments were necessary to his work. Miss Speke need feel no anxiety at all.

But Miss Speke felt more than anxiety, she felt uneasiness, she felt a singular growing dread. There lay in her a seed of distress that began to sprout rapidly. Everything arrived as Mr. Thorley had announced, case upon case was unpacked in his room by his own hands. The straw and wood she used for firing purposes, there was no mess, no litter, no untidyness, nor were walls and furniture injured in any way. What caused her dread to deepen into something bordering upon actual alarm was the fact that, on searching Mr. Thorley's rooms when he was out, she could discover no trace of any of the things that had arrived. There was no trace of either books or instruments. Where had he stored them? Where could they lie concealed? She asked herself innumerable questions, but found no answer to them. These stores, enough to choke and block the room, had been brought in through the sitting-room door. They could not possibly have been taken out again. They had *not* been taken out. Yet no trace of them was anywhere to be seen. It was very strange, she thought; indeed, it was more than strange. She felt excited. She felt more, indeed—*exalté*.

Meanwhile, thin strips of white paper, straight, angled, curved, were pinned upon the carpet; threads of finest silk stretched overhead connecting the top of the door lintel with the window, the high cupboard with the curtain rods—yet too high to be brushed away merely by the head of anyone moving in the room. And the full-length mirror still stood with its face close against the wall.

The mystery of these aerial entanglements increased Miss Speke's alarm considerably. What could their purpose be? "Thank God," she thought, "this isn't war time!" She knew enough to realise their meaning was not "wireless." That they bore some relation to the lines on the

carpet and to the diagrams and curves upon the paper, she grasped vaguely. But what it all meant baffled her and made her feel quite stupid. Where all the books and instruments had disappeared added to her bewilderment. She felt more and more perturbed. A vague, uncertain fear was worse than something definite she could face and deal with. Her fear increased. Then, suddenly, and with a reasonable excuse, Sarah gave notice.

For some reason Miss Speke did not argue with the girl. She preferred to let the real meaning of her leaving remain unexpressed. She just let her go. But the fact disturbed her extraordinarily. Sarah had given every satisfaction, there had been no sign of a grievance, no complaint, the work was not hard, the pay was good. It was simply that the girl preferred to leave. Miss Speke attributed it to Mr. Thorley. She became more and more disturbed in mind. Also she found herself, more and more, avoiding her lodger, whose regular habits made such avoidance an easy matter. Knowing his hours of exit and entrance she took care to be out of the way. At the mere sound of his step she flew to cover. The new servant, a stupid, yet not inefficient country girl, betrayed no reaction of any sort, no unfavourable reaction, at any rate. Having received her instructions, Lizzie did her work without complaint from either side. She did not remove the paper and the thread, nor did she mention them. She seemed just the country clod she was. Miss Speke, however, began to have restless nights. She contracted a dangerous habit: she lay awake—listening.

¶

AS the result of one of these sleepless nights she came to the conclusion that she would be happier without Mr. Thorley in the house—only she had not the courage to ask him to leave. The truth was she had not the courage to speak to him at all, much less to give him notice, however nicely.

After much cogitation she hit upon a plan that promised well: she sent him a carefully worded letter explaining that, owing to increased cost of living she found herself compelled to raise his terms. The " raise " was more than considerable, it was unreasonable, but he paid what she demanded, sending down a cheque for three months in advance with his best compliments. The letter somehow made her tremble. It was at this stage she first became aware of the existence in her of other feelings than discomfort, uneasiness, and alarm. These other feelings were vague and, being in contradiction of her dread, were difficult to describe, but their result was plain—she did not really wish Mr. Thorley to go. His friendly " compliments," his refusal of her hint, caused her a secret pleasure. It was not the cheque at the increased rate that pleased her—it was simply the fact that her lodger meant to stay.

It might be supposed that some delayed sense of romance had been stirred in her, but this really was not the case at all. Her pleasure was due to another source, but to a source uncommonly obscure and very strange. She feared him, feared his presence, above all, feared going into his room, while yet there was something about the mere idea of Mr. Thorley that entranced her. Another thing may as well be told at once—she herself faced it boldly—she would enter his dreaded room, when he was out, and would deliberately linger there. There was an odd feeling in the room that gave her pleasure, and more than pleasure—happiness. Surrounded by the enigmas of his personality, by the lines and curves of white paper pinned upon her carpet, by the tangle of silken threads above her head, by the mysterious books, the more than mysterious diagrams in his drawer—yet all these, even the dark perplexity of the rejected mirror, were forgotten in the curious sense of happiness she derived from merely sitting in his room. Her fear contained this other remarkable ingredient—an uncommon sense of joy, of liberty, of freedom.

She could not explain it, she did not attempt to do so. She would go shaking and trembling into his room, and a few minutes later this sense of uncommon happiness—of release, almost of escape, she felt it—would steal over her as though in her dried-up, frozen soul spring had burst upon mid-winter, as though something that crawled had suddenly most gloriously found wings.

Under this influence the dingy street turned somehow radiant, and the front door of her poor lodging-house opened upon blue seas, yellow sands, and mountains carpeted with flowers. Her whole life, painfully repressed and crushed down in the dull service of conventional nonentities,

flashed into colour, movement, and adventure. Nothing confined her. She was no longer limited. She knew advance in all possible directions. She knew the stars. She knew escape!

An attempt has been made to describe for her what she never could have described herself.

The reaction, upon coming out again, was painful. Her life in the past as a governess, little better than a servant; her life in the present as lodging-house keeper; her struggle with servants, with taxes, with daily expenses; her knowledge that no future but a mere "living" lay in front of her until the grave was reached—these overwhelmed her with an intense depression that the contrast rendered almost insupportable. Whereas in his room she had perfume, freedom, liberty, and wonder—the wonder of some entirely new existence.

Thus, briefly, while Miss Speke longed for Mr. Thorley to leave her house she became obsessed with the fear that one day he really *would* go. Her mind, it is seen, became uncommonly disturbed; her lodger's presence being undoubtedly the cause. Her nights were now more than restless, they were sleepless. Whence came, she asked herself repeatedly in the dark watches, her fear? Whence came, too, her strange enchantment?

It was under these circumstances that she bethought herself of her old tenant, the retired clergyman on the top floor, and sought his aid. The consolation of talking to another would be something, yet when the interview began all she could manage to say was that her mind was troubled and her heart not quite as it should be, and that she "didn't know what to do about it all." For the life of her she could not find more definite words. To mention Mr. Thorley she found utterly impossible.

"Prayer," the old man interrupted her half way, "prayer, my dear lady. Prayer, I find," he repeated smoothly, "is always the best course in all one's troubles and perplexities. Leave it to God. He knows. And in His good time He will answer." He advised her to read the Bible and Longfellow. She added Florence Barclay to the list and followed his advice. The books, however, comforted her very little.

After some hesitation she then tried her other tenant. But the "banker" stopped her even sooner than the clergyman had done. MacPherson was very prompt:

"I can give you another ten shillings or half a guinea," he said briskly. "Times are deeficult, I know. But I can't do more. If that's suffeecient I shall be delighted to stay on——" and, with a nod and a quick smile that settled the matter then and there, he was through the door and down the steps on the way to his office.

It was evident that Miss Speke must face her troubles alone, a fact, for the rest, life had already taught her. The loyal, courageous spirit in her accepted the situation. The alternate moods of happiness and depression, meanwhile, began to wear her out. "If only Mr. Thorley would go! If only Mr. Thorley will not go!" For some weeks now she had successfully avoided him. He made no requests or complaints. His habits were as regular as sunrise, his payments likewise. Not even the servant mentioned him. He became a shadow in the house.

Then, with the advent of summertime, he came home, as it were, an hour earlier than usual. He invariably worked from 5-30 to 7-30, when he went out for his dinner. Tea he always had at a pupil's house. It was a light evening, caused by the advance of the clock, and Miss Speke, mending her underwear at the window, suddenly perceived his figure coming down the street.

She watched, fascinated. Of two instincts—to hide herself, or to wait there and catch his eye—she obeyed the latter. She had not seen him for several weeks, and a deep thrill of happiness ran through her. His walk was peculiar, she noticed at once; he did not walk in a straight line. His tall, thin outline crossed the pavement in long, sweeping curves, yet quite steadily. He was not drunk. He came nearer; he was not twenty feet away; at ten feet she saw his face clearly, and received a shock. It was worn, and thin, and wasted, but a light of happiness, of something more than happiness indeed, shone in it. He reached the area railings. He looked up. Their eyes met, his with a start of recognition, hers with a steady stare of wonder. She ran into the passage, and before Mr. Thorley had time to use his latch-key she had opened the door for him herself. Little she knew, as she stood there trembling, that she stood also upon the threshold of an amazing adventure.

Face to face with him her presence of mind deserted her. She could only look up

into that worn and wasted face, into those happy, severe, and brilliant eyes, where yet burned a strange expression of wistful yearning, of uncommon wonder, of something that seemed not of this world quite. Such an expression she had never seen before upon any human countenance. There was uncommon fire in the eyes. It enthralled her. The same instant, as she stood there gazing at him without a single word, either of welcome or inquiry, it flashed across her that he needed something from her. He needed help, her help. It was a far-fetched notion, she was well aware, but it came to her irresistibly. The conviction was close to her, closer than her skin.

It was this knowledge, doubtless, that enabled her to hear without resentment the strange words he at once made use of:

"Ah, I thank you, Miss Speke, I thank you," the thin lips parting in a smile, the shining eyes lit with an emotion of more than ordinary welcome. "You cannot know what a relief it is to me to see you. You are so sound, so wholesome, so ordinary, so—forgive me, I beg—so commonplace."

He was gone past her and upstairs into his sitting-room. She heard the key turn softly. She was aware that she had not shut the front door. She did so, then went back, trembling, happy, frightened, into her own room. She had a curious, rushing feeling, both frightful and bewildering, that the room did not contain her. . . . She was still sitting there two hours later, when she heard Mr. Thorley's step come down the stairs and leave the house. She was still sitting there when she heard him return, open the door with his key, and go up to his sitting-room. And all this time she had the wondrous sensation that the room did not contain her. The walls and ceilings did not shut her in. She was out of the room. Escape had come very close to her. She was out of the house as well. . . .

¶

SHE went early to bed, taking this time the Bible with her. Her strange sensations had passed, they had left her gradually. She had made herself a cup of tea and had eaten a soft-boiled egg and some bread-and-butter. She felt more normal again, but her nerves were unusually sensitive. It was a comfort to know there were two men in the house with her, two worthy men, a clergyman and a banker. The Bible, the banker, the clergyman, with Mrs. Barclay and Longfellow not far from her bed, were certainly a source of comfort to her.

The traffic died away, the rumbling of the distant motor-buses ceased and, with the passing of the hours, the night became intensely still.

It was April. Her window was opened at the top and she could smell the cool, damp air of coming spring. Soothed by the books she began to feel drowsy. She glanced at the clock—it was just on two—then blew out the candle and prepared to sleep. Her thoughts turned automatically to Mr. Thorley, lying asleep on the floor above, his threads and paper strips and mysterious diagrams all about him—when, suddenly, a voice broke through the silence with a cry for help. It was a man's voice, and it sounded a long way off. But she recognised it instantly, and she sprang out of bed without a trace of fear. It was Mr. Thorley calling, and in the voice was anguish.

"He's in trouble! In danger! He needs help! I knew it!" ran rapidly through her mind, as she lit the candle with fingers that did not tremble. The clock showed three. She had slept a full hour. She opened the door and peered into the passage, but saw no one there; the stairs, too, were empty. The call was not repeated.

"Mr. Thorley!" she cried aloud. "Mr. Thorley! Do you want anything?" And by the sound of her voice she realised how distant and muffled his own had been. "I'm coming!" She realised also the uncommon stillness of the night.

She stood there waiting, but no answer came. There was no sound.

"Did you call me?" she tried again, but with less confidence. "Can I do anything for you?"

Again there was no answer; nothing stirred; the house was silent as the grave. The linoleum felt cold against her bare feet, and she stole back to get her slippers and a dressing-gown, while a hundred possibilities flashed through her mind at once. Oddly enough, she never once thought of burglars, nor of fire, nor, indeed, of any ordinary situation that required ordinary help. Why this was so she could not say. No ordinary fear, at any rate, assailed her in that moment, nor did she feel the smallest touch of nervousness about her own safety.

"Was it—I wonder—a dream?" she

asked herself as she pulled the dressing-gown about her. "Did I dream that voice ——?" when the cry broke forth again, startling her so that she nearly dropped the candle.

"Help! Help! Help me!"

Very distinct, yet muffled as by distance, it was beyond all question the voice of Mr. Thorley. What she had taken for anguish in it she now recognised was terror. It sounded on the floor above, it was the closed door doubtless that caused the muffled effect of distance.

Miss Speke ran along the passage instantly, and with extraordinary speed for an elderly woman; she was half-way up the stairs in a moment, when, just as she reached the first little landing by the bath-room and turned to begin the second flight, the voice came again: "Help! Help!" but this time with a difference that, truth to tell, did set her nerves unpleasantly a-quiver. For there were two voices instead of one, and they were not upstairs at all. Both were below her in the passage she had just that moment left. Close they were behind her. One, moreover, was not the voice of Mr. Thorley. It was a boy's clear soprano. Both called for help together, and both held a note of terror that made her heart shake.

Under these conditions it may be forgiven to Miss Speke that she lost her balance and reeled against the wall, clutching the banisters for a moment's support. Yet her courage did not fail her. She turned instantly and quickly, went downstairs again—to find the passage empty of any living figure. There was no one visible. There was only silence, a motionless hat-rack, the door of her own room slightly ajar, and shadows.

"Mr. Thorley!" she called. "Mr. Thorley!" her voice not quite so loud and confident as before. It had a whisper in it. No answer came. She repeated the words, her tone with still less volume. Only faint echoes that seemed to linger unduly came in response. Peering into her own room she found it exactly as she had left it. The dining-room, facing it, was likewise empty. Yet a moment before she had plainly heard two voices calling for help within a few yards of where she stood. Two voices! What could it mean? She noticed now for the first time a peculiar freshness in the air, a sharpness, almost a perfume, as though all the windows were wide open and the air of coming spring was in the house.

Terror, though close, had not yet actually gripped her. That she had gone crazy occurred to her, but only to be dismissed. She was quite sane and self-possessed. The changing direction of the sounds lay beyond all explanation, but an explanation, she was positive, there must be. The odd freshness in the air was heartening, and seemed to brace her. No, terror had not yet really gripped her. Ideas of summoning the servant, the clergyman, the banker, these she equally dismissed. It was *her* help that was needed, not theirs. She went boldly upstairs again and knocked at Mr. Thorley's bedroom door. She knocked again and again, loud enough to waken him, if he had perchance called out in sleep, but not loud enough to disturb her other tenants. No answer came. There was no sound within. No light shone through the cracks. With his sitting-room the same conditions held.

It was the strangeness of the second voice that now stole over her with a deadly fear. She found herself cold and shivering. As she, at length, went slowly downstairs again the cries were suddenly audible once more. She heard both voices: "Help! Help! Help me!" Then silence. They were fainter this time. Far away, they sounded, withdrawn curiously into some remote distance, yet ever with the same anguish, the terror in them as before. The direction, however, this time she could not tell at all. In a sense they seemed both close and far, both above her and below; they seemed—it was the only way she could describe the astounding thing—in any direction, or in all directions.

Miss Speke was really terrified at last. The strange, full horror of it gripped her, turning her heart suddenly to ice. The two voices, the terror in them, the extraordinary impression that they had withdrawn further into distance—this overcame her. She became appalled. Staggering into her room, she reached the bed and fell upon it in a senseless heap. She had fainted.

¶

SHE slept late, owing probably to exhausted nerves. Though usually up and about by 7-30, it was after nine when the servant woke her. She sprawled half in the bed, half out; the candle, which luckily had extinguished itself in falling, lay upon the carpet. The events of the night came slowly back to her as she watched the

servant's face. The girl was white and shaking.

" Are you ill, mum ? " Lizzie asked anxiously in a whisper ; then, without waiting for an answer, blurted out what she had really come in to say : " Mr. Thorley, mum ! I can't get into his room. It's locked. There's no answer." The girl was very frightened.

Mr. Thorley invariably had breakfast at 8 o'clock, and was out of the house punctually at 8-45.

" Was he ill in the night—perhaps—do you think ? " Miss Speke said. It was the nearest she could get to asking if the girl had heard the voices. She had admirable control of herself by this time. She got up, still in her dressing-gown and slippers.

" Not that I know of, mum," was the reply.

" Come," said her mistress firmly. " We'll go in." And they went upstairs together.

The bedroom door, as the girl had said, was locked on the inside, but the sitting-room was open. Miss Speke led the way. The freshness of the night before lay in the air she noticed, though the windows were all closed tightly. There was an exhilarating sharpness, a delightful tang as of open space. On the carpet, as usual, lay the strips of white paper, fastened with small pins, and the silk threads, also as usual, stretched across from lintel to cupboard, from window to bracket. Miss Speke brushed several of them from her face.

The door into the bedroom was ajar, and she went boldly in, followed more cautiously by the girl. " There's nothing to be afraid of," said her mistress firmly. The bed, she saw, had not been slept in. Everything was neat and tidy. The long mirror stood close against the wall, showing its ugly back as usual, while about its four feet clustered the curved strips of paper Miss Speke had grown accustomed to.

" Pull the blinds up, Lizzie," she said in a quiet voice.

The light now enabled her to see everything quite clearly. There were silken threads, she noticed distinctly, stretching from bed to window, and though both windows were closed there was this strange, sweet freshness in the air as of a flowering spring garden. It was like being in the open, almost upon a mountain top. She sniffed it with a curious feeling of pleasure, of freedom, of release, though Lizzie, apparently, noticed nothing of all this.

" There's his 'at and mackintosh," Lizzie whispered in a frightened voice, pointing to the hooks on the door. " And the umbrella in the corner. But I don't see 'is boots, mum. They weren't put out to be cleaned."

Miss Speke turned and looked at her, voice and manner under full command. " What do you mean ? " she asked.

" Mr. Thorley ain't gone out, mum," was the reply in a tremulous tone.

At that very moment a faint, distant cry was audible in a man's voice : " Help ! Help ! " Immediately after it a soprano, fainter still, called from what seemed even greater distance : " Help me ! " The direction was not ascertainable. It seemed both in the room, yet far away outside in space above the roofs. A glance at the girl convinced Miss Speke that she had heard nothing.

" Mr. Thorley is not here," whispered Miss Speke, one hand upon the brass bed-rail for support.

The room was undeniably empty.

" Leave everything exactly as it is," ordered her mistress as they went out. Tears stood in her eyes, she lingered a moment on the threshold, but the sounds were not repeated. " Exactly as it is," she repeated, closing the bedroom and then the sitting-room door behind her. She locked the latter, putting the key in her pocket. Two days later, as Mr. Thorley had not returned, she informed the police. But Mr. Thorley never returned. He had disappeared completely. He left no trace. He was never heard of again, though—once—he was seen.

Yet, this is not entirely accurate perhaps, for he was seen twice, in the sense that he was seen by two persons, and though he was not " heard of," he was certainly heard. Miss Speke heard his voice from time to time. She heard it in the day time and at night ; calling for help and always with the same words she had first heard : " Help ! Help ! Help me ! " It sounded very far away, withdrawn into great distance, the distance ever increasing. Occasionally she heard the boy's voice with it ; they called together sometimes ; she never heard the soprano voice alone. But the anguish and terror she had first noticed were no longer present. Alarm had gone out of them. It was more like an echo that she heard. Through all the hubbub, confusion and distressing annoyance of the police search and inquiry, the voice and voices came to

her, though she never mentioned them to a single living soul, not even to her old tenants, the clergyman and the banker. They kept their rooms on—which was about all she could have asked of them. The best suite was never let again. It was kept locked and empty. The dust accumulated. The mirror remained untouched, its face against the wall.

The voices, meanwhile, grew more and more faint; the distance seemed to increase; soon the voice of the boy was no longer heard at all, only the cry of Mr. Thorley, her mysterious lodger, sang distantly from time to time, both in the sunshine and in the still darkness of the night hours. The direction whence it came, too, remained, as before, undeterminable. It came from anywhere and everywhere—from above, below, on all sides. It had become, too, a pleasant, even a happy sound; no dread belonged to it any more. The intervals grew longer then; days first, then weeks passed without a sound; and invariably, after these increasing intervals, the voice had become fainter, weaker, withdrawn into ever greater distance. With the coming of the warm spring days it grew almost inaudible. Finally, with the great summer heats it died away completely.

¶

THE disappearance of Mr. Thorley, however, had caused no public disturbance on its own account, nor until it was bracketed with another disappearance, that of one of his pupils, Sir Mark Pikestaffe's son. The Pikestaffe Case then became a daily mystery that filled the papers. Mr. Thorley was of no consequence, whereas Sir Mark was a figure in the public eye.

Mr. Thorley's life, as inquiry proved, held no mystery. He had left everything in order. He did not owe a penny. A half-brother called eventually to take away his few possessions, but the books and instruments he had brought into the lodging-house were never traced. He was a scholar and a gentleman to the last, a man, too, it appeared, of immense attainments and uncommon ability, one of the greatest mathematical brains, if the modest obituaries were to be believed, the world has ever known. His name now passed into oblivion. He left no record of his researches or achievements. Out of some mysterious sense of loyalty and protection Miss Speke never mentioned his peculiar personal habits. The strips of paper, as the silken threads, she had carefully removed and destroyed long before the police came to make their search of his rooms. . . .

But the disappearance of young Gerald Pikestaffe raised a tremendous hubbub. It was some days before the two disappearances were connected, both having occurred on the same night, it was then proved. The boy, a lad of great talent, promising a brilliant future, and the favourite pupil of the older man, his tutor, had left the house without coat or hat, and had never been seen again. He left no clue, no trace. Terrible hints and suggestions were, of course, spread far and wide, but there was not a scrap of evidence forthcoming to support them. Gerald Pikestaffe and Mr. Thorley, at the same moment of the same night, vanished from the face of the earth and were no more seen. The matter ended there.

The Pikestaffe Case merely added one more to the insoluble mysteries with which our commonplace daily life is sprinkled.

It was some six weeks to a month after the event that Miss Speke received a letter from one of her former charges, the most generous one, now satisfactorily finished with the Bankruptcy Court. He had honourably discharged his obligations; he was doing well; he wrote and asked Miss Speke to put him up for a week or two. "And do *please* give me Mr. Thorley's room," he asked. "The case thrilled me, and I should like to sleep in it. I always loved mysteries, you remember . . . and queer, spooky things. There's something *very* spooky about this thing. Besides, I knew the P. boy a little——"

Though it cost her much effort and still more hesitation she consented finally. She prepared the rooms herself. There was a new servant. Lizzie having given notice the day after the disappearance, and the older woman who now waited upon the clergyman and the banker was not quite to be trusted with the delicate job. Miss Speke, entering the empty rooms on tiptoe, a strange trepidation in her heart, but that same heart firm with courage, drew up the blinds, swept the floors, dusted the furniture, and made the bed. All she did with her own hands. Only the full-length mirror she did not touch. What terror still was in her clung to that handsome piece. It was

haunted by memories. For her it was still both wonderful and somehow awful. The ghost of her strange experience hid invisibly in its polished, if now unseen, depths. She dared not handle it, far less move it from the resting-place where it rested in peace. *His* hands had placed it there. To her it was sacred.

It had been given to her by Colonel Lyle, who would now occupy the room, stand on the wondrous carpet, move through the air where once the mysterious silks had floated, sleep in the very bed itself. All this he could do, but the mirror he must not touch.

" I'll explain to him a little. I'll beg him not to move it. He's very understanding," she said to herself, as she went out to buy some flowers for the sitting-room. Colonel Lyle was expected that very afternoon. Lilac, she remembered, was what he always liked. It took her longer than she expected to find really fresh bunches of the colour that he preferred, and when she got back it was time to be thinking about his tea. The sun's rays fell slanting down the dingy street, touching it with happy gold. This, with thoughts of the tea-kettle and what vase would suit the flowers best, filled her mind as she passed along the linoleum in the narrow hall—then noticed suddenly a new hat and coat hanging on the usually empty pegs. Colonel Lyle had arrived before his time.

" He's already come," she said to herself with a little gasp. A heavy dread settled instantly on her spirit. She stood a moment motionless in the passage, the lilac blossoms in her hand. She was listening.

" The gentleman's come, mum," she heard the servant say, and at the same moment saw her at the top of the kitchen stairs in the hall. " He went up to his room, mum."

Miss Speke held out the flowers. With an effort to make her voice sound ordinary she gave an order about them. " Put them in water, Mary, please. The double vase will do." She watched the woman take them slowly, oh, so slowly, from her. But her mind was elsewhere. It was still listening. And after the woman had gone down to the kitchen again slowly, oh, so slowly, she stood motionless for some minutes, listening, still intently listening. But no sound broke the quiet of the afternoon. She heard only the blundering noises made by the woman in the kitchen below. On the floor above was—silence.

Miss Speke then turned and went upstairs.

Now, Miss Speke admits frankly that she was " in a state," meaning thereby, doubtless, that her nerves were tightly strung. Her heart was thumping, her ears and eyes strained to their utmost capacity; her hands, she remembers, felt a little cold, and her legs moved uncertainly. She denies, however, that her " state," though it may be described as nervous, could have betrayed her into either invention or delusion. What she saw she saw, and nothing can shake her conviction. Colonel Lyle, besides, is there to support her in the main outline, and Colonel Lyle, when first he had entered the room, was certainly not " in a state," whatever excuses he may have offered later to comfort her. Moreover, to counteract her trepidation, she says she felt a distinct sense of exhilaration due to the pleasant freshness of the air. As she pushed the door wide open—it was already ajar—this delicious air met her in the face, with its sweetness, its actual perfume, its lift of wonder and release. These feelings of freedom, of liberty, of escape that she at once experienced, modified her dread. She declares that joy rushed upon her with this fragrant air, and that her " nerves " were entirely forgotten.

" What I saw I saw," remains her emphatic and unshakable verdict. " I saw—everything."

The first thing she saw admitted certainly of no doubt. Colonel Lyle lay huddled up against the further wall, half upon the carpet and half leaning on the wainscoting. He was unconscious. One arm was stretched towards the mirror, the hand still clutching one of its mahogany feet. And the mirror had been moved. It turned now slightly more towards the room.

The picture, indeed, told its own story, a story Colonel Lyle himself told afterwards when he had recovered. He was surprised to find the mirror—his mirror—with its face to the wall; he went forward to put it in its proper position, in doing this he looked into it; he saw something, and—the next thing he knew—Miss Speke was bringing him round.

She explains, further, that her overmastering curiosity to look into the mirror, as Colonel Lyle had evidently looked himself, prevented her from immediately tendering first aid to that gentleman, as she

unquestionably should have done ; instead, she crossed the room, stepped over his huddled form, turned the mirror a little further round towards her, and looked straight into it.

The eye, apparently, takes in a great deal more than the mind is consciously aware of having " seen " at the moment. Miss Speke saw everything, she claims. But details certainly came back to her later, details she had not been aware of at the time. At the moment, however, her impressions, though extremely vivid, were limited to certain outstanding items. These items were—that her own reflection was not visible, no picture of herself being there ; that Mr. Thorley and a boy—she recognised the Pikestaffe lad from the newspaper photographs she had seen—were plainly there, and that books and instruments in great quantity filled all the nearer space, blocking up the foreground. Beyond, behind, stretching in all directions, she affirms, was limitless space that produced upon her the effect of the infinite heavens as seen in a clear night sky. This space was prodigious, yet in some way not alarming. It did not terrify. A diffused soft light pervaded the huge panorama. There were no shadows, there were no high lights.

Curiously enough, however, the absence of any reproduction of herself did not at first strike her as at all out of the way ; she noticed the fact, no more than that ; it was, perhaps naturally, the deep shock of seeing Mr. Thorley and the boy that held her absolutely spellbound, arresting her faculties as though they had been frozen.

Mr. Thorley was moving to and fro, his body bent, his hand thrown forward. He looked as natural as in life. He moved steadily, as with a purpose, now nearer, now further, but his figure always bent as though he were intent upon something in his hands. The boy moved, too, but with a more gentle, less vigorous, motion that suggested floating. He followed the larger figure, keeping close, his face raised from time to time as though his companion spoke to him. The expression that he wore was quiet, happy, and intent. He was absorbed in what he was doing at the moment. Then, suddenly, Mr. Thorley straightened himself up. He turned. Miss Speke saw his face for the first time. He looked into her eyes. The gaze was straight, and full, and clear. It betrayed recognition. Mr. Thorley smiled at her.

In a very few seconds she was aware of all this, of its main outlines, at any rate. She saw the moving, living figures in the midst of this stupendous, all-pervading and amazing space. The overwhelming surprise it caused her prevented, apparently, the lesser emotion of personal alarm ; fear she certainly did not feel at first. It was when Mr. Thorley looked at her with his brilliant, piercing eyes and smiled that her heart gave its violent jump, missed a beat or two, then began hammering against her ribs like released machinery that has gone beyond control. She was aware of the happy glory in the face, a face that was thin to emaciation, almost transparent, yet wearing an expression that was no longer earthly. Then, as he smiled, he came towards her ; he beckoned ; he stretched both hands out, while the boy looked up and watched.

Mr. Thorley's advance, however, had two distracting peculiarities—that as he drew nearer he moved not in a straight line, but in a curve. As a skater performing " edges," though on both feet instead of on one, he swept gracefully and swiftly in her direction. The other peculiarity was that with each step nearer, his figure grew smaller. It lessened in height. He seemed, indeed, to be moving in two directions at once. He became diminutive.

The sight ought by rights to have paralysed her, yet it produced instead of terror an effect of exhilaration she could not possibly account for. There came that familiar and delicious touch of freshness, almost of fragrance, in the air. The feeling of liberty, release, escape, rose strongly in her. Not only did all desire to resist die away almost before it was born, but more, she felt its opposite—an overpowering wish to join him. The tiny hands were still stretched out to greet her, to draw her in, to welcome her ; the smile upon the diminutive face, as it came nearer and nearer, was enchanting. She heard his voice then :

" Come, come to us ! Come in and live ! Here God is nearer, and there is liberty ! "

The voice was very close and loud as in life, but it was not in front. It was behind her. Against her very ear it sounded in the air behind her back. She moved one foot forward ; she raised her arms. She felt herself being sucked in—into that glorious, mighty space that was limitless, unending, infinite.

The cumulative effect of so many amazing happenings, all of them contrary to nature, should have been destructive to her reason. Their combined shock would have dislocated her system somewhere and have laid her low. But with every individual, it seems, the breaking-point is different. Her system, indeed, was dislocated, and a moment later and she was certainly laid low, yet it was not the effect of the figure, the voice, the gliding approach of Mr. Thorley that produced this. It was the flaw of little human egoism that brought her down. For it was in this instant that she *realised* the absence of her own reflection in the mirror. The fact, though noticed before, had not entered her consciousness as such. It now definitely did so. The arms she lifted in greeting had no reflected counterpart.

Her figure, she realised with a shock of terror, was not there. She dropped, then, like a stricken animal, one outstretched hand clutching the frame of the mirror as she did so.

" Gracious God ! " she heard herself scream as she collapsed. She heard, too, the crash of the falling mirror which she overturned and brought down with her.

Whether the noise brought Colonel Lyle round, or whether it was the combined weight of Miss Speke and the handsome piece upon his legs that roused him, is of no consequence.

He stirred, opened his eyes, disentangled himself and proceeded, not without astonishment, to render first aid to the unconscious lady.

The explanations that followed are, equally, of little consequence. His own attack, he considered, was chiefly due to fatigue, to violent indigestion, and to the after-effects of his protracted bankruptcy proceedings. Thus, at any rate, he assured Miss Speke. He added, however, that he had received rather a shock from the handsome piece, for, surprised at finding it turned to the wall, he had replaced it and looked into it, but had not seen himself reflected. This had amazed him a good deal, yet what amazed him still more was that he had seen something moving in the depths of the glass.

" I saw a face," he said, " and it was a face I knew. It was Gerald Pikestaffe. Behind him was another figure, the figure of a man, whose face I could not see." A mist rose before his eyes, his head swam a bit, and he evidently swayed for some unaccountable reason. It was a blow received in falling that stunned him momentarily.

He stood over her, while he fanned her face ; her swoon was of brief duration ; she recovered quickly ; she listened to his story with a quiet mind. The after-effect of too great wonder leaves no room for pettier emotions, and traces of the exhilaration she had experienced were still about her heart and soul.

" Is it smashed ? " was the first thing she asked, to which Colonel Lyle made no answer at first, merely pointing to the carpet where the frame of the long mirror lay in broken fragments.

" There was no glass, you see," he said presently. He, too, was quiet, his manner very earnest ; his voice, though subdued as by a hint of wonder approaching awe, betrayed the glow of some intense inner excitement that lit fire in his eyes as well. " He had cut it out long ago, of course. He used the empty framework merely."

" Eh ? " said Miss Speke, looking down incredulously, but finding no sign of splinters on the floor.

Her companion smiled. " We shall find it about somewhere if we look," he said calmly, which, indeed, proved later true—lying flat beneath the carpet under the bed. " His measurements and calculations led—probably by chance—towards the mirror " —he seemed speaking to himself more than to his bewildered listener—" perhaps by chance, perhaps by knowledge," he continued, " up to the mirror—and then *through* it." He looked down at Miss Speke and laughed a little. " So, like Alice, he went through it, too, taking his books and instruments, the boy as well, all with him."

" I only know one thing," said Miss Speke, unable to follow him or find meaning in his words, " I shall never let these rooms again. I shall lock them up."

Her companion collected the broken pieces and made a little heap of them.

" And I shall pray for him," added Miss Speke, as he led her presently downstairs to her own quarters. " I shall never cease to pray for him as long as I live."

" He hardly needs that," murmured Colonel Lyle, but to himself. " The first terror has long since left him. He now lives in Other Space. He has escaped ! "

"Pigs is Pigs"

But unfortunately the supply exceeded the demand

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

MIKE FLANNERY, the Westcote agent of the Interurban Express Company, leaned over the counter of the express office and shook his fist. Mr. Morehouse, angry and red, stood on the other side of the counter, trembling with rage. The argument had been long and heated, and at last Mr. Morehouse had talked himself speechless. The cause of the trouble stood on the counter between the two men. It was a soap-box across the top of which were nailed a number of strips, forming a rough but serviceable cage. In it two spotted guinea-pigs were greedily eating lettuce leaves.

"Do as you loike, then!" shouted Flannery, "pay for thim an' take thim, or don't pay for thim and leave thim be. Rules is rules, Misther Morehouse, an' Mike Flannery's not going to be called down fer breakin' of thim."

"But, you everlastingly stupid idiot!" shouted Mr. Morehouse, madly shaking a flimsy printed book beneath the agent's nose, "can't you read it here—in your own plain printed rates? 'Pets, domestic, Franklin to Westcote, if properly boxed, twenty-five cents. each.'" He threw the book on the counter in disgust. "What more do you want? Aren't they pets? Aren't they domestic? Aren't they properly boxed? What?"

He turned and walked back and forth rapidly, frowning ferociously. Suddenly he turned to Flannery and, forcing his voice to an artificial calmness, spoke slowly but with intense sarcasm.

"Pets," he said. "P–e–t–s! Twenty-five cents. each. There are two of them. One! Two! Two times twenty-five are fifty! Can you understand that? I offer you fifty cents."

Flannery reached for the book. He ran his hand through the pages and stopped at page sixty-four.

"An' I don't take fifty cints," he whispered in mockery. "Here's the rule for ut. 'Whin the agint be in anny doubt regardin' which of two rates applies to a shipmint, he shall charge the larger. The consign-ey may file a claim for the overcharge.' In this case, Misther Morehouse, I be in doubt. Pets thim animals may be, an' domestic they be, but pigs, I'm blame sure they do be, an' me rules says plain as the nose on yer face, 'Pigs, Franklin to Westcote, thirty cints each.' An', Misther Morehouse, by me arithmetical knowledge, two times thirty comes to sixty cints."

Mr. Morehouse shook his head savagely.

"Nonsense!" he shouted, "confounded nonsense, I tell you! Why, you poor, ignorant foreigner, that rule means common pigs, domestic pigs, not guinea-pigs!"

Flannery was stubborn.

"Pigs is pigs," he declared firmly. "Guinea-pigs or dago pigs or Irish pigs is all the same to the Interurban Express Company an' to Mike Flannery. Th' nationality of the pig creates no differentiality in the rate, Misther Morehouse! 'Twould be the same was they Dutch pigs or Rooshun pigs. Mike Flannery," he added, "is here to tind to the expriss business an' not to hould conversation wid dago pigs in sivinteen languages fer to discover be they Chinese or Tipperary by birth an' nativity."

Mr. Morehouse hesitated. He bit his lip and then flung out his arms wildly.

"Very well!" he shouted, "you shall hear of this! Your president shall hear of this! It is an outrage! I have offered you fifty cents. You refuse it! Keep the pigs until you are ready to take the fifty cents, but, by George, sir, if one hair of those pigs' heads is harmed I will have the law on you!"

He turned and stalked out, slamming the door. Flannery carefully lifted the soap-box from the counter and placed it in a corner. He was not worried. He felt the peace that comes to a faithful servant who has done his duty and done it well.

Mr. Morehouse went home raging. His boy, who had been awaiting the guinea-pigs, knew better than to ask him for them. He was a normal boy, and therefore always had a guilty conscience when his father was angry. So the boy slipped quietly around the house. There is nothing so soothing to a guilty conscience as to be out of the path of the avenger.

Mr. Morehouse stormed into the house.

"Where's the ink?" he shouted at his wife as soon as his foot was across the door-sill.

Mrs. Morehouse jumped guiltily. She never used ink. She had not seen the ink, nor moved the ink, nor thought of the ink, but her husband's tone convicted her of the guilt of having borne and reared a boy, and she knew that whenever her husband wanted anything in a loud voice the boy had been at it.

"I'll find Sammy," she said meekly.

When the ink was found Mr. Morehouse wrote rapidly, and he read the completed letter and smiled a triumphant smile.

"That will settle that crazy Irishman!" he exclaimed. "When they get that letter he will hunt another job all right."

¶

A WEEK later Mr. Morehouse received a long official envelope, with the card of the Interurban Express Company in the upper left corner. He tore it open eagerly and drew out a sheet of paper. At the top it bore the number A6754. The letter was short. "Subject—Rate on guinea-pigs," it said. "Dear Sir,—We are in receipt of your letter regarding rate on guinea-pigs between Franklin and Westcote, addressed to the President of this company. All claims for overcharge should be addressed to the Claims Department."

Mr Morehouse wrote to the Claims Department. He wrote six pages of choice sarcasm, vituperation, and argument, and sent them to the Claims Department.

A few weeks later he received a reply from the Claims Department. Attached to it was his last letter.

"Dear Sir," said the reply, "Your letter of the 16th inst., addressed to this department, subject rate on guinea-pigs from Franklin to Westcote, rec'd. We have taken up the matter with our agent at Westcote, and his reply is attached herewith. He informs us that you refused to receive the consignment or to pay the charges. You have therefore no claim against this company and your letter regarding the proper rate on the consignment should be addressed to our Tariff Department."

Mr. Morehouse wrote to the Tariff Department. He stated his case clearly, and gave his arguments in full, quoting a page or two from the encyclopædia to prove that guinea-pigs were not common pigs.

With the care that characterises corporations when they are systematically conducted Mr. Morehouse's letter was numbered, O.K'd and started through the regular channels.

Duplicate copies of the bill of lading, manifest, Flannery's receipt for the package, and several other pertinent papers were pinned to the letter, and they were passed to the head of the Tariff Department.

The head of the Tariff Department put his feet on his desk and yawned. He looked through the papers carelessly.

"Miss Kane," he said to his stenographer, "take this letter. 'Agent, Westcote, N.J. Please advise why consignment referred to in attached papers was refused domestic pets rates.'"

Miss Kane made a series of curves and angles on her notebook and waited with pencil poised.

The head of the department looked at the papers again.

"Huh! guinea-pigs!" he said. "Probably starved to death by this time! Add this to that letter: 'Give condition of consignment at present.'"

He tossed the papers on to the stenographer's desk, took his feet from his own desk, and went out to lunch.

When Mike Flannery received the letter he scratched his head.

"Give prisint condition," he repeated, thoughtfully. "Now what do thim clerks be wantin' to know, I wonder! 'Prisint condition,' is ut? Thim pigs, praise St. Patrick, do be in good health, so far as I know, but I niver was no veterinary surgeon to dago pigs. Mebby thim clerks wants me to call in the pig docther an' have their pulses took. Wan thing I do know, howiver, which is they've glorious appytites for pigs of their soize. Ate? They'd ate the brass padlocks off a barn door! If the paddy pig, by the same token, ate as hearty as these dago pigs do, there'd be a famine in Ireland."

To assure himself that his report would be up-to-date, Flannery went to the rear of the

office and looked into the cage. The pigs had been transferred to a larger box—a dry goods box.

" Wan — two — t'ree — four —foive— six—sivin—eight ! " he counted. " Sivin spotted an' wan all black. All well an' hearty an' all eatin' loike ragin' hippypotty-musses." He went back to his desk and wrote.

" Mr. Morgan, Head of Tariff Department," he wrote. " Why do I say dago pigs is pigs because they is pigs and will be til you say they ain't which is what the rule book says stop your jollying me you know it as well as I do. As to health they are all well and hoping you are the same. P.S.—There are eight now the family increased all good eaters. P.S.—I paid out so far two dollars for cabbage which they like shall I put in bill for same what ? "

Morgan, head of the Tariff Department, when he received this letter, laughed. He read it again, and became serious.

" By George ! " he said. " Flannery is right. ' Pigs is pigs.' I'll have to get authority on this thing. Meanwhile, Miss Kane, take this letter : 'Agent, Westcote, N.J. Regarding shipment guinea-pigs, File No. A6754. Rule 83, General Instructions to Agents, clearly states that agents shall collect from consignee all costs of provender, etc., etc., required for live stock while in transit or storage. You will proceed to collect same from consignee."

Flannery received this letter next morning, and when he read it he grinned.

" Proceed to collect," he said softly. " How thim clerks do loike to be talkin' ! *Me* proceed to collect two dollars and twenty-foive cints off Misther Morehouse ! I wonder do thim clerks *know* Misther Morehouse ? I'll git it ! Oh yes ! ' Misther Morehouse, two an' a quarter, plaze.' ' Cert'nly, me dear friend Flannery. Delighted ! ' *Not !* "

Flannery drove the express wagon to Mr. Morehouse's door. Mr. Morehouse answered the bell.

"Ah, ha ! " he cried as soon as he saw it was Flannery. " So you've come to your senses at last, have you ? I thought you would ! Bring the box in."

" I hev no box," said Flannery, coldly. " I hev a bill agin Misther John C. Morehouse for two dollars and twinty-foive cints for kebbages aten by his dago pigs. Wud you wish to pay ut ? "

" Pay—— Cabbages—— ! " gasped Mr. Morehouse. " Do you mean to say that two little guinea-pigs—— "

" Eight ! " said Flannery. " Papa an' mamma an' the six childer. Eight ! "

For answer Mr. Morehouse slammed the door in Flannery's face. Flannery looked at the door reproachfully.

" I take ut the con-*sign*-y don't want to pay for thim kebbages," he said. " If I know signs of refusal, the con-*sign*-y refuses to pay for wan dang kebbage leaf an' be hanged to me ! "

Mr. Morgan, the head of the Tariff Department, consulted the president of the Interurban Express Company regarding guinea-pigs, as to whether they were pigs or not pigs. The president was inclined to treat the matter lightly.

" What is the rate on pigs and on pets ? " he asked.

" Pigs thirty cents, pets twenty-five," said Morgan.

" Then, of course, guinea-pigs are pigs," said the president.

" Yes," agreed Morgan. " I look at it that way, too. A thing that can come under two rates is naturally due to be classed as the higher. But are guinea-pigs pigs ? Aren't they rabbits ? "

" Come to think of it," said the president, " I believe they are more like rabbits. Sort of halfway station between pig and rabbit. I think the question is this—are guinea-pigs of the domestic pig family ? I'll ask Professor Gordon. He is an authority on such things. Leave the papers with me."

The president put the papers on his desk and wrote a letter to Professor Gordon. Unfortunately the professor was in South America collecting zoological specimens, and the letter was forwarded to him by his wife. As the professor was in the highest Andes, where no white man had ever penetrated, the letter was many months in reaching him. The president forgot the guinea-pigs, Morgan forgot them, Mr. Morehouse forgot them, but Flannery did not. One-half of his time he gave to the duties of his agency ; the other half was devoted to the guinea-pigs. Long before Professor Gordon received the president's letter Morgan received one from Flannery.

"About them dago pigs," it said, " what shall I do, they are great in family life, no race suicide for them, there are thirty-two now shall I sell them do you take this express office for a menagerie, answer quick."

"Pigs is Pigs"

Morgan reached for a telegraph blank and wrote :—

"Agent, Westcote. Don't sell pigs."

He then wrote Flannery a letter calling his attention to the fact that the pigs were not the property of the Company, but were merely being held during a settlement of a dispute regarding rates. He advised Flannery to take every possible care of them.

Flannery, letter in hand, looked at the pigs and sighed. The dry-goods box cage had become too small. He boarded up twenty feet of the rear of the express office to make a large and airy home for them, and went about his business. He worked with feverish intensity when out on his rounds, for the pigs required attention, and took most of his time. Some months later, in desperation, he seized a sheet of paper and wrote " 160 " across it and mailed it to Morgan. Morgan returned it asking for explanation. Flannery replied :

" There be now one hundred sixty of them dago pigs for heaven's sake let me sell off some, do you want me to go crazy, what ? "

" Sell no pigs," Morgan wired.

Not long after this the president of the express company received a letter from Professor Gordon. It was a long and scholarly letter, but the point was that the guinea-pig was the *Cavia apararaea*, while the common pig was the genus *Sus* of the family *Suidæ*. He remarked that they were prolific and multiplied rapidly.

" They are not pigs," said the president, decidedly, to Morgan. " The twenty-five cent rate applies."

Morgan made the proper notation on the papers that had accumulated in File A6754, and turned them over to the Audit Department. The Audit Department took some time to look the matter up, and after the usual delay wrote Flannery that as he had on hand one hundred and sixty guinea-pigs, the property of consignee, he should deliver them and collect charges at the rate of twenty-five cents each.

Flannery spent a day herding his charges through a narrow opening in their cage so that he might count them.

"Audit Department," he wrote, when he had finished the count, " you are way off there may be was one hundred and sixty dago pigs once, but wake up don't be a back number. I've got even eight hundred, now shall I collect for eight hundred or what ? How about sixty-four dollars I paid out for cabbages ? "

It required a great many letters back and forth before the Audit Department was able to understand why the error had been made of billing one hundred and sixty instead of eight hundred, and still more time for it to get the meaning of the " cabbages."

Flannery was crowded into a few feet at the extreme front of the office. The pigs had all the rest of the room, and two boys were employed constantly attending to them. The day after Flannery had counted the guinea-pigs there were eight more added to his drove, and by the time the Audit Department gave him authority to collect for eight hundred Flannery had given up all attempts to attend to the receipt and the delivery of goods. He was hastily building galleries around the express office, tier above tier. He had four thousand and sixty-four guinea-pigs to care for ! More were arriving daily.

¶

IMMEDIATELY after its authorisation the Audit Department sent another letter, but Flannery was too busy to open it. They wrote another and then they telegraphed :—

" Error in guinea-pig bill. Collect for two guinea-pigs, fifty cents. Deliver all to consignee."

Flannery read the telegram and cheered up. He wrote out a bill as rapidly as his pencil could travel over paper and ran all the way to the Morehouse home. At the gate he stopped suddenly. The house stared at him with vacant eyes. The windows were bare of curtains and he could see into the empty rooms. A sign on the porch said, " To Let." Mr. Morehouse had moved ! Flannery ran all the way back to the express office. Sixty-nine guinea-pigs had been born during his absence. He ran out again and made feverish inquiries in the village. Mr. Morehouse had not only moved, but he had left Westcote. Flannery returned to the express office and found that since he left it two hundred and six guinea-pigs had entered the world. He wrote a telegram to the Audit Department.

" Can't collect fifty cents for two dago pigs consignee has left town address unknown what shall I do ? Flannery."

The telegram was handed to one of the clerks in the Audit Department, and as he read it he laughed.

" Flannery must be crazy. He ought to know that the thing to do is to return the

consignment here," said the clerk. He telegraphed Flannery to send the pigs to the main office of the company at Franklin.

When Flannery received the telegram he set to work. The six boys he had engaged to help him also set to work. They worked with the haste of desperate men, making cages out of soap boxes, cracker boxes, and all kinds of boxes, and as fast as the cages were completed they filled them with guinea-pigs and expressed them to Franklin. Day after day the cages of guinea-pigs flowed in a steady stream from Westcote to Franklin, and still Flannery and his six helpers ripped and nailed and packed. relentlessly and feverishly. At the end of the week they had shipped two hundred and eighty cases of guinea-pigs, and there were in the express office seven hundred and four more pigs than when they began packing them.

" Stop sending pigs. Warehouse full," came a telegram to Flannery. He stopped packing only long enough to wire back, " Can't stop," and kept on sending them. On the next train up from Franklin came one of the Company's inspectors. He had instructions to stop the stream of guinea-pigs at all hazards. As his train drew up at Westcote Station he saw a cattle-car standing on the express company's siding. When he reached the express office he saw the express wagon backed up to the door. Six boys were carrying bushel basketsfull of guinea-pigs from the office and dumping them into the wagon. Inside the room, Flannery with his coat and vest off, was shovelling guinea-pigs into bushel baskets with a coal-scoop. He was winding up the guinea-pig episode.

He looked up at the inspector with a snort of anger.

" Wan wagonload more an' I'll be quit of thim, an' niver will ye catch Flannery wid no more foreign pigs on his hands. No, sur ! They near was the death o' me. Next toime I'll know that pigs of whativer nationality is domestic pets—an' go at the lowest rate."

He began shovelling again rapidly, speaking quickly between breaths.

" Rules may be rules, but you can't fool Mike Flannery twice wid the same thrick—whin ut comes to live stock, dang the rules. So long as Flannery runs this expriss office pigs is pets—an' cows is pets an' horses is pets — an' lions an' tigers an' Rocky Mountain goats is pets—an' the rate on thim is twenty-foive cints."

He paused long enough to let one of the boys put an empty basket in the place of the one he had just filled. There were only a few guinea-pigs left. As he noted their limited number his natural habit of looking on the bright side returned.

" Well, annyhow," he said cheerfully, " 'tis not so bad as ut might be. What if thim dago pigs had been elephants ! "

Love

A New Poem

By HUMBERT WOLFE

LOVE hurts, you say, and there's nothing to do
long nights but to think on the pain, and wait
for the insupportable daylight to
blow on the ash in the cluttered grate
with yesterday's burnt-out sticks and coal
from even staler yesterdays,
with just enough substance to singe the soul
but never enough for a wholesome blaze.
And even so, being bitter cold
you must warm your hands at the niggard flame,
for the body persists with its manifold
insult of life in the spirit's shame.
And therefore love's wrong ? for you would have known
all that life offers, watching, outside,
(with steady eyes and your soul your own)
the world where the rest of us mortified.
You had modelled life, as a sculptor a bust
planning and choosing, with here a touch
and there a change, till you shaped it just
as you meant it to be, with neither too much
of greed for being, nor yet too little
of the common heat that makes us men,
and standing clear would have watched it settle
back, I suppose, into dust again.

For that is the truth of it. Nothing to spend
    means nothing to buy, and since pain is
the current coin of life, in the end
    the only way of living is this
you could have prayed and have never guessed
    how blood can change to fire and gutter
spot by spot through the shaken breast,
    till there's nothing left but the heart's faint stutter.
You could have watched life trickle and fade
    day by day from little to less,
light to shadow, shadow to shade,
    and so, being nothing, to nothingness.
You could have turned aside from love,
    and have only seen what yourself conceived,
but when, growing old, you had seen enough,
    you could not have died, since you had not lived.
And, therefore, though love is never enough,
    but is only a signpost pointing on
beyond itself to the Tyrian stuff,
    that a god or a devil is painted on
in dyes and patterns we cannot guess,
    because we, like love, are the shadow cast
of that unbelievable loveliness;
    yet nevertheless it is true at last
however bitter, however love falter
    between the unknowable and the grave,
we are what we are, and we shall not alter,
    and love is the only thing that we have.

The Garden-Party

And how Life mingles joy and sorrow

By KATHERINE MANSFIELD

AND after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

"Where do you want the marquee put, mother?"

"My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest."

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast, and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

"You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one."

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors, and besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas, and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it, and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

"Good morning," she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, "Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?"

"That's right, miss," said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. "That's about it."

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small, but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling too. "Cheer up, we won't bite," their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

"Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?"

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his under-lip, and the tall fellow frowned.

"I don't fancy it," said he. "Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee," and he turned to Laura in his easy way, "you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me."

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

"A corner of the tennis-court," she suggested. "But the band's going to be in one corner."

"H'm, going to have a band, are you?" said another of the workmen. He was pale.

He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

"Only a very small band," said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

"Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine."

Against the karakas. Then the karaka-trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing. Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom. . . . And now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Soneone whistled, someone sang out, "Are you right there, matey?" "Matey!" The friendliness of it, the—the—— Just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

"Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!" a voice cried from the house.

"Coming!" Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda, and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

"I say, Laura," said Laurie very fast, "you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing."

"I will," said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. "Oh, I do love parties, don't you?" gasped Laura.

"Ra-ther," said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too, and gave her a gentle push. "Dash off to the telephone, old girl."

The telephone. "Yes, yes; oh yes. Kitty? Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother's calling." And Laura sat back. "What, mother? Can't hear."

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. "Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday."

"Mother says you're to wear that *sweet* hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye."

¶

LAURA put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head, took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. "Huh," she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long, chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed, and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on

the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, "I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan."

"What is it, Sadie?" Laura came into the hall.

"It's the florist, Miss Laura."

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

"O-oh, Sadie!" said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

"It's some mistake," she said faintly. "Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother."

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

"It's quite right," she said calmly. "Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?" She pressed Laura's arm. "I was passing the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse."

"But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere," said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

"My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man."

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

"Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please," said Mrs. Sheridan. "Don't you agree, Laura?"

"Oh, I *do*, mother."

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

"Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?"

"Quite."

"Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room, and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and—one moment Hans——" Jose loved giving orders to the servants, and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. "Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once."

"Very good, Miss Jose."

She turned to Meg. "I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over 'This Life is Weary.'"

Pom! Ta-ta-ta *Tee*-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

This Life is *Wee*-ary,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan*-ges,
This Life is *Wee*-ary,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan*-ges,
And then . . . Good-bye!

But at the word "Good-bye," and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

"Aren't I in good voice, mummy?" she beamed.

This Life is *Wee*-ary,
Hope comes to Die.
A Dream—a *Wa*-kening.

But now Sadie interrupted them. "What is it, Sadie?"

"If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?"

"The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?" echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. "Let me see." And she said to Sadie firmly, "Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes."

Sadie went.

"Now, Laura," said her mother quickly, "come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning."

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

"One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream-cheese and lemon-curd. Have you done that?"

"Yes."

"Egg and——" Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. "It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?"

" Olive, pet," said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

" Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive."

¶

THEY were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

" I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches," said Jose's rapturous voice. " How many kinds did you say there were, cook ? Fifteen ? "

" Fifteen, Miss Jose."

" Well, cook, I congratulate you,"

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

" Godber's has come," announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

" Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl," ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course, Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

" Don't they carry one back to all one's parties ? " said Laura.

" I suppose they do," said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. " They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say."

" Have one each, my dears," said cook in her comfortable voice. " Yer ma won't know."

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

" Let's go into the garden, out by the back way," suggested Laura. " I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee They're such awfully nice men."

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans.

Something had happened.

" Tuk-tuk-tuk," clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself ; it was his story.

" What's the matter ? What's happened?"

" There's been a horrible accident," said cook. " A man killed."

" A man killed ! Where ? How ? When ? " . .

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

" Know those little cottages just below here, miss ? " Know them ? Of course, she knew them. " Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction-engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed."

" Dead ! " Laura stared at Godber's man.

" Dead when they picked him up," said Godber's man with relish. " They were taking the body home as I come up here." And he said to the cook, " He's left a wife and five little ones."

" Jose, come here." Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. " Jose ! " she said, horrified, " however are we going to stop everything ?"

" Stop everything, Laura ! " cried Jose in astonishment. " What do you mean ? "

" Stop the garden-party, of course." Why did Jose pretend ?

But Jose was still more amazed. " Stop the garden-party. My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant."

" But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate."

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore, and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys.

Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps, and a cobbler, and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up, Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere ; one must see everything. So through they went.

" And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman," said Laura.

" Oh, Laura ! " Jose began to be seriously annoyed. " If you're going to stop a band playing every time someone has an accident, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic." Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. " You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental," she said softly.

" Drunk ! Who said he was drunk ? " Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said just as they had used to say on those occasions, " I'm going straight up to tell mother."

" Do, dear," cooed Jose.

" Mother, can I come into your room ? " Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

" Of course, child. Why, what's the matter ? What's given you such a colour ? " And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing-table. She was trying on a new hat.

" Mother, a man's been killed," began Laura.

" *Not* in the garden ? " interrupted her mother.

" No, no ! "

" Oh what a fright you gave me ! " Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief, and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

" But listen, mother," said Laura. Breathless, half-choking, she told the dreadful story. " Of course, we can't have our party, can we ? " she pleaded. " The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours ! "

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose ; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

" But, my dear child, use your commonsense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If someone had died there normally—and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn't we ? "

Laura had to say " yes " to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

" Mother, isn't it really terribly heartless of us ? " she asked.

" Darling ! " Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. " My child ! " said her mother, " the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself ! " And she held up her hand-mirror.

" But, mother," Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself ; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done.

" You are being very absurd, Laura," she said coldly. " People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now."

" I don't understand," said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies, and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right ? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant ? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children, and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan. . . .

¶

LUNCH was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

" My dear ! " trilled Kitty Maitland, " aren't they too like frogs for words ? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf."

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted to tell

him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

" Laurie ! "

" Hallo ! " He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. " My word, Laura ! You do look stunning," said Laurie. " What an absolutely topping hat ! "

Laura said faintly " Is it ? " and smiled up at Laurie, and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up ; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridan's garden for this one afternoon, on their way to—where ? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

" Darling Laura, how well you look ! "

" What a becoming hat, child ! "

" Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking."

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, " Have you had tea ? Won't you have an ice ? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special." She ran to her father and begged him. " Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink ? "

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

" Never a more delightful garden-party . . ." " The greatest success . . ." " Quite the most . . ."

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

" All over, all over, thank heaven," said Mrs. Sheridan. " Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties ! Why will you children insist on giving parties ! " And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

" Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag."

" Thanks." Mr. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. " I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day ? " he said.

" My dear," said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, " we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off."

" Oh, mother ! " Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

" It was a horrible affair all the same," said Mr. Sheridan. " The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane and leaves a wife and half-a-dozen kiddies, so they say."

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father . . .

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

" I know," she said. " Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree ? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared. Laura ! " She jumped up. " Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard."

" But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea ? " said Laura.

Again, how curious, she seemed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that ?

" Of course ! What's the matter with you to-day ? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic, and now——"

Oh well ! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was heaped by her mother.

" Take it yourself, darling," said she. " Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies."

" The stems will ruin her lace frock," said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. " Only the basket, then, And, Laura ! "—her mother followed her out of the marquee—" don't on any account——"

" What mother ? "

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head ! " Nothing ! Run along."

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she ? She stopped a minute.

And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, "Yes, it was the most successful party."

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was as though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

¶

LAURA was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, "Is this Mrs. Scott's house?" and the woman, smiling queerly, said, "It is, my lass."

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, "Help me, God," as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, "Are you Mrs. Scott?" But to her horror the woman answered, "Walk in, please, miss," and she was shut in the passage.

"No," said Laura, "I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent——"

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. "Step this way, please, miss," she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

"Em," said the little creature who had let her in. "Em! It's a young lady." She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, "I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?"

"Oh, but of course!" said Laura. "Please, please don't disturb her. I—I only want to leave——"

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her face, puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

"All right, my dear," said the other. "I'll thenk the young lady."

And again she began, "You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure," and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

"You'd like a look at 'im, wouldn't you?" said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. "Don't be afraid, my lass"—and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly she drew down the sheet—"'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear."

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh, so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy . . . happy . . . All is well, said the sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying

something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

" Forgive my hat," she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her way out of the door, down the path, past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. " Is that you, Laura ? "

" Yes."

" Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right ? "

" Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie ! " She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

" I say, you're not crying, are you ? " asked her brother.

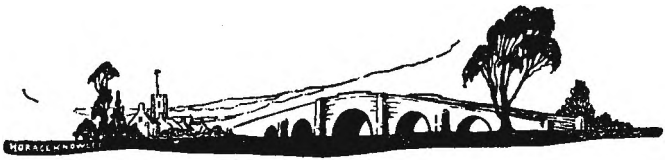
Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder.

" Don't cry," he said in his warm, loving voice. " Was it awful ? "

" No," sobbed Laura. " It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie——" She stopped, she looked at her brother. " Isn't life," she stammered, " isn't life——" But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

" *Isn't* it, darling ? " said Laurie.



To Lucasta, going beyond the Seas

IF to be absent were to be
Away from thee ;
Or that when I am gone
You or I were alone :
Then, my Lucasta, might I crave
Pity from blustering wind or swallowing wave.

But I'll not sigh one blast or gale
To swell my sail,
Or pay a tear to 'suage
The foaming blue god's rage ;
For whether he will let me pass
Or no, I'm still as happy as I was.

Though seas and land betwixt us both,
Our faith and troth,
Like separated souls,
All time and space controls :
Above the highest sphere we meet
Unseen, unknown ; and greet as Angels greet.

So then we do anticipate
Our after-fate,
And are alive i' the skies,
If thus our lips and eyes
Can speak like spirits unconfined
In Heaven, their earthy bodies left behind.

RICHARD LOVELACE.

Oysters

Machinery—A Dainty Morsel

IF the conversation which takes place at dinner tables, especially in that incipient stage of content which follows upon the bad quarter of an hour of waiting, is a fair test of the public interest in any topic, I imagine that the great oyster question may be said to be that about which the general mind is most exercised. It is a matter which concerns me personally because, since it is known that I hold the office of Inspector of Fisheries, I am almost sure to be attacked, before I have had time to squeeze my lemon, with inquiries why oysters are so dear, and why I do not do something to make them cheaper, just as if I were the minister for molluscous affairs and responsible for their going wrong. . . .

I suppose that when the sapid and slippery morsel—which is and is gone, like a flash of quotatory summer lightning—glides along the palate, few people imagine that they are swallowing a piece of machinery (and going machinery, too) greatly more complicated than a watch. But so it is ; the oyster possesses representatives of all the most important organs of the higher animals, and is endowed with corresponding functions. The " loves of the oyster " may be mythical, and we may even be sceptical as to its parental tenderness ; but no parent can take greater care of its young. And though the oyster seems the type of dull animal vegetation in its adult condition, it passes through a vagabond, if not a stormy youth, between the time in which it is sheltered by the parental roof, and that in which it " ranges itself " as a grave and sedentary member of the oyster community.

Thomas Henry Huxley.

A Roman Banquet

THE Major-Domo (*at Cæsar's elbow*) *:* What shall we serve to whet Cæsar's appetite ?

Cæsar : What have you got ?

The Major-Domo : Sea hedgehogs, black and white sea-acorns, sea nettles, becca ficoes, purple shell-fish——

Cæsar : Any oysters ?

The Major-Domo : Assuredly.

Cæsar : British oysters ?

The Major-Domo (*assenting*) *:* British oysters, Cæsar.

Cæsar : Oysters, then. (*The Major-Domo signs to a slave at each order, and the slave goes out to execute it.*) I have been in Britain—that Western land of romance—the last piece of earth on the edge of the ocean that surrounds the world. I went there in search of its famous pearls. The British pearl was a fable, but in searching for it I found the British oyster.

Appolodorus : All posterity will bless you for it. G. Bernard Shaw.

A Quaint Recipe

LORD MASHAM made me go home with him to-night to eat boiled oysters. Take oysters, wash them clean ; that is, wash their shells clean ; then put your oysters in an earthen pot, with their hollow sides down, then put this pot covered into a great kettle with water and so let them boil. Your oysters are boiled in their own liquor, and not mixed with water. Jonathan Swift.

"The Whistling Native"

THE Whistling Oyster is now in the possession of Mr. Pearkes, of Vinegar Yard, opposite the gallery door of Drury Lane Theatre; and was discovered by him on Tuesday week. . . . He saw and heard an oyster, with open shells, whistling—"My native land!"

Mr. Pearkes and Jane were both so astounded that neither could seize the oyster which, startled, shut its mouth; and, so much were Mr. Pearkes and Jane perplexed, that the musical oyster, lying among a heap of others, could not be distinguished from the oysters that were dumb, every one of which was taken up and whistled to by Mr. Pearkes and Jane, in the vain hope of bringing out its voice. At last Mr. Pearkes resolved next night to set a trap for the oyster. He did so in the following manner.

He placed a tin oyster-scollop, half-filled with bread-crumbs, with salt, pepper and a bit of butter, near the oysters, and, putting out the lights, retired to watch in his back parlour. At three in the morning the whistling commenced; and the astonishment of Mr. Pearkes may, as in all such cases, be more easily conceived than described, when we inform our readers that Mr. Pearkes saw the oyster walk from its companions to the counter, towards the tin scollop, and heard it begin to whistle. Mr. Pearkes immediately rushed from his hiding-place and secured the musician. The oyster has since become extremely tame, and whistles various tunes—"In the deep, deep sea"—"It is our opening day"—and some of Dibdin's nautical airs.

Douglas Jerrold.

Song of the Oyster-Opener

SUMMER'S throbbing chant is done,
Mute the choral antiphon.
Sing, my little bivalves gay,
Welcome to this glorious day!

See the bright and gleaming blade,
Emblem of my splendid trade,
What a luscious tale it tells
As it whizzes 'twixt the shells.

Oysters, let us merry be,
Sing the chorus now with me.
Dance, my little bivalves gay,
Dance and sing this roundelay.

Hail! bren-butter, brown and thin!
Let the season now begin,
Hail, cayenne and vineGAR,
Welcome, glorious letter "R"!

F. W. Thomas.

The Precious Pearl

MANY a precious stone lies neglected upon the ground, but nevertheless continues to be a precious stone. The pearl oyster is rough and unsightly on the outside, but beautiful and bright within, and precious for what it contains. Even so pious servants are often humble and despised, in the world's eyes, but great in God's.

Christian Scriver.

An Oyster's Grief

HIS speech was graceful and well-worded and enormously long; and it was all about an oyster. He passionately protested against the suggestion of some humanitarians, who were vegetarians in other respects, but maintained that organisms so simple might fairly be counted as exceptions. Man, he said, even at his miserable best, was always trying to excommunicate some one citizen of the cosmos, to forget some one creature that he should remember. Now, it seemed that creature was the oyster. He gave a long account of the tragedy of the oyster, a really imaginative and picturesque account; full of fantastic fishes, and coral crags and crawling and climbing; and bearded creatures streaking the seashore; and the green darkness in the cellars of the sea.

"What a horrid irony it is," he cried, "that this is the only one of the lower creatures whom we call a Native! We speak of him, and of him alone, as if he were a native of the country. Whereas, indeed, he is an exile in the universe. What can be conceived more pitiful than the eternal frenzy of the impotent amphibian? What is more terrible than the tear of an oyster? Nature herself has sealed it with the hard seal of eternity. The creature man forgets bears against him a testimony that cannot be forgotten. For the tears of widows and of captives are wiped away at last like the tears of children. They vanish like the mists of morning or the small pools after a flood. But the tear of the oyster is a pearl.

G. K. Chesterton.

Curious Links

BY what curious links, and fantastical relations, are mankind connected together! At the distance of half the globe, a Hindoo gains his support by groping at the bottom of the sea for the morbid concretion of a shell-fish, to decorate the throat of a London alderman's wife. It is said that the great Linnæus had discovered the secret of infecting oysters with this perligenous disease; what is become of the secret we do not know, as the only interest we take in oysters is of a much more vulgar, though perhaps a more humane nature. Sydney Smith.

Three A Penny

"OYSTERS are capital this season, I mean as to quality, but they're not a good sale. I made £3 a week in oysters, not reckoning anything else, eighteen or twenty years back. It was easy to make money then; like putting down one sovereign and taking two up. I sold oysters then often enough at one penny apiece. Now I sell far finer at three a penny and five for twopence. People can't spend money in shell-fish when they haven't got any. They say that fortune knocks once at every man's door. I wish I'd opened my door when he knocked at it." . . .

The number of oysters sold by the costermongers amounts to 124,000,000 a year. These at four a penny, would realise the large sum of £129,650. We may therefore safely assume that £125,000 is spent yearly in oysters in the streets of London. Henry Mayhew (1851).

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Success

Say not the struggle naught availeth

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

HIS oilskins glistening with nodules of water, the tall quartermaster entered the captain's cabin in response to a sleepy " Hallo ! "

The captain sat up in his bunk, a broad low bunk against the port bulkhead and immediately underneath a big round port. He snorted, rubbed his eyes, ruffled his short-clipped white beard with the palm of his hand, and peered through the dim light from the overhead electric globes. " Eh ? " he mumbled.

The quartermaster said : " Fog, sir." Then he added : " Sea's dropped considerable, sir."

" Is that so ? " grunted the captain. Then he hopped out of his bunk, flinging back the warm blankets. He groped for his trousers. " Just a minute, Quartermaster," he called, as the oil-skinned man allowed the door to swing open and started to back out.

" Give me a cigar from that box on my desk." Then, louder, as he straightened up and pulled his trousers on : " Happen to have a match about you ? Seems I can never find a blasted light on this ship."

" Match, sir ? " murmured the quartermaster. He stepped forward and took a cigar from the half-empty box on the desk. He unbuttoned his oilskin coat and fumbled in his jacket pockets. Eventually he found a match. He inspected it from under the dripping brim of his sou'wester to see if it had a head on it. Then he took it across to the bunk along with the cigar.

" That'll do," said the captain as he puffed the cigar to a glow and flung the burnt-out match away. "And close that blinking door when you go. The fog's like ice."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Stolidly the quartermaster went from the cabin and closed the door softly behind him, muffling at once the sighing lap of the restless sea against the *Carroway's* hull and the mate's voice shouting some order from the bridge.

There was a stale smell in the cabin. Cigar smoke and whisky fumes from the previous night still hung about. There was also a faint odour of oilskins, not from those the quartermaster had worn, but from a long coat that hung on a peg at the head of the bunk, and was so new as to be still somewhat sticky.

In the centre of the cabin, against the for'ard bulkhead, stood the captain's heavy mahogany desk, a flat-topped affair with many drawers. The inkwell on the desk was made of a small skull painted red. Many similar objects about the room indicated the presence of a man not at all superstitious, a man unafraid of death.

A strange whirring came from the big-faced clock over the desk. Then a tiny hammer beneath the clock lifted and fell four times on a tiny bell. The sound was like glass tinkling. Almost immediately afterwards the sound of the clock in the chart-house could be heard. Then the deep-toned ship's bell over the helmsman's head, on the bridge above, took up the tale. The notes reverberated, muffled, through the encircling white.

The captain slipped his braces over his shoulders, finished tucking in his shirt.

" Six, eh ? " he mumbled out of lips closed tight over his smouldering cigar. "And still dark. Damn ! "

He shuffled back to his bunk, a little wisp of a man with blue eyes as bright as a bird's. His face was dusky red, still unlined despite his white hair and his age. He moved spryly as he finished dressing.

A thought struck him when he was ready. He hopped briskly into the bathroom, wetted a towel, and wiped out his eyes. Also he wiped his beard and moustache, not taking the trouble to remove his cigar. His hands he dipped into water and then hastily dried them. He pulled on thick wool gloves before leaving the bathroom and making for the cabin door.

When he opened it a waft of fog drifted

in on him, and he coughed gruffly. " Brrrrrrr ! " he said, and thrust his hands into the pockets of his oilskins, pockets he had specially made, for few oilskins had them

Slamming the door behind him, he made his way up the steep companion to the navigation bridge. He trotted across to the binnacle. He peered into the glowing compass bowl. Then he turned to the sailor who was steering, a giant Norwegian, stolid-faced, big-boned, ceaselessly chewing Copenhagen snuff. " You're off your course, man," he snarled. The Norwegian grunted, dropped his eyes to the compass, moved the wheel a spoke or two, and took no further notice.

The captain trotted to where the mate stood at the tight-hauled dodger, looking for'ard into the whiteness and listening anxiously to the bleating hand horns that came from the fog all around.

He turned as the other approached. " Pretty thick, sir," he said. " Came down about half an hour back."

" Is that so ? " responded the captain in an aggrieved tone. " Happen to have a match about you ? Seems I can never find——"

The mate held out a box. " Here you are, sir." Then impatiently, worried : " Hear that liner snorting away ? "

Above the bleating hand horns from small fishing schooners came the coughing bellow of a deep-sea ship, a monster by the sound. The captain grunted as he removed one glove, lit his cigar, and handed the match-box back. " Good matches," he said.

The mate stared away into the murk, all the more obscure because dawn had not yet come.

He was a young man. It was his first voyage as mate. He was inclined to fret unduly. " I've got a lookout on the fo'c's'le head, one in the crow's-nest, and one here on the bridge," he said. He pointed to where the tall quartermaster, who had aroused the captain, stood in the glass-windowed starboard wing of the bridge and stared out on the beam.

The captain squinted at the telegraph near him. It was at Half Speed. He grunted. Then he trotted to the brass standard and rang for Slow. The engine's pulse dropped a tone or two. The *Carroway* barely drifted along the glassy, sighing sea.

" That liner," the captain grunted. " Too damned near. Probably making twenty knots. Never slow down. I know. Carried mails m'self once. Rules says slow down in fog. Owners says get mail in on time or get fired. I know."

The mate, who had caught part of it, said : " Yes, sir," still more moodily. He had started as a fourth officer on a mail liner himself. He wondered what the fishermen of the fleet of tiny ships around the *Carroway* were thinking about. Probably uneasily waiting for the great steel bow to tower above them and cut them down. Liners always ploughed along full-speed regardless.

The captain shouted suddenly : " Hard astarboard ! " He jammed the telegraph Full Astern. One hand he kept in his pocket. His lips still chewed his cigar.

¶

OUT of the fog and dark for'ard came a rending blare of the liner's siren. Her lights gleamed mistily. The wash of her keen prow could be heard, muffled. The loom of her was great, awesome. The *Carroway's* siren shrilled and coughed, warning, spasmodically, as the mate hung on the lanyard.

There was a confused shouting. The man in the crow's-nest screamed. He had been on the *Titanic*, and anything approaching a collision unnerved him. The man on the fo'c'sle head shouted : "Ahead ! Ahead, sir ! Ship dead ahead ! " The quartermaster in the wing bridge faced inboard.

" We get it," he observed calmly.

The helmsman tore the wheel round with nervous haste. The mate screamed for all hands on deck. Slowly the *Carroway* answered her helm and began to swing clear.

But the liner's speed was too great. The wash from her started the *Carroway* rolling. Her wall-like sides grazed 'midships. Her prow cut into the *Carroway's* stern, and the *Carroway* shuddered from keelson to truck, so that she heeled far over on her beam. On the liner's great white bridge, so far above the *Carroway's* bridge, several great-coated officers looked down, white-faced. They shouted, waved. A shrill whistle cut the fog.

" Sorry ! . . . We'll pick you up ! " shouted one of them. The liner was gone, shooting into the fog. The sea boiled about her. Only her chaotic milky wake was left. A great jangling of bells came muffled from where she had disappeared. Then the

fog swirled into the passage she had made, and even the jangling was shut off.

The second and third mates, aroused from their bunks by the shock, came running half-dressed to the bridge as the *Carroway* settled sloshingly back on an even keel.

" Keep the siren going, mister," said the captain calmly to the white-faced mate. Then he turned to the other officers. To the second mate he said : " Go aft and look at the damage." To the third mate : " Get the boats swung outboard."

Both officers raced away, conversing jerkily with each other.

The *Carroway* was wallowing heavily at the stern already. The captain put the telegraph to Stop, and then to Slow Ahead. There was no answering jangle. The ship drifted. The engine pulse had gone. A whistle came from the brass speaking-tube to the engine-room. The captain hurried across to it. Came the voice of the second engineer : " May Ah ask what th' de'il's wrang oop on deck ? "

The captain mumbled : "Ah, McDee, collision. Give me a few turns of the screw."

" We hae nane," came the second's impersonal voice. "Ah'm bringing ma' men on deck. We'll keep steam up for th' winches and siren."

The captain said mildly : " Is that so ? " He plugged the tube and grunted. He beckoned the carpenter, who had just come up the companion with his sounding-rod and line in his hand.

"Ah, Chips, I see you're on the job. Sound the well. . . . And, by the way, happen to have a match about you ? Seems I can never find a blasted light on this ship. Thanks. Take a boy with you an' send him back to report."

The helmsman called to the captain : " She's not answering." He twirled the useless wheel spokes contemptuously and spat tobacco juice aside. The quartermaster, who had been in the bridge wing, crossed over and tried the wheel. Then he nodded. " That's so," he said. The captain rubbed his beard and removed his cigar long enough to spit.

" Run along and help the third mate with the boats," he said. The wireless operator came up. So loud was the siren's roar, now it had unlimited steam, that the operator had to shout to make himself heard. " What position shall I send out ? S.O.S. with it, I suppose, sir ? "

The mate broke in excitedly : " Oh, I don't think it matters. That liner that run us down ought to be back any minute."

The captain grunted : " Is that so ? She'll never find us in this fog. Went out of earshot 'fore she could stop. Wish I knew her name. I'd report her. Send out S.O.S., operator. The mate here'll give you our position by dead reckoning. We must be somewhere near Cape Race ; that's all I know. . . . By the way, happen to have a match about you ? No ? All right."

" Here you are, sir," said the mate, his hand trembling a little as he handed over his box. He was not exactly afraid, but it was his first experience of collision, and excitement was thrilling him. The second mate ran up the companion.

" Rudder, chunk of poop, screw, and some after-railing gone," he said.

The captain nodded as he puffed his cigar to a new glow. " Thought as much. Help get the boats out. Lower 'em to rail level. . . . What's that noise ? "

The mate and the second ran to the dodger and peered over.

The second mate went back to the captain, who was standing idly by the useless wheel and apparently thinking.

" Firemen, sailors, and some passengers, sir," he said. " Lost their heads. Rushing the boats "

The captain observed, waking with a start : " Is that so ? . . . Rushing for the boats ? Worst of carrying squareheads. Get your gun and go to the third mate. . . . Mr. Larson ! " he called, as the second mate disappeared in the murk. The mate swung from the dodger and came to his captain.

" My God, they're rushing the boats, sir," he stammered. The captain touched his arm gently.

" Calm, Mr. Larson, calm. . . . That's better. You'll get used to this stuff if you sail the Western Ocean for long. Don't get excited. . . . Rushing the boats ? I know. Get your gun in case of trouble. Take a couple of men aft, if you can find any. See if the sounding machine's still there. If so, take a cast."

With a gulp the mate left, and the captain ruffled his beard and swore. He peered up at the black sky, or where the sky would have been but for the fog, and noticed a strange greyness permeating all things. The dawn was near.

The boy the carpenter had taken with him came on the bridge to report. " Carpenter

says ten feet in the afterhold, sir," he piped. " No. 4 hold's pretty dry. The chief engineer told me to say he's shut the bulkhead doors between four and five holds, sir."

"All right. Run along," commented the captain. He added, hastily : " Boy, happen to have a match about you ? No ? All right." The boy darted away, back to the carpenter. The captain snorted and went into the chart-room to see if he could find a light. In the grip of the fierce coast currents, blinded by the fog, the ship drifted.

¶

THE few saloon passengers the *Carroway* carried, half a dozen women, a dozen men, and some children, huddled on the boat deck near the warmth of the fat smokestack and watched with fear-widened, sleep-clogged eyes as the third mate and a handful of seamen hoisted out the boats that rested in their chocks on the fiddley.

The *Carroway* began to take a decided slant as her afterhold filled. Her bulkheads were standing the strain, and there was no immediate danger. But the foreign, commoner seamen and the few steerage passengers only knew that S.O.S. was being sent out, and they were afraid.

Coal-blackened firemen, excited sailors, bearded labourers—like a torrent they poured up the iron monkey ladders from the main deck to the fiddley. Mouthing, growling, uttering half-inarticulate cries, they surged forward. The third mate and his men were swept fighting back from the boat they already had clear of the chocks. The boat rapidly filled. Five or six men remained on the deck to lower away.

The second mate came. He gestured the bleeding third mate and his men, and led them to the attack anew. The panic-stricken seamen, fumbling with the boat falls, were torn away. Angrily, men leaped back from the boat to rescue their comrades. Another free-for-all fight raged over the fiddley top. A few of the male saloon passengers joined half-heartedly with the officers. The fog lightened as the dawn rose.

The noise, sounding even above the blaring siren, attracted the captain. Mumbling to himself, he went down the bridge companion and entered his cabin. From a drawer in his desk he took an old ugly Colt's revolver. It was a long-barrelled thing, dull-steeled. He loaded it carefully, slipped some extra cartridges in the pockets of his oilskin coat. Then he went down to the main deck.

He walked along till he came to the break of the fiddley. He shinned hand over hand up the spider ladder. Trotting to the scene of conflict, he dragged a burly, garlic-breathing Austrian from the outskirts and swatted him across the temple with his revolver barrel. The man went down and out, and stayed there. Another man the captain seized and treated similarly.

" Quit ! " he snarled to the chaos of struggling bodies, arms, legs, and curses. He fought a way to the second mate's side.

" Guns," he said Then he fired in the air. As though a shock had run through the seamen they ceased struggling and looked to see what was happening. They drew back, eyeing the menacing Colt's muzzle with wide eyes. The second mate's gun covered them, too. Fear they had of the sea, but that death at least was more remote. A bull-necked Frenchman did not think so. He rushed to the half-empty boat and reached for the gunnel. The captain's revolver coughed once more. The Frenchman's right leg bent under him suddenly, as though struck with an iron bar. He rolled to the deck and groaned. Had he not caught a loose gripe lanyard with spasmodic fingers he would have gone overboard.

The fight was over. Those still in the boat crawled sullenly out. The mutinous men slunk away. The third mate gathered together his sailors and went on with his work. The second mate pocketed the revolver and grinned.

" Scum, sir," he said.

The captain grunted : " Is that so ? " Then, irritably : " Happen to have a match about you ? I never seem to be able to get—— Ah, thanks. Stay here with the third mate."

He moved away to where the saloon passengers stood, tucking his big gun in his pocket, butt first. Ruffling his gaudy wet feathers, the ship's mascot and the captain's pet, a small parrot, was perched on the top of a lifebelt box.

" Pretty Polly," chuckled the captain, stopping and tickling the bird's poll.

"Awk ! " the parrot said indignantly. " Is that so ? "

The captain chuckled again and turned to the passengers. " I'd get below," he said mildly, growing serious. " Rather cold up here."

" But—but the danger ? " shrilled a

woman with a thin face and bony bare arms, wrapping a plaid shawl closer about her.

The captain shrugged. "None. The bulkheads are holding all right. We'll have another ship along here in an hour or two. Go along below. I'll call you if anything's liable to happen."

He ushered them down the monkey ladder as he would have ushered a flock of obstinate sheep, with waving arms and a succession of soft clucks.

Following the passengers down to the main deck he ran across the harassed saloon steward and talked to him severely for allowing his charges to get panic-stricken enough to leave their rooms. Protesting, the steward was waved away. The captain went back to the bridge.

¶

THE wireless operator came to him, his young face haggard. "Can't get any answer, sir," he said despairingly. "It must be this fog. It does sometimes block signals. I can't get in touch with a single ship or a land station. What shall we do? I'm sorry, sir."

"Do? Say, do you happen to have a match about you?" The captain removed his glove. . . . "Do? Why, you can't do a damned thing if your instrument's out of gear. Don't take it to heart. . . . Match? Yes. Thanks! Damn this cigar! Run along and keep trying, m'boy."

"Thank you, sir." The operator went away with a lighter heart. The mate came on the bridge, wet with perspiration.

"Had a devil of a job, sir," he said. "Most of the poop's smashed up. The sounding machine wasn't damaged too much and I found it workable. But the fair lead was gone, and the cant of the deck makes it impossible to take a sounding from where the machine is. I've got the bos'n aft now with a man and some spanners getting the machine loose. I think I'll set it up 'midships somewhere and run the wire through a block on the end of a boom."

"Might work," grunted the captain, ruffling his beard with the palm of his ungloved hand. He pulled on the glove as he spoke again. "This current must be settin' us down on the coast, Larson. While the bos'n's busy on the machine you might see the lifebelt boxes are unlocked. Cut the rafts adrift, too. Send me a man up here to run messages."

"Aye, aye, sir." The mate turned away, wiping his brow and feeling easier in his mind. The captain was like a douche of cold water. He stiffened a man. He was as carelessly impersonal as if the *Carroway* was just steaming into harbour on a fine day with all clear ahead.

An able seaman came on the bridge some few minutes after the mate had gone. He reported for duty. "Happen to have a match about you?" the captain inquired. The man had. The captain lit a fresh cigar and puffed away. After a moment or two he forgot to puff, as he always forgot, and fell to chewing with his lips.

Through the fog a dull moaning noise became apparent. Dimly on the port bow, through the lightening fog, a thin line of white appeared. A man shouted from the foredeck. The line of white broadened and spread ahead. The cry was taken up by the men on the fiddley. Knowing that helm and screw were gone, knowing the *Carroway* was helpless, each man still, in this emergency, appealed to the little grey-bearded figure on the bridge with a cigar sagging from one corner of his mouth and his hugely gloved hand rubbing at his chin. It was recognition of the leader, the appeal to the highest, just as all men appeal to God in time of mental stress.

"Breakers! Breakers on your port bow, sir!"

"Ahead, sir! Breakers ahead!"

"Gott im Himmel! To der boats! . . ."

"Man overboard!" came the second mate's shout above the mingled cries as a man lost his footing and slid overside from the fiddley deck, slippery with continuous spray. "Shall we lower a boat, sir?"

Energetically the captain ruffled his beard. "Never seem to be able to find a blasted light on this ship," he murmured, as he became aware his cigar had gone out again. He shouted aloud: "No!" Then he added: "Women and children first, mister, if it comes to that."

The *Carroway* struck on the port beam, broadside on. She shivered back from a shingle bank and then struck again. Her keel rasped. A sea smote her on the starboard side, her weather side, and canted her over. Sprays showered across the deck. With a despairing cry another seaman lost his foothold and his grip on a funnel stay and went overside. The passengers surged on deck from below again, more frightened than before. Women screamed.

As though drawn by a great vacuum cleaner, the fog trickled away, rolled back to seaward and left the *Carroway* naked to the rising sea and the shingly coast.

Another swell canted the ship, and this time she stayed canted, her stern deeply aground, her bows still raised a little but also touching bottom. She moved up and down uneasily.

The captain very calmly took in the shore line as he wiped spray from his eyes and chewed his cigar.

The coast was low and hilly. A broad shingle beach ran from the cliffs to the sea. High surf broke where shingle and water met. The *Carroway* had grounded some three hundred yards from the shallows.

¶

BOAT falls shrieked as they were let go in haste. The second and third mates' profane voices came to the captain. A boat smacked into the water on the side facing the shore where the water was smooth in the sheltered lee. It was loaded to the gunnel with seamen and steerage passengers.

Oars came out, in ones and twos, all lengths, and in different attitudes. Plain it was that few knew how to handle a boat. The falls were unhooked. Bloody-mouthed, bruised of face, the two young mates stood on the edge of the fiddley deck and shook their fists. The second mate raised his revolver and took one shot. The bullet skimmed right over the boat after striking the water.

" That'll do," called the captain mildly. The second mate looked up to the bridge, swore, nodded, said " Yes, sir,"and pocketed his revolver. Then with the third mate he moved along to another boat, a woman carrying a baby plucking at his arm and imploring him to save her child.

The boat carrying the mutineers rode low in the water with its excessive weight. Its oars splashed erratically. But it had fairly smooth sailing for a few yards. Then it got from under the protection of the slanting *Carroway's* hull and into the first of the surf.

It was tossed skyward, earthward, sideways. It was twisted. It was tortured. Shouts came against the rising wind. Confusion reigned in the boat as the angry surf smashed the oar butts against the rowers' chests. Finally, there drifted ashore an upturned boat. A few heads dotted the surf for a while. They disappeared. That was all. The passengers left on the *Carroway* shuddered and broke the silence they had kept while watching. They raised their eyes to the bridge and whispered to each other : " See what the captain does."

It was plain no boat would live in the surf. It was also plain the *Carroway* was dangerous. Already every other sea swept her. Shallow water cascaded across the fiddley. The cook had long since deserted his galley, the last seaman the fo'c's'le. The engine-room was filling with water, deserted. The fires had been drawn. The siren would cease to bellow when the last of the steam came. Already it was weakening.

The mate mounted to the bridge. He had ceased bothering over the sounding machine. The water depth was now apparent.

" I see there's someone moving about ashore, sir," he said hopefully, quite over his excitement.

The captain looked up at the sky, now peering blue with the dawn through the last shreds of the fog. He looked to seaward, where the fog was still unpierceable. He looked for'ard and aft where the seas were breaking monotonously over the *Carroway's* main deck. He sighed. " Is that so ? " he said. Then : " Damn that liner."

" Shall we signal, sir ? " asked the mate. " See those men moving about ? Coast-guards. I guess they'll rig a breeches buoy."

The captain responded again mildly : " Is that so ? " Again he looked around. Then, stepping to the glass-box, he secured a pair of binoculars. He focussed them on the beach.

" Yes," he said at last, " they'll rig a breeches buoy. That's the coastguards. I see they've a rocket apparatus there. Tell the men to stand by and grab the line when it comes shooting across. . . . If we don't get off this ship in half an hour we needn't bother."

" Do you think so, sir ? Do you really think so ? "

The mate grew nervous again. The captain grunted.

" Sure. . . . Happen to have a match about you ? Thanks. . . . Remember your signals for receiving rockets ? "

The mate gulped. " I think so, sir."

" Run along, then."

The mate went down the companion and passed along, warning his men and the chief engineer's men to look out for the rocket

line. The able seaman on the bridge hoisted a string of flags to the triatic stay halyards under the captain's directions. Then he was sent down to help the rest look out for the rocket line. Full daylight came at last.

Against the wind came a faint dull boom. A man separated from the small group on the shingle and waved his arms above his head. Came a whistling noise. Then the rocket shot over the *Carroway*, a thin line snaking out behind. The rocket fell with a hiss into the crest of a breaking wave on the weather side of the ship. The line fell on the slanting foredeck. A seaman jumped on it with both feet, bent and picked it up, and then ran madly for the alleyway under the bridge, lee side, as a sea broke over the weather rail. He retained the line.

The second mate shouted through cupped hands when the sea had subsided. The man with the line reached for his sheath-knife, and cut it from the rocket. The free end he thus obtained he passed outside of all stanchions against the rail. He carried it to where the second mate leaned over the edge of the fiddley house.

The third mate and some more seamen came to the second mate's aid. Slowly they hauled in on the thin line. One seaman stood apart from the rest, at the after end of the house, and waved his red handkerchief. The man ashore, who had waved previously, now waved again in answer. The second mate growled an order, and the thin line was hauled in hand over hand. From the bridge the captain chewed his cigar and watched appreciatively. Also he tuned his ear to catch the deep sigh as each nearing sea rose to board his ship.

Presently a black dot left the shingled beach and came swaying over and through the surf towards the *Carroway*. It was attached to the end of the taut line that the seamen were rapidly hauling in. When it finally came aboard, scraping and clattering over the edge of the fiddley house, it was recognisable as a tailblock with an endless fall of stout rope rove through it.

The captain shouted from the bridge at this point, removing his cold cigar for the purpose : " Make fast to the Samson post ! "

The second mate waved his hand. He panted out orders and aided his men to stagger to the for'ard end of the house. The endless fall and the tailblock were not light to handle.

Against the for'ard end of the house a Samson post stood both on the port and starboard side. Each post was a stout cylinder of steel, like a short mast, to which the derricks for handling the cargo out of the 'midship holds were attached. As the port side was the lee, the second mate made the tailblock well fast round the port Samson post. When he had completed that task he unbent the rocket line and passed it back overside again. Then he waved to the man he had signalled from the after end of the house. That man waved his red handkerchief again. Ashore the signal was answered.

Immediately afterwards the endless fall began to run and whine through the block and the well-greased sheave turned round. The men ashore were hauling a line out to the ship, a stouter line yet, a small hawser. It came presently, bobbing through the high surf, made fast to the fall.

When it finally jammed in the sheave of the block the second mate signalled, and the man at the house end waved. Those ashore stopped heaving. The seamen unbent the hawser, and it was made fast about eighteen inches above the tailblock on the Samson post. Then they unbent the stopper they had held the hawser's weight with while taking their turns round the post.

The signaller waved again from the ship.

Those ashore lay back on the hawser and hauled it taut, making it well fast round a great boulder that stood about half-way between the cliffs and the water's edge. Then they fastened the breeches buoy to the hawser and hauled it to the *Carroway* by means of the endless fall.

"All ready, sir ! " shouted the second mate. The captain waved and grunted.

" Good work ! Women and children first," he said. " Get them standing by ! "

"Aye, aye, sir ! "

The saloon passengers and what few were left of the steerage were rounded up near the Samson post. Continuous icy sprays drenched them. They shivered in the bitter wind. There was no warmth in the morning sun. The fiddley house was black with shivering men, firemen, engineers.

The rising sea was battering the *Carroway*. Her foredeck was already clear of everything movable. Even the winches were shifting. No. 1 hatch had caved in, and the forehold was half full. This tended to bring the bow lower down at rest on the shingle. Also it placed a strain on the midship section of the hull.

The continuous swing of the sea caused

the *Carroway* to lunge over on her port beam still more, with an occasional upheaval that made the keel rasp gratingly on the bottom. This rasping could be felt by every soul aboard. And it was evidently causing leakage, most likely snapping off rivet heads, for the carpenter reported depths in the bunkers, and the chief and second engineers, grieving over the engine-room from the upper gangway gratings, told of water that crept slowly above the eccentrics.

A woman and her young baby got into the breeches buoy. She was frightened and wide-eyed, her baby crying piteously. Those ashore hauled away. Down the swaying, jumping hawser slid the buoy. It dipped into the surf. It came out again. The *Carroway* heaved up and shuddered, and the hawser tautened fearsomely, threatening to snap The woman screamed, and the sound echoed above the roar of the whiteness through which she rocketted. Then her canvas craft touched shingle and a dozen rough hands dragged her to safety. The dripping buoy came bobbing to the ship again.

The captain leaned his elbows on the after-bridge rail and watched as load after load went ashore. Occasionally he ruffled his white beard with his gloved hand, but he said nothing. Every moment he expected the ship to go right over. Already she was so low in the sea that two or three extra large breakers had sent water sloshing over the navigation bridge, round the captain's sea-boots. The smokestack and ventilators on the weather side of the fiddley protected the waiting passengers and crew somewhat. But when a full sea should go over the house, smokestack and ventilators all would go by the board. The minutes crept by.

¶

THE last passenger had gone. The crew started to land. The crowd on the beach grew greater. From over the inland hills, misty blue in the morning, from over the cliffs, figures could be seen running to aid. The captain still leaned over the bridge rail and chewed with his lips at his cigar. A bleak look dulled his blue eyes. Sadness swept him. His ship ! Finished !

The wind freshened. The sea grew. The jumping and the straining of the hawser became more acute. Full were the afterholds, full the foreholds, half-full the bunkers and the engine-room. No. 2 hatch was smashed in. A sea had taken half the ventilators from the fiddley and had canted the smokestack. Another had shifted the chart-house several feet from its rightful position. The captain did not move, though he was very wet and very cold.

The mate came along from midships dragging the protesting young wireless operator by the arm. " I think I picked someone up with the emergency set," he said. " I think——"

" Shut up ! " the harassed mate snarled. " Get up on the fiddley. You for the shore."

He forced the operator up the monkey ladder. The captain's lips twitched as the young man shot to the shingle. For youth this was adventure. For him, tragedy.

The third mate was next, with the cook. The chief steward and the chief engineer went together. Only the second mate, the mate, a couple of seamen and the captain were left. The siren had long since ceased bellowing. The boy who pulled the lanyard had long since landed.

The second mate and the two seamen went.

" Come on, sir," shouted the mate, getting into the drenched canvas buoy. He shuddered as the *Carroway* lurched and the hawser groaned. It would not stand much longer. It might snap while the buoy was over the surf.

The captain grunted and came slowly down from the bridge, bringing with him the ship's papers and the log book. He had to dodge a sea when he started for the fiddley house. He managed the distance at last and clambered up the monkey ladder, his cigar still drooping from his mouth. He stood by the buoy. He ruffled his beard, peering for'ard and then aft. Also he looked at the sky, at the rising sea, at the shore. There was no hope. The *Carroway* was finished. He sighed.

" Come on, sir," said the mate, his nervousness increasing. " She'll go soon."

The captain grunted. His bright eye caught a movement under one of the boxes of lifebelts that the sea had left. He moved from the fuming mate and raked under the box. He brought the half-drowned, bedraggled ship's parrot to light. The bird had been forgotten in the excitement.

" Pretty Polly," he crooned. " Did they forget um ? "

"Awk ! " moaned the parrot feebly.

The captain handed the sorry-looking pet to the mate and climbed into the buoy.

"Hate to leave her," he mumbled, looking at the stricken ship and meaning her. He gulped and swore.

"Haul away!" yelled the mate frantically as the hawser cracked and stretched and the *Carroway* shuddered to her very trucks under the leap of a monster swell, glass-bodied, white-capped, foaming, growing.

Hastily the buoy shot down to the shingle, the shingle that looked so far away when viewed from the little swaying canvas sack above the creaming welter of tortured water.

¶

THERE was a crack, muffled by the thunder of the surf, as the hawser parted. The men ashore rushed into the shallows of the backwash with cries of horror. The endless fall and buoy plunged into the whiteness. There was a swirl of drenched canvas, oilskins, a sou'wester. There was a fleck of colour from a parrot's wing.

The men ashore formed a chain, hand clasping hand. Far into the surf they waded, the strongest first. Currents sucked and buffeted at their legs, spray filled their eyes and nostrils. They persisted.

The mate came first, half drowned, fighting for breath, lunging out with both hands. He was passed ashore. Friendly arms received him and laid him on the shingle. Of the captain there was no sign. The men of the chain looked at each other and then at the boiling surf. They shook their heads.

Slowly they drew back to the beach. Then someone cried aloud. He pointed. The men turned and gaped.

Some twenty yards down the beach a figure staggered from the sucking backwash. It fell repeatedly, was washed seaward. It rolled over, was tossed about. But always it rose and staggered on. It was a figure in a ripped oilskin coat, without any sou'-wester. It was a little figure, slender, white-bearded, in sodden sea-boots. It held a drooping cigar in one corner of its mouth. In one hand by a leg and wing, it held a feebly kicking parrot.

The rescued seamen and the rescuing coastguards rushed forward. They surrounded the captain. The leader of the coastguards shook his hand and swore in his excitement. He was a big man, healthy-looking, grey-eyed, black-bearded.

The captain coughed, spat water, snorted, shook himself. He looked at the parrot reprovingly and sighed. Then he faced the coastguard leader.

"Happen to have a match about you?" he said, and ruffled his wet beard with his free hand. He would have fallen had not the coastguard leader caught him. He muttered feebly: "Seems I can never find a light on this blasted ship."

"Awk!" croaked the parrot, suddenly reviving and ruffling its drenched plumage. "Is that so?"

AGAINST INDIFFERENCE

MORE love or more disdain I crave;
Sweet, be not still indifferent:
O send me quickly to my grave,
Or else afford me more content!
Or love or hate me more or less,
For love abhors all lukewarmness.

Give me a tempest if 'twill drive
Me to the place where I would be;
Or if you'll have me still alive,
Confess you will be kind to me.
Give hopes of bliss or dig my grave:
More love or more disdain I crave.

CHARLES WEBBE.

The One Hundred Dollar Bill

Concerning a man who lost his sense of values

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

THE new one hundred dollar bill, clean and green, freshening the heart with the colour of springtime, slid over the glass of the teller's counter and passed under his grille to a fat hand, dingy on the knuckles, but brightened by a flawed diamond. This interesting hand was a part of one of those men who seem to have too much fattened muscle for their clothes; his shoulders distended his overcoat; his calves strained the sprightly checked cloth, a little soiled, of his trousers; his short neck bulged above the glossy collar. His hat, round and black as a pot and appropriately small, he wore slightly obliqued, while under its curled brim his small eyes twinkled surreptitiously between those upper and nether puffs of flesh that mark the too faithful practitioner of unhallowed gaieties. Such was the first individual owner of the new one hundred dollar bill, and he at once did what might have been expected of him.

Moving away from the teller's grille, he made a cylindrical packet of bills smaller in value—"ones" and "fives"—then placed round them, as a wrapper, the beautiful one hundred dollar bill, snapped a rubber band over it; and the desired inference was plain; a roll all of hundred dollar bills, inside as well as outside. Something more was plain, too: obviously the man's small head had a sportive plan in it, for the twinkle between his eye puffs hinted of liquor in the offing and lively women impressed by a show of masterly riches. Here, in brief, was a man who meant to make a night of it, who would feast, dazzle, compel deference and be loved. For money gives power, and power is loved; no doubt he would be loved. He was happy and went out of the bank believing that money is made for joy.

So little should we be certain of our happiness in this world. The splendid one hundred dollar bill was taken from him untimely, before nightfall that very evening. At the corner of two busy streets he parted with it to the law, though in a mood of excruciating reluctance and only after a cold-blooded threatening on the part of the lawyer. This latter walked away thoughtfully with the one hundred dollar bill, not now quite so clean, in his pocket.

Collinson was the lawyer's name, and in years he was only twenty-eight, but already of the slightly harried appearance that marks the young husband who begins to suspect that the better part of his life was his bachelorhood. His dark, ready-made clothes, his twice soled shoes, and his hair, which was too long for a neat and businesslike aspect, were symptoms of necessary economy; but he did not wear the eager look of a man who saves to "get on for himself." Collinson's look was that of an employed man who only deepens his rut with his pacing of it.

An employed man he was, indeed; a lawyer without much hope of ever seeing his name on the door or on the letters of the firm that employed him, and his most important work was the collection of small debts. This one hundred dollar bill now in his pocket was such a collection, small to the firm and the client, though of a noble size to himself and the long-pursued debtor from whom he had just collected it.

The banks were closed; so was the office, for it was six o'clock and Collinson was on his way home when by chance he encountered the debtor; there was nothing to do but to keep the bill overnight. This was no hardship, however, as he had a faint pleasure in the unfamiliar experience of walking home with such a thing in his pocket; and he felt a little important by proxy when he thought of it.

Upon the city the November evening had come down dark and moist. Lighted windows and street lamps appeared and disappeared in the altering thicknesses of fog, but at intervals, as Collinson walked on northward, he passed a small shop, or a

cluster of shops, where the light was close to him and bright, and at one of these oases of illumination he lingered a moment, with a thought to buy a toy in the window for his three-year-old little girl. The toy was a gaily coloured acrobatic monkey that willingly climbed up and down a string, and he knew that the " baby," as he and his wife still called their child, would scream with delight at the sight of it. He hesitated, staring into the window rather longingly, and wondering if he ought to make such a purchase. He had twelve dollars of his own in his pocket, but the toy was marked " 35 cents," and he decided he could not afford it. So he sighed and went on, turning presently into a darker street.

¶

WHEN he reached home, the baby was crying over some inward perplexity not to be explained ; and his wife, pretty and a little frowzy, was as usual, and as he had expected. That is to say, he found her irritated by cooking, bored by the baby, and puzzled by the dull life she led. Other women, it appeared, had happy and luxurious homes, and during the malnutritious dinner she had prepared she mentioned many such women by name, laying particular stress upon the achievements of their husbands. Why should she (" alone," as she put it) lead the life she did in one room and kitchenette, without even being able to afford to go to the movies more than once or twice a month ? Mrs. Theodore Thompson's husband had bought a perfectly beautiful little sedan automobile ; he gave his wife everything she wanted. Mrs. Will Gregory had merely mentioned that her old Hudson seal coat was wearing a little, and her husband had instantly said : " What'll a new one come to, girlie ? Four or five hundred ? Run and get it ! " Why were other women's husbands like that—and why—was hers like *this ?*

" My goodness ! " he said. " You talk as if I had sedans and sealskin coats and theatre tickets *on* me ! Well, I haven't ; that's all ! "

" Then go out and get 'em ! " she said fiercely. " Go out and get 'em ! "

" What with ? " he inquired. " I have twelve dollars in my pocket, and a balance of seventeen dollars at the bank ; that's twenty-nine. I get twenty-five from the office day after to-morrow—Saturday ; that makes fifty-four ; but we have to pay forty-five for rent on Monday ; so that'll leave us nine dollars. Shall I buy you a sedan with a sealskin coat on Tuesday, out of the nine ? "

Mrs. Collinson began to weep a little. " The old, old story ! " she said. " Six long, long years it's been going on now ! I ask you how much you've got, and you say, ' nine dollars,' or ' seven dollars,' or ' four dollars,' and once it was sixty-five cents ! Sixty-five cents ; that's what we had to live on ! Sixty-five *cents !* "

" Oh hush ! " he said wearily.

" Hadn't you better hush a little yourself ? " she retorted. " You come home with twelve dollars in your pocket and tell your wife to hush ! That's nice ? Why can't you do what decent men do ? "

" What's that ? "

" Why, give their wives something to live for. What do you give me, I'd like to know ! Look at the clothes I wear, please ! "

" Well, it's your own fault," he muttered.

" What did you say ! Did you say it's my fault I wear clothes any women I know wouldn't be *seen* in ? "

" Yes, I did. If you hadn't made me get you that platinum ring——"

" What ! " she cried, and flourished her hand at him across the table. " Look at it ! It's platinum, yes ; but look at the stone in it, about the size of a pinhead, so's I'm ashamed to wear it when any of my friends see me ! A hundred and sixteen dollars is what this magnificent ring cost you, and how long did I have to beg before I got even that little out of you ? And it's the best thing I own and the only thing I ever did get out of you ! "

" Oh, Lordy ! " he moaned.

" I wish you'd seen Charlie Loomis looking at this ring to-day," she said, with a desolate laugh. " He happened to notice it, and I saw him keep glancing at it, and I wish you'd seen Charlie Loomis's expression ! "

Collinson's own expression became noticeable upon her introduction of this name ; he stared at her gravely until he completed the mastication of one of the indigestibles she had set before him ; then he put down his fork and said :

" So you saw Charlie Loomis again to-day. Where ? "

" Oh, my ! " she sighed. " Have we got to go over all that again ? "

" Over all what ? "

" Over all the fuss you made the last

time I mentioned Charlie's name. I thought we settled it you were going to be a little more sensible about him."

"Yes," Collinson returned. "*I* was going to be more sensible about him, because you were going to be more sensible about him. Wasn't that the agreement?"

She gave him a hard glance, tossed her head so that the curls of her bobbed hair fluttered prettily, and with satiric mimicry repeated his question. "Agreement! Wasn't that the agreement! Oh, my, but you do make me tired, talking about 'agreements'! As if it was a crime my going to a vaudeville matinee with a man kind enough to notice that my husband never takes me anywhere!"

"Did you go to a vaudeville with him to-day?"

"No, I didn't!" she said. "I was talking about the time when you made such a fuss. I didn't go anywhere with him to-day."

"I'm glad to hear it," Collinson said. "I wouldn't have stood for it."

"Oh, you wouldn't?" she cried, and added a shrill laugh as further comment. "You 'wouldn't have stood for it'!"

"Never mind," he returned doggedly. "We went over all that the last time, and you understand me. I'll have no more foolishness about Charlie Loomis."

"How nice of you! He's a friend of yours; you go with him yourself; but your wife mustn't even look at him, just because he happens to be the one man that amuses her a little. That's fine!"

"Never mind," Collinson said again. "You say you saw him to-day. I want to know where."

"Suppose I don't choose to tell you."

"You'd better tell me, I think."

"Do you? I've got to answer for every minute of my day, have I?"

"I want to know where you saw Charlie Loomis."

She tossed her curls again, and laughed. "Isn't it funny!" she said. "Just because I like a man, he's the one person I can't have anything to do with! Just because he's kind and jolly and amusing, and I like his jokes and his thoughtfulness towards a woman when he's with her, I'm not to be allowed to see him at all! But my *husband*—oh, that's entirely different! *He* can go out with Charlie whenever he likes and have a good time, while I stay home and wash the dishes! Oh, it's a lovely life!"

"Where did you see him to-day?"

Instead of answering his question, she looked at him plaintively and allowed tears to shine along her lower eyelids. "Why do you treat me like this?" she asked in a feeble voice. "Why can't I have a man friend if I want to? I do like Charlie Loomis. I do like him——"

"Yes! That's what I noticed!"

"Well, but what's the good of always insulting me about him? He has time on his hands of afternoons, and so have I. Our janitor's wife is crazy about the baby and just adores to have me leave her in their flat—the longer the better. Why shouldn't I go to a matinee or a picture show sometimes with Charlie? Why should I just have to sit around instead of going out and having a nice time, when he wants me to?"

"I want to know where you saw him to-day!"

Mrs. Collinson jumped up. "You make me sick!" she said, and began to clear away the dishes.

"I want to know where——"

"Oh, hush up!" she cried. "He came here to leave a note for you."

"Oh," said her husband. "I beg your pardon. That's different."

"How sweet of you!"

"Where's the note, please?"

She took it from her pocket and tossed it to him. "So long as it's a note for *you* it's all right, of course," she said. "I wonder what you'd do if he'd written one to me!"

"Never mind," said Collinson, and read the note.

Dear Collie,

Dave and Smithie and Old Bill and Sammy Hoag and maybe Steinie and Sol are coming over to the shack about eight-thirty. Home brew and the old pastime. *You* know! Don't fail.

CHARLIE.

"You've read this, of course," Collinson said. "The envelope wasn't sealed."

"I have not," his wife returned, covering the prevarication with a cold dignity. "I'm not in the habit of reading other people's correspondence, thank you! I suppose you think I do so because you'd never hesitate to read any note *I* got; but I don't do everything you do, you see!"

"Well, you can read it now," he said, and gave her the note.

Her eyes swept the writing briefly, and she made a sound of wonderment, as if

amazed to find herself so true a prophet. " And the words weren't more than out of my mouth. *You* can go and have a grand party right in his flat, while your wife stays home and gets the baby to bed and washes the dishes ! "

" I'm not going."

" Oh, no ! " she said mockingly. " I suppose not. I see you missing one of Charlie's stag parties ! "

" I'll miss this one."

But it was not to Mrs. Collinson's purpose that he should miss the party ; she wished him to be as intimate as possible with the debonair Charlie Loomis ; and so, after carrying some dishes into the kitchenette in meditative silence, she reappeared with a changed manner. She went to her husband, gave him a shy little pat on the shoulder and laughed good-naturedly. " Of course you'll go," she said. " I do think you're silly about me never going out with him when it would give me a little innocent pleasure and when you're not home to take me, yourself ; but I wasn't really in such terrible earnest, all I said. You work hard the whole time, honey, and the only pleasure you ever do have, it's when you get a chance to go to one of these little penny-ante stag parties. You haven't been to one for ever so long, and you never stay after twelve ; it's really all right with me. I want you to go."

" Oh, no," said Collinson. " It's only penny-ante, but I couldn't afford to lose anything at all."

" If you did lose, it'd only be a few cents," she said. " What's the difference, if it gives you a little fun ? You'll work all the better if you go out and enjoy yourself once in a while."

" Well, if you really look at it that way, I'll go."

" That's right, dear," she said, smiling. " Better put on a fresh collar and your other suit, hadn't you ? "

" I suppose so," he assented, and began to make the changes she suggested.

When he had completed his toilet, it was time for him to go. She came in from the kitchenette, kissed him, and then looked up into his eyes, letting him see a fond and brightly amiable expression.

" There, honey," she said. " Run along and have a nice time. Then maybe you'll be a little more sensible about some of *my* little pleasures."

He held the one hundred dollar bill folded in his hand, meaning to leave it with her, but as she spoke a sudden recurrence of suspicion made him forget his purpose. " Look here," he said. " I'm not making any bargain with you. You talk as if you thought I was going to let you run around to vaudevilles with Charlie because you let me go to this party. Is that your idea ? "

It was, indeed, precisely Mrs. Collinson's idea, and she was instantly angered enough to admit it in her retort. " Oh, aren't you *mean !* " she cried. " I might know better than to look for any fairness in a man like you ! "

" See here——"

" Oh, hush up ! " she said. " Shame on you ! Go on to your party ! " With that she put both hands upon his breast, and pushed him towards the door.

" I won't go. I'll stay here."

" You will, too, go ! " she cried, shrewishly. " I don't want to look at you around here all evening. It'd make me sick to look at a man without an ounce of fairness in his whole mean little body ! "

" All right," said Collinson, violently, " I *will* go ! "

" Yes ! Get out of my sight ! "

And he did, taking the one hundred dollar bill with him, to the penny-ante poker party.

¶

THE gay Mr. Charlie Loomis called his apartment " the shack " in jocular depreciation of its beauty and luxury, but he regarded it as a perfect thing, and in one way it was : for it was perfectly in the family likeness of a thousand such "shacks." It had a ceiling with false beams, walls of green burlap, spotted with coloured " coaching prints," brown shelves supporting pewter plates and mugs, "mission" chairs, a leather couch with violent cushions, silver-framed photographs of lady friends and officer friends, a drop light of pink-shot imitation alabaster, a papier-maché skull tobacco jar among moving-picture magazines on the round card table ; and, of course, the final Charlie Loomis touch—a Japanese man-servant.

The master of all this was one of those neat, stoutish young men with fat, round heads, sleek, fair hair, immaculate, pale complexions, and infirm little pink mouths —in fact, he was of the type that may suggest to the student of resemblances a fastidious

and excessively clean white pig with transparent ears. Nevertheless, Charlie Loomis was of a freehanded habit in some matters, being particularly indulgent to pretty women and their children. He spoke of the latter as " the kiddies," of course, and liked to call their mothers " kiddo," or " girlie." One of his greatest pleasures was to tell a woman that she was " the dearest, bravest little girlie in the world." Naturally he was a welcome guest in many households, and would often bring a really magnificent toy to the child of some friend whose wife he was courting. Moreover, at thirty-three he had already done well enough in business to take things easily, and he liked to give these little card parties, not for gain, but for pastime. He was cautious and disliked high stakes in a game of chance.

" I don't consider it hospitality to have any man go out o' my shack sore," he was wont to say. " Myself, I'm a bachelor and got no obligations ; I'll shoot any man that can afford it for anything he wants to. Trouble is, you never can tell when a man can't afford it or what harm his losin' might mean to the little girlie at home and the kiddies. No, boys, penny-ante and ten-cent limit is the highest we go in this ole shack. Penny-ante and a few steins of the ole home-brew that hasn't got a divorce in a barrel of it ! "

Penny-ante and the ole home-brew had been in festal operation for half-an-hour when the morose Collinson arrived this evening. Mr. Loomis and his guests sat about the round table under the alabaster drop light ; their coats were off ; cigars were worn at the deliberate poker angle ; colourful chips and cards glistened on the cloth ; one of the players wore a green shade over his eyes ; and all in all, here was a little poker party for a lithograph.

" Ole Collie, b'gosh ! " Mr. Loomis shouted, humorously. " Here's your vacant cheer ; stack all stuck out for you'n' ever'thin' ! Set daown, neighbour, an' Smithie'll deal you in, next hand. What made you so late ? Helpin' the little girl at home get the kiddie to bed ? That's a great kiddie of yours, Collie."

Collinson took the chair that had been left for him, counted his chips and then as the playing of a " hand " still preoccupied three of the company, he picked up a silver dollar that lay upon the table near him. " What's this ? " he asked. " A side bet ? Or did somebody just leave it here for me ? "

" Yes ; for you to look at," Mr. Loomis explained. " It's Smithie's."

" What's wrong with it ? "

" Nothin'. Smithie was just showin' it to us. Look at it."

Collinson turned the coin over and saw a tiny inscription that had been lined into the silver with a point of steel. " Luck," he read—" Luck hurry back to me ! " Then he spoke to the owner of this marked dollar. " I suppose you put that on there, Smithie, to help make sure of getting our money to-night."

But Smithie shook his head, which was a large, gaunt head, as it happened—a head fronted with a sallow face shaped much like a coffin, but inconsistently genial in expression. " No," he said. " It just came in over my counter this afternoon, and I noticed it when I was checkin' up the day's cash. Funny, ain't it : ' Luck hurry back to me ! ' "

" Who do you suppose marked that on it ? " Collinson said thoughtfully.

" Golly ! " his host exclaimed. " It won't do you much good to wonder about that ! "

Collinson frowned, continuing to stare at the marked dollar. " I guess not, but really I should like to know."

" I would, too," Smithie said. " I been thinkin' about it. Might 'a' been somebody in Seattle or somebody in Ipswich, Mass., or New Orleans or St. Paul. How you goin' to tell ? It's funny how some people like to believe luck depends on some little thing like that."

" Yes, it is," Collinson assented, still brooding over the coin.

The philosophic Smithie extended his arm across the table collecting the cards to deal them, for the " hand " was finished. " Yes, sir, it's funny," he repeated. " Nobody knows exactly what luck is, but the way I guess it out, it lays in a man's believin' he's in luck, and some little object like this makes him kind of concentrate his mind on thinkin' he's going to be lucky, because of course you often know you're goin' to win, and then you do win. You don't win when you want to win, or when you need to ; you win when you believe you'll win. I don't know who it was that said, ' Money's the root of all evil ' ; but I guess he didn't have too much sense ! I suppose if some man killed some other man for a dollar, the poor fish that said that would let the man out and send the dollar to the chair—"

But here this garrulous and discursive

guest was interrupted by immoderate protests from several of his colleagues. "Cut it out!" "My Lord!" "Do something!" "Smithie! Are you ever goin' to deal?"

"I'm going to shuffle first," he responded, suiting the action to the word, though with deliberation, and at the same time continuing his discourse. "It's a mighty interesting thing, a piece o' money. You take this dollar, now: Who's it belonged to? Where's it been? What different kind o' funny things has it been spent for sometimes? What funny kinds of secrets do you suppose it could 'a' heard if it had ears? Good people have had it and bad people have had it. Why, a dollar could tell more about the human race—why, it could tell all about it!"

"I guess it couldn't tell all about the way you're dealin' those cards," said the man with the green shade. "You're mixin' things all up."

"I'll straighten 'em all out then," said Smithie cheerfully. "They say, 'Money talks.' Golly! If it could talk, what couldn't it tell? Nobody'd be safe. I got this dollar now, but who's it goin' to belong to next, and what'll he do with it? And then after that! Why, for years and years and years, it'll go on from one pocket to another, in a millionaire's house one day, in some burglar's flat the next, maybe, and in one person's hand money'll do good, likely, and in another's it'll do harm. We all want money; but some say it's a bad thing, like that dummy I was talkin' about. Lordy! Goodness or badness, I'll take all anybody—"

¶

HE was interrupted again, and with increased vehemence. Collinson, who sat next to him, complied with the demand to "ante up" then placed the dollar near his little cylinder of chips, and looked at his cards. They proved unencouraging, and he turned to his neighbour. "I'd sort of like to have that marked dollar, Smithie," he said. "I'll give you a paper dollar and a nickel for it."

But Smithie laughed, shook his head and slid the coin over toward his own chips. "No sir. I'm goin' to keep it—a while, anyway."

"So you do think it'll bring you luck, after all!"

"No. But I'll hold on to it for this evening, anyhow."

"Not if we clean you out, you won't," said Charlie Loomis. "You know the rules o' the old shack: only cash goes in this game; no I.O.U. stuff ever went here or ever will. Tell you what I'll do, though, before you lose it; I'll give you a dollar and a quarter for your ole silver dollar, Smithie."

"Oh, you want it, too, do you? I guess I can spot what sort of luck you want it for, Charlie."

"Well, Mr. Bones, what sort of luck do I want it for?"

"You win, Smithie," one of the other players said. "We all know what sort o' luck ole Charlie wants your dollar for: he wants it for luck with the dames."

"Well, I might," Charlie admitted not displeased. "I haven't been so lucky that way lately—not so dog-gone lucky!"

All of his guests, except one, laughed at this, but Collinson frowned, still staring at the marked dollar. For a reason he could not have put into words just then, it began to seem almost vitally important to him to own this coin if he could, and to prevent Charlie Loomis from getting possession of it. The jibe, "He wants it for luck with the dames," rankled in Collinson's mind: somehow it seemed to refer to his wife.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Smithie," he said, "I'll bet two dollars against that dollar of yours that I hold a higher hand next deal than you do."

"Here! Here!" Charlie remonstrated. "Shack rules! Ten-cent limit."

"That's only for the game," Collinson said, turning upon his host with a sudden sharpness. "This is an outside bet between Smithie and me. Will you do it, Smithie? Where's your sporting spirit?"

So liberal a proposal at once roused the spirit to which it appealed. "Well, I might, if some o' the others'll come in too, and make it really worth my while."

"I'm in," the host responded with prompt inconsistency; and others of the party, it appeared, were desirous of owning the talisman. They laughed and said it was "crazy stuff," yet they all "came in," and, for the first time in the history of this "shack," what Mr. Loomis called "real money," was seen upon the table as a stake. It was won, and the silver dollar with it, by the largest and oldest of the gamesters, a fat man with a walrus moustache that inevitably made him known in this circle as "Old Bill." He smiled condescendingly, and would have put the dollar in his pocket

with the " real money," but Mr. Loomis protested.

" Here ! What you doin' ? " he shouted, catching Old Bill by the arm. " Put that dollar back on the table ! "

" What for ? "

" What for ? Why, we're goin' to play for it again. Here's two dollars against it I beat you on the next hand."

" No," said Old Bill calmly. " It's worth more than two dollars to me. It's worth five."

" Well, five then," his host returned. " I want that dollar ! "

" So do I," said Collinson. " I'll put in five dollars if you do."

" Anybody else in ? " Old Bill inquired, dropping the coin on the table ; and all of the others again " came in." Old Bill won again ; but once more Charlie Loomis prevented him from putting the silver dollar in his pocket.

" Come on now ! " Mr. Loomis exclaimed. " Anybody else but me in this for five dollars next time ? "

" I am," said Collinson, swallowing with a dry throat ; and he set forth all that remained to him of his twelve dollars. In return he received a pair of deuces, and the jubilant Charlie won.

He was vainglorious in his triumph. " Didn't that little luck piece just keep on tryin' to find the right man ? " he cried, and read the inscription loudly. " ' Luck hurry back to me ! ' Righto ! You're home where you belong, girlie ! Now we'll settle down to our reg'lar little game again."

" Oh, no," said Old Bill. " You wouldn't let me keep it. Put it out there and play for it again."

" I won't. She's mine now."

" I want my luck piece back myself," said Smithie. " Put it out and play for it You made Old Bill."

" I won't do it."

" Yes, you will," Collinson said, and he spoke without geniality. " You put it out there."

" Oh, yes, I will," Mr. Loomis returned mockingly. " I will for ten dollars."

" Not I," said Old Bill. " Five is foolish enough ! " And Smithie agreed with him. " Nor me ! "

" All right, then. If you're afraid of ten, I keep it. I thought the ten'd scare you."

" Put that dollar on the table," Collinson said. " I'll put ten against it."

There was a little commotion among these mild gamesters ; and someone said : " You're crazy, Collie. What do you want to do that for ? "

" I don't care," said Collinson. " That dollar's already cost me enough, and I'm going after it."

" Well, you see, I want it, too," Charlie Loomis retorted cheerfully ; and he appealed to the others. " I'm not askin' him to put up ten against it, am I ? "

" Maybe not," Old Bill assented. " But how long is this going to keep on ? It's already messed our game all up, and if we keep on foolin' with these side bets, why what's the use ? "

" My goodness ! " the host exclaimed. " I'm not pushin' this thing, am I ? I don't want to risk my good old luck piece, do I ? It's Collie that's crazy to go on, ain't it ? " He laughed. " He hasn't showed his money yet, though, I notice, and this old shack is run on strictly cash principles. I don't believe he's got ten dollars more on him ! "

" Oh, yes, I have."

" Let's see it, then ! "

Collinson's nostrils distended a little, but he said nothing, fumbled in his pocket and then tossed the one hundred dollar bill, rather crumpled, upon the table.

¶

" GREAT heavens ! " shouted Old Bill. " Call the doctor; I'm all of a swoon ! "

" Look at what's spilled over our nice clean table ! " another said, in an awed voice. " Did you claim he didn't have ten on him, Charlie ? "

" Well, it's nice to look at," Smithie observed. " But I'm with Old Bill. How long are you two goin' to keep this thing goin' ? If Collie wins the luck piece I suppose Charlie'll bet him fifteen against it, and then——"

" No, I won't," Charlie interrupted. " Ten's the limit."

" Goin' to keep on bettin' ten against it all night ? "

" No," said Charlie. " I tell you what I'll do with you, Collinson ; we both of us seem kind o' set on this luck piece, and you're already out some on it. I'll give you a square chance at it and at catchin' even. It's twenty minutes after nine. I'll keep on these side bets with you till ten o'clock, but when my clock hits ten, we're through, and the one that's got it then

keeps it, and no more foolin'. You want to do that, or quit now? I'm game either way."

"Go ahead and deal," said Collinson. "Whichever one of us has it at ten o'clock it's his, and we quit."

But when the little clock on Charlie's green painted mantelshelf struck ten, the luck piece was Charlie's and with it an overwhelming lien on the one hundred dollar bill. He put both in his pocket. "Remember this ain't my fault; it was you that insisted," he said, and handed Collinson four five-dollar bills as change.

Old Bill, platonically interested, discovered that his cigar was sparkless, applied a match, and casually set forth his opinion. "Well, I guess that was about as poor a way of spendin' eighty dollars, as I ever saw, but it all goes to show there's truth in the old motto that anything at all can happen in any poker game! That was a mighty nice hundred dollar bill you had on you, Collie; but it's like what Smithie said: a piece o' money goes hoppin' around from one person to another—it don't care!—and yours has gone and hopped to Charlie. The question is: Who's it goin' to hop to next?" He paused to laugh, glanced over the cards that had been dealt him, and concluded: "My guess is 't some good-lookin' woman'll prob'ly get a pretty fair chunk o' that hundred dollar bill out o' Charlie. Well, let's settle down to the old army game."

They settled down to it, and by twelve o'clock (the invariable closing hour of these pastimes in the old shack) Collinson had lost four dollars and thirty cents more. He was commiserated by his fellow gamesters as they put on their coats and overcoats, preparing to leave the hot little rooms. They shook their heads, laughed ruefully in sympathy, and told him he oughtn't to carry hundred dollar bills upon his person when he went out among friends. Old Bill made what is sometimes called an unfortunate remark.

"Don't worry about Collie," he said jocosely. "That hundred dollar bill prob'ly belonged to some rich client of his."

"What!" Collinson said, staring.

"Never mind, Collie; I wasn't in earnest," the joker explained. "Of course I didn't mean it."

"Well, you oughtn't to say it," Collinson protested. "People say a thing like that about a man in a joking way, but other people hear it sometimes and don't know they're joking, and a story gets started."

"My goodness, but you're serious!" Old Bill exclaimed. "You look like you had a misery in your chest, as the rubes say; and I don't blame you! Get on out in the fresh night air and you'll feel better."

He was mistaken, however; the night air failed to improve Collinson's spirits as he walked home alone through the dark and chilly streets. There was, indeed, a misery in his chest, where stirred a sensation vaguely nauseating; his hands were tremulous and his knees infirm as he walked. In his mind was a confusion of pictures and sounds, echoes from Charlie Loomis' shack; he could not clear his mind's eye of the one hundred dollar bill; and its likeness, as it lay crumpled on the green cloth under the drop light, haunted and hurt him as a face in a coffin haunts and hurts the new mourner.

¶

IT seemed to Collinson then that money was the root of all evil and the root of all good, the root and branch of all life, indeed. With money, his wife would have been amiable, not needing gay bachelors to take her to vaudeville. Her need of money was the true foundation of the jealousy that had sent him out morose and reckless to-night; of the jealousy that had made it seem, when he gambled with Charlie Loomis for the luck dollar, as though they really gambled for luck with her.

It still seemed to him that they had gambled for luck with her, and Charlie had won it. But as Collinson plodded homeward in the chilly midnight, his shoulders sagging and his head drooping, he began to wonder how he could have risked money that belonged to another man. What on earth had made him do what he had done? Was it the mood his wife had set him in as he went out that evening? No; he had gone out feeling like that often enough, and nothing had happened.

Something had brought this trouble on him, he thought; for it appeared to Collinson that he had been an automaton, having nothing to do with his own actions. He must bear the responsibility for them; but he had not willed them. If the one hundred dollar bill had not happened to be in his pocket—That was it! And at the thought he mumbled desolately to himself: "I'd

been all right if it hadn't been for that." If the one hundred dollar bill had not happened to be in his pocket, he'd have been " all right." The one hundred dollar bill had done this to him. And Smithie's romancing again came back to him : " In one person's hands money'll do good, likely ; in another's it'll do harm." It was the money that did harm or good, not the person ; and the money in his hands had done this harm to himself.

He had to deliver a hundred dollars at the office in the morning, somehow ; for he dared not take the risk of the client's meeting the debtor.

There was a balance of seventeen dollars in his bank, and he could pawn his watch for twenty-five, as he knew well enough, by experience. That would leave fifty-eight dollars to be paid, and there was only one way to get it. His wife would have to let him pawn her ring. She'd have to !

Without any difficulty he could guess what she would say and do when he told her of his necessity : and he knew that never in her life would she forego the advantage over him she would gain from it. He knew, too, what stipulations she would make, and he had to face the fact that he was in no position to reject them. The one hundred dollar bill had cost him the last vestiges of mastery in his own house ; and Charlie Loomis had really won not only the bill and the luck, but the privilege of taking Collinson's wife to vaudevilles. And it all came back to the same conclusion : The one hundred dollar bill had done it to him. " What kind of a thing is this life ? " Collinson mumbled to himself, finding matters wholly perplexing in a world made into tragedy at the caprice of a little oblong slip of paper.

Then, as he went on his way to wake his wife and face her with the soothing proposal to pawn her ring early the next morning, something happened to Collinson. Of itself the thing that happened was nothing, but he was aware of his folly as if it stood upon a mountain top against the sun—and so he gathered knowledge of himself and a little of the wisdom that is called better than happiness.

His way was now the same as upon the latter stretch of his walk home from the office that evening. The smoke fog had cleared and the air was clean with a night wind that moved briskly from the west ; in all the long street there was only one window lighted, but it was sharply outlined now, and fell as a bright rhomboid upon the pavement before Collinson. When he came to it he paused, at the hint of an inward impulse he did not think to trace ; and, frowning, he perceived that this was the same shop window that had detained him on his homeward way, when he had thought of buying a toy for the baby.

The toy was still there in the bright window : the gay little acrobatic monkey that would climb up or down a red string as the string slacked or straightened ; but Collinson's eye fixed upon the card marked with the price " 35 cents."

He stared and stared. " Thirty-five cents ! " he said to himself. " Thirty-five cents ! "

Then suddenly he burst into loud and prolonged laughter.

The sound was startling in the quiet night, and roused the interest of a meditative policeman who stood in the darkened doorway of the next shop. He stepped out, not unfriendly.

" What you havin' such a good time over, this hour o' the night ? " he inquired. " What's all the joke ? "

Collinson pointed to the window. " It's that monkey on the string," he said. " Something about it struck me as mighty funny ! "

So, with a better spirit, he turned away, still laughing, and went to face his wife.

A Beleaguered City

A tale of the "dead" who came back

By Mrs. OLIPHANT

PART II.

The Narrative of M. Le Maire

Previous Chapters

MARTIN DUPIN (de la Clairière), Maire of Semur, in the Haute Bourgogne, notices one day that there is an increasing element of impiety and godlessness amongst the people of the city.

On the following day Semur is visited by a terrifying phenomenon. Instead of daylight dawning at six o'clock, for it is July, darkness remains for many hours, while night falls again early in the afternoon.

M. Dupin is persuaded by M. Paul Lecamus, a man classed by the people as a visionary, to accompany him to the Porte St. Lambert, where Lecamus asserts there is to be witnessed something even more alarming than this strange and inexplicable darkness.

The officers of the *octroi* at the Porte St. Lambert, on hearing that the Maire intends to pass through the gate out of the city, attempt to dissuade him, declaring emphatically that something very strange lies beyond.

However, M. Dupin and M. Lecamus are not deterred and go out through the postern gate. Outside the city there is nothing to be seen, and darkness reigns here as inside; but they experience an extraordinary sensation. They feel as though they are hemmed in by a vast crowd of people thronging all the vacant space. This uncanny sensation of being surrounded by invisible beings is so overwhelming that the two men re-enter the city hurriedly and in a state of great perturbation.

Gradually a belief spreads amongst the populace that these abnormal conditions are being inflicted upon Semur as a punishment. It has been ordered that the sick ward of the Hospital of St. Jean is to be cut off from the chapel, with which it communicates, as several people have complained of the noise of the daily Mass disturbing them. The Sisters of St. Jean are naturally incensed at this change, and the populace believe they may be responsible for the curse that has fallen on the city.

M. Dupin refuses to alter his decision in this respect. Next evening he is attracted to the *Place* by perceiving a great crowd there. The Cathedral door is pointed out to him by several excited people, and on looking at it he sees strange fiery letters which vanish and reappear in astounding fashion. These letters take the form of a placard headed by the word *Sommation* and call upon the Maire and people of Semur to give up their city to the dead, who know the true meaning of life and will not misuse it.

I WILL not attempt to give any detailed account of the state of the town during this evening. For myself I was utterly worn out, and went to rest as soon as M. de Clairon left me, having satisfied, as well as I could, the questions of the women. Even in the intensest excitement weary nature will claim her dues. I slept. I can even remember the grateful sense of being able to put all anxieties and perplexities aside for the moment, as I went to sleep. I felt the drowsiness gain upon me, and I was glad. To forget was of itself a happiness.

I woke up, however, intensely awake, and in perfect possession of all my faculties, while it was yet dark; and at once got up and began to dress. The moment of hesitation which generally follows waking—the little interval of thought in which one turns over perhaps that which is past, perhaps that which is to come—found no place within me. I got up without a moment's pause, like one who has been called to go on a journey; nor did it surprise me at all to see my wife moving about, taking a cloak from her wardrobe, and putting up linen in a bag. She was already fully dressed; but she asked no questions of me any more than I did of her. We were in haste, though we said nothing. When I had dressed, I looked round me to see if I had forgotten anything, as one does when one leaves a place. I saw my watch suspended to its usual hook, and my pocketbook, which I had taken from my pocket on the previous night. I took up also the light overcoat which I had worn when I made my rounds through the city on the first night of the darkness. "Now," I said, "Agnès, I am ready." I did not speak to her of where we were going, nor she to me. Little Jean and my mother met us at the door. Nor did *she* say anything, contrary to her custom; and the child was quite quiet. We went downstairs

together without saying a word. The servants, who were all astir, followed us.

I cannot give any description of the feelings that were in my mind. I had not any feelings. I was only hurried out, hastened by something which I could not define—a sense that I must go ; and perhaps I was too much astonished to do anything but yield. It seemed, however, to be no force or fear that was moving me, but a desire of my own ; though I could not tell how it was, or why I should be so anxious to get away. All the servants, trooping after me, had the same look in their faces ; they were anxious to be gone—it seemed their business to go—there was no question, no consultation.

And when we came out into the street, we encountered a stream of processions similar to our own. The children went quite steadily by the side of their parents. Little Jean, for example, on an ordinary occasion would have broken away—would have run to his comrades of the Bois-Sombre family, and they to him. But no ; the little ones, like ourselves, walked along quite gravely. They asked no questions, neither did we ask any questions of each other, as, " Where are you going ? " or, " What is the meaning of a so-early promenade ? " Nothing of the kind : my mother took my arm, and my wife, leading little Jean by the hand, came to the other side. The servants followed. The street was quite full of people ; but there was no noise except the sound of their footsteps. All of us turned the same way—turned towards the gates—and though I was not conscious of any feeling except the wish to go on, there were one or two things which took a place in my memory.

The first was, that my wife suddenly turned round as we were coming out of the *port-cochère*, her face lighting up. I need not say to anyone who knows Madame Dupin de la Clairière, that she is a beautiful woman. Without any partiality on my part, it would be impossible for me to ignore this fact : for it is perfectly well known and acknowledged by all. She was pale this morning—a little paler than usual ; and her blue eyes enlarged, with a serious look, which they always retain more or less. But suddenly, as we went out of the door, her face lighted up, her eyes were suffused with tears—with light—how can I tell what it was ?—they became like the eyes of angels. A little cry came from her parted lips—she lingered a moment, stooping down as if talking to some one less tall than herself, then came after us, with that light still in her face. At the moment I was too much occupied to enquire what it was ; but I noted it, even in the gravity of the occasion.

The next thing I observed was M. le Curé, who, as I have already indicated, is a man of great composure of manner and presence of mind, coming out of the door of the Presbytery. There was a strange look on his face of astonishment and reluctance. He walked very slowly, not as we did, but with a visible desire to turn back, folding his arms across his breast, and holding himself as if against the wind, resisting some gale which blew behind him, and forced him on. We felt no gale ; but there seemed to be a strange wind blowing along the side of the street on which M. le Curé was. And there was an air of concealed surprise in his face—great astonishment, but a determination not to let any one see that he was astonished, or that the situation was strange to him. And I cannot tell how it was, but I, too, though pre-occupied, was surprised to perceive that M. le Curé was going with the rest of us, though I could not have told why.

Behind M. le Curé there was another whom I remarked. This was Jacques Richard, he of whom I have already spoken. He was like a figure I have seen somewhere in sculpture. No one was near him, nobody touching him, and yet it was only necessary to look at the man to perceive that he was being forced along against his will. Every limb was in resistance ; his feet were planted widely yet firmly upon the pavement ; one of his arms was stretched out as if to lay hold on anything that should come within reach. M. le Curé resisted passively ; but Jacques resisted with passion, laying his back to the wind, and struggling not to be carried away. Notwithstanding his resistance, however, this rough figure was driven along slowly, struggling at every step. He did not make one movement that was not against his will, but still he was driven on. On our side of the street all went, like ourselves, calmly. My mother uttered now and then a low moan, but said nothing. She clung to my arm, and walked on, hurrying a little, sometimes going quicker than I intended to go. As for my wife, she accompanied us with her light step, which scarcely seemed to touch the

ground, little Jean pattering by her side. Our neighbours were all round us. We streamed down, as in a long procession, to the Porte St. Lambert.

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IT was only when we got there that the strange character of the step we were all taking suddenly occurred to me. It was still a kind of grey twilight, not yet day. The bells of the Cathedral had begun to toll, which was very startling—not ringing in their cheerful way, but tolling as if for a funeral ; and no other sound was audible but the noise of footsteps, like an army making a silent march into an enemy's country. We had reached the gate when a sudden wondering came over me. Why were we all going out of our houses in the wintry dusk to which our July days had turned ? I stopped, and turning round, was about to say something to the others, when I became suddenly aware that here I was not my own master. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth ; I could not say a word. Then I myself was turned round, and softly, firmly, irresistibly pushed out of the gate. My mother, who clung to me, added a little, no doubt, to the force against me, whatever it was, for she was frightened, and opposed herself to any endeavour on my part to regain freedom of movement ; but all that her feeble force could do against mine must have been little. Several other men around me seemed to be moved as I was. M. Barbou, for one, made a still more decided effort to turn back, for, being a bachelor, he had no one to restrain him. Him I saw turned round as you would turn a *roulette*. He was thrown against my wife in his tempestuous course, and but that she was so light and elastic in her tread, gliding out straight and softly like one of the saints, I think he must have thrown her down. And at that moment, silent as we all were, his " *Pardon, Madame, mille pardons, Madame,*" and his tone of horror at his own indiscretion, seemed to come to me like a voice out of another life.

Partially roused before by the sudden impulse of resistance I have described, I was yet more roused now. I turned round, disengaging myself from my mother. " Where are we going ? why are we thus cast forth ? My friends, help." I cried. I looked round upon the others, who, as I have said, had also awakened to a possibility of resistance. M. de Bois-Sombre, without a word, came and placed himself by my side ; others started from the crowd. We turned to resist this mysterious impulse which had sent us forth. The crowd surged round us in the uncertain light.

Just then there was a dull, soft sound, once, twice, thrice repeated. We rushed forward, but too late. The gates were closed upon us. The two folds of the great Porte St. Lambert, and the little postern for foot-passengers, all at once, not hurriedly, as from any fear of us, but slowly, softly, rolled on their hinges and shut—in our faces. I rushed forward with all my force and flung myself upon the gate. To what use ? It was so closed as no mortal could open it. They told me after, for I was not aware at the moment, that I burst forth with cries and exclamations, bidding them " Open, open in the name of God ! " I was not aware of what I said, but it seemed to me that I heard a voice of which nobody said anything to me, so that it would seem to have been unheard by the others, saying with a faint sound as of a trumpet, " Closed —in the name of God." It might be only an echo, faintly brought back to me, of the words I had myself said.

There was another change, however, of which no one could have any doubt. When I turned round from these closed doors, though the moment before the darkness was such that we could not see the gates closing, I found the sun shining gloriously round us, and all my fellow-citizens turning with one impulse, with a sudden cry of joy, to hail the full day.

Le grand jour ! Never in my life did I feel the full happiness of it, the full sense of the words before. The sun burst out into shining, the birds into singing. The sky stretched over us—deep and unfathomable and blue—the grass grew under our feet, a soft air of morning blew upon us, waving the curls of the children, the veils of the women, whose faces were lit up by the beautiful day. After three days of darkness what a resurrection ! It seemed to make up to us for the misery of being thus expelled from our homes. It was early, and all the freshness of the morning was upon the road and the fields, where the sun had just dried the dew. The river ran softly, reflecting the blue sky. How black it had been, deep and dark as a stream of ink, when I had looked down upon it from the Mont St. Lambert ! And now it ran as

clear and free as the voice of a little child. We all shared this moment of joy—for to us of the South the sunshine is as the breath of life, and to be deprived of it had been terrible. But when that first pleasure was over, the evidence of our strange position forced itself upon us with overpowering reality and force, made stronger by the very light. In the dimness it had not seemed so certain; now, gazing at each other in the clear light of the natural morning, we saw what had happened to us. No more delusion was possible. We could flatter ourselves now that it was a trick or a deception. M. de Clairon stood there like the rest of us, staring at the closed gates which science could not open. And there stood M. le Curé, which was more remarkable still. The Church herself had not been able to do anything.

We stood, a crowd of houseless exiles, looking at each other, our children clinging to us, our hearts failing us, expelled from our homes. As we looked in each other's faces we saw our own trouble. Many of the women sat down and wept, some upon the stones in the road, some on the grass. The children took fright from them, and began to cry, too. What was to become of us? I looked round upon this crowd with despair in my heart. It was I to whom everyone would look—for lodging, for direction—everything that human creatures want. It was my business to forget myself, though I also had been driven from my home and my city. Happily there was one thing I had left. In the pocket of my overcoat was my scarf of office. I stepped aside behind a tree and took it out and tied it upon me. That was something. There was thus a representative of order and law in the midst of the exiles, whatever might happen. This action, which a great number of the crowd saw, restored confidence. Many of the poor people gathered round me, and placed themselves near me, especially those women who had no natural support.

When M. le Curé saw this it seemed to make a great impression upon him. He changed colour, he who was usually so calm. Hitherto he had appeared bewildered, amazed to find himself as others. This, I must add, though you may perhaps think it superstitious, surprised me very much, too. But now he regained his self-possession. He stepped upon a piece of wood that lay in front of the gate. "My children!" he said. But just then the Cathedral bells, which had gone on tolling, suddenly burst into a wild peal. I do not know what it sounded like. It was a clamour of notes all run together, tone upon tone, without time or measure, as though a multitude had seized upon the bells and pulled all the ropes at once. If it was joy, what strange and terrible joy! It froze the very blood in our veins. M. le Curé became quite pale. He stepped down hurriedly from the piece of wood. We all made a hurried movement farther off from the gate.

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IT was now that I perceived the necessity of doing something, of getting this crowd disposed of, especially the women and the children. I am not ashamed to own that I trembled like the others; and nothing less than the consciousness that all eyes were upon me, and that my scarf of office marked me out among all who stood around, could have kept me from moving with precipitation as they did. I was enabled, however, to retire at a deliberate pace, and being thus slightly detached from the crowd, I took advantage of the opportunity to address them. Above all things, it was my duty to prevent a tumult in these unprecedented circumstances.

"My friends," I said, "the event which has occurred is beyond explanation for the moment. The very nature of it is mysterious; the circumstances are such as require the closest investigation. But take courage. I pledge myself not to leave this place till the gates are open, and you can return to your homes; in the meantime, however, the women and the children cannot remain here. Let those who have friends in the villages near go and ask for shelter; and let all who will, go to my house of La Clairière. My mother, my wife, recall to yourselves the position you occupy, and show an example. Lead our neighbours, I entreat you, to La Clairière."

My mother is advanced in years, and no longer strong, but she has a great heart. "I will go," she said. "God bless thee, my son! There will be no harm happen, for if this be true which we are told, thy father is in Semur."

There then occurred one of those incidents for which calculation never will prepare us. My mother's words seemed, as it were, to open the flood-gates; my wife came up to me with the light in her face which I had seen when we left our own

door. "It was our little Marie—our angel," she said. And then there arose a great cry and clamour of others, both men and women pressing round. "I saw my mother," said one, "who is dead twenty years come the St. Jean." "And I my little René," said another. "And I my Camille, who was killed in Africa." And lo, what did they do but rush towards the gate in a crowd—that gate from which they had but this moment fled in terror—beating upon it, and crying out, "Open to us, open to us, our most dear! Do you think we have forgotten you? We have never forgotten you!" What could we do with them, weeping thus, smiling, holding out their arms to—we knew not what? Even my Agnès was beyond my reach. Marie was our little girl who was dead. Those who were thus transported by a knowledge beyond ours were the weakest among us; most of them were women, the men old or feeble, and some children. I can recollect that I looked for Paul Lecamus among them, with wonder not to see him there. But though they were weak, they were beyond our strength to guide. What could we do with them? How could we force them away while they held to the fancy that those they loved were there? As it happens in times of emotion, it was those who were most impassioned who took the first place. We were at our wits' end.

But while we stood waiting, not knowing what to do, another sound suddenly came from the walls, which made them all silent in a moment. The most of us ran to this point and that (some taking flight altogether; but with the greater part anxious curiosity and anxiety had for the moment extinguished fear), in a wild eagerness to see who or what it was. But there was nothing to be seen, though the sound came from the wall close to the Mont St. Lambert, which I have already described. It was to me like the sound of a trumpet, and so I heard others say; and along with the trumpet were sounds as of words, though I could not make them out. But those others seemed to understand—they grew calmer—they ceased to weep. They raised their faces, all with that light upon them—that light I had seen in my Agnès. Some of them fell upon their knees. Imagine to yourself what a sight it was, all of us standing round, pale, stupefied, without a word to say! Then the women suddenly burst forth into replies: "*Oui, ma cherie! Oui, mon Ange!*" they cried. And while we looked they rose up; they came back, calling the children around them. My Agnès took that place which I had bidden her take. She had not hearkened to me, to leave me, but she hearkened now; and though I had bidden her to do this, yet to see her do it bewildered me, made my heart stand still. "*Mon ami,*" she said, "I must leave thee; it is commanded; they will not have the children suffer."

What could we do? We stood pale and looked on, while all the little ones, all the feeble, were gathered in a little army. My mother stood like me—to her nothing had been revealed. She was very pale, and there was a quiver of pain in her lips. She was the one who had been ready to do my bidding; but there was a rebellion in her heart now. When the procession was formed (for it was my care to see that everything was done in order), she followed but among the last. Thus they went away, many of them weeping, looking back, waving their hands to us. My Agnès covered her face, she could not look at me; but she obeyed. They went some to this side, some to that, leaving us gazing. For a long time we did nothing but watch them, going along the roads. What had their angels said to them? Nay, but God knows. I heard the sound; it was like the sound of the silver trumpets that travellers talk of; it was like music from heaven. I turned to M. le Curé, who was standing by. "What is it?" I cried. "You are their director—you are an ecclesiastic—you know what belongs to the unseen. What is this that has been said to them?" I have always thought well of M. le Curé. There were tears running down his cheeks. "I know not," he said. "I am a miserable like the rest. What they know is between God and them. Me! I have been of the world, like the rest!"

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THIS is how we were left alone—the men of the city—to take what means were best to get back to our homes. There were several left among us who had shared the enlightenment of the women, but these were not persons of importance who could put themselves at the head of affairs. And there were women who remained with us, but these not of the best. To see our wives go was very strange to us; it was the thing we wished most to see, the women and

children in safety, yet it was a strange sensation to see them go. For me, who had the charge of all on my hands, the relief was beyond description—yet was it strange; I cannot describe it. Then I called upon M. Barbou, who was trembling like a leaf, and gathered the chief of the citizens about me, including M. le Curé, that we should consult together what we should do.

I know no words that can describe our state in the strange circumstances we were now placed in. The women and the children were safe—that was much. But we—we were like an army suddenly formed, but without arms, without any knowledge of how to fight, without being able to see our enemy. We Frenchmen have not been without knowledge of such perils. We have seen the invader enter our doors; we have been obliged to spread our table for him and give him of our best. But to be put forth by forces no man could resist—to be left outside, with the doors of our own houses closed upon us—to be confronted by nothing—by a mist, a silence, a darkness—this was enough to paralyse the heart of any man. And it did so, more or less, according to the nature of those who were exposed to the trial. Some altogether failed us, and fled, carrying the news into the country, where most people laughed at them, as we understood afterwards. Some could do nothing but sit and gaze, huddled together in crowds, at the cloud over Semur, from which they expected to see fire burst and consume the city altogether. And a few, I grieve to say, took possession of the little *cabaret*, which stands at about half a kilometre from the St. Lambert gate, and established themselves there in hideous riot, which was the worst thing of all for serious men to behold.

Those upon whom I could rely I formed into patrols to go round the city, that no opening of a gate, or movement of those who were within, should take place without our knowledge. Such an emergency shows what men are. M. Barbou, though in ordinary times he discharges his duties as *adjoint* satisfactorily enough (though, it need not be added, a good Maire who is acquainted with his duties makes the office of *adjoint* of but little importance), was now found entirely useless. He could not forget how he had been spun round and tossed forth from the city gates. When I proposed to put him at the head of a patrol he had an attack of the nerves. Before nightfall he deserted me altogether, going off to his country-house and taking a number of his neighbours with him. "How can we tell when we may be permitted to return to the town?" he said, with his teeth chattering. "M. le Maire, I adjure you to put yourself in a place of safety."

"Sir," I said to him sternly, "for one who deserts his post there is no place of safety."

But I do not think he was capable of understanding me. Fortunately I found in M. le Curé a much more trustworthy coadjutor. He was indefatigable; he had the habit of sitting up to all hours, of being called at all hours, in which our *bourgeoisie*, I cannot but acknowledge, is wanting. The expression I have before described of astonishment—but of astonishment which he wished to conceal—never left his face. He did not understand how such a thing could have been permitted to happen while he had no share in it; and, indeed, I will not deny that this was a matter of great wonder to myself, too.

The arrangements I have described gave us occupation; and this had a happy effect upon us in distracting our minds from what had happened; for I think that if we had sat still and gazed at the dark city we should soon have gone mad, as some did. In our ceaseless patrols and attempts to find a way of entrance, we distracted ourselves from the inquiry, who would dare to go in if the entrance were found? In the meantime not a gate was opened, not a figure visible. We saw nothing no more than if Semur had been a picture painted upon a canvas. Strange sights indeed met our eyes—sights which made even the bravest quail. The strangest of them was the boats that would go down and up the river, shooting forth from under the fortified bridge, which is one of the chief features of our town, sometimes impelled by oars, but with no one visible in them—no one conducting them. To see one of these boats impelled up the stream, with no rower visible, was a wonderful sight. M. de Clairon, who was by my side, murmured something about a magnetic current; but when I asked him sternly by what set in motion, his voice died away in his moustache. M. le Curé said very little; one saw his lips move as he watched with us the passage of those boats. He smiled when it was proposed by some one to fire upon them. He read his Hours

as he went round at the head of his patrol. My fellow-townsmen and I conceived a great respect for him; and he inspired pity in me also. He had been the teacher of the Unseen among us, till the moment when the Unseen was thus, as it were, brought within our reach; but with the revelation he had nothing to do; and it filled him with pain and wonder. It made him silent; he said little about his religion, but signed himself, and his lips moved. He thought (I imagined) that he had displeased Those who are over all.

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WHEN the night came the bravest of us were afraid. I speak for myself. It was bright moonlight where we were, and Semur lay like a blot between the earth and the sky, all dark; even the Cathedral towers were lost in it; nothing visible but the line of the ramparts; whitened outside by the moon. One knows what black and strange shadows are cast by the moonlight; and it seemed to all of us that we did not know what might be lurking behind every tree. The shadows of the branches looked like terrible faces. I sent all my people out on the patrols, though they were dropping with fatigue. Rather that than to be mad with terror. For myself, I took up my post as near the bank of the river as we could approach; for there was a limit beyond which we might not pass. I made the experiment often; and it seemed to me, and to all that attempted it, that we did reach the very edge of the stream; but the next moment perceived that we were at a certain distance, say twenty metres or thereabout. I placed myself there very often, wrapping a cloak about me to preserve me from the dew. (I may say that food had been sent us, and wine from La Clairière, and many other houses in the neighbourhood, where the women had gone for this among other reasons, that we might be nourished by them.) And I must here relate a personal incident, though I have endeavoured not to be egotistical.

While I sat watching, I distinctly saw a boat, a boat which belonged to myself, lying on the very edge of the shadow. The prow, indeed, touched the moonlight where it was cut clean across by the darkness; and this was how I discovered that it was the *Marie*, a pretty pleasure-boat which had been made for my wife. The sight of it made my heart beat; for what could it mean but that someone who was dear to me, someone in whom I took an interest, was there? I sprang up from where I sat to make another effort to get nearer; but my feet were as lead, and would not move; and there came a singing in my ears, and my blood coursed through my veins as in a fever. Ah! Was it possible? I, who am a man, who have resolution, who have courage, who can lead the people, *I was afraid!* I sat down again and wept like a child. Perhaps it was my little Marie that was in the boat. God, He knows if I loved thee, my little angel! But I was afraid. O how mean is man! though we are so proud. They came near to me who were my own, and it was borne in upon my spirit that my good father was with the child; but because they had died I was afraid. I covered my face with my hands. Then it seemed to me that I heard a long quiver of a sigh; a long, long breath, such as sometimes relieves a sorrow that is beyond words. Trembling, I uncovered my eyes. There was nothing on the edge of the moonlight; all was dark, and all was still, the white radiance making a clear line across the river, but nothing more.

If my Agnès had been with me she would have seen our child, she would have heard that voice! The great cold drops of moisture were on my forehead. My limbs trembled my heart fluttered in my bosom. I could neither listen nor yet speak. And those who would have spoken to me, those who loved me, sighing, went away. It is not possible that such wretchedness should be credible to noble minds; and if it had not been for pride and for shame, I should have fled away straight to La Clairière, to put myself under shelter, to have someone near me who was less a coward than I. I, upon whom all the others relied, the Maire of the Commune! I make my confession. I was of no more force than this.

A voice behind me made me spring to my feet—the leap of a mouse would have driven me wild. I was altogether demoralised. "Monsieur le Maire, it is but I," said someone quite humble and frightened. "*Tiens!*—it is thou, Jacques!" I said. I could have embraced him, though it is well known how little I approve of him. But he was living, he was a man like myself. I put out my hand, and felt him warm and breathing, and I shall never forget the

ease that came to my heart. Its beating calmed. I was restored to myself.

" M. le Maire," he said, " I wish to ask you something. Is it true all that is said about these people, I would say, these Messieurs ? I do not wish to speak with disrespect, M. le Maire."

" What is it, Jacques, that is said ? " I had called him " thou " not out of contempt, but because, for the moment, he seemed to me as a brother, as one of my friends.

" M. le Maire, is it indeed *les morts* that are in Semur ? "

He trembled, and so did I. " Jacques," I said, " you know all that I know.

" Yes, M. le Maire, it is so, sure enough. I do not doubt it. If it were the Prussians, a man could fight. But *ces Messieurs la !* What I want to know is : is it because of what you did to those little Sisters, those good little ladies of St. Jean ? "

" What I did ? You were yourself one of the complainants. You were of those who said, when a man is ill, when he is suffering, they torment him with their Mass ; it is quiet he wants, not their Mass. These were thy words, *vaurien*. And now you say it was I ! "

" True, M. le Maire," said Jacques ; " but look you, when a man is better, when he has just got well, when he feels he is safe, then you should not take what he says for gospel. It would be strange if one had a new illness just when one is getting well of the old ; and one feels now is the time to enjoy one's self, to kick up one's heels a little, while at least there is not likely to be much of a watch kept *up there*—the saints forgive me," cried Jacques, trembling and crossing himself, " if I speak with levity at such a moment ! And the little ladies were very kind. It was wrong to close their chapel, M. le Maire. From that comes all our trouble."

" You good-for nothing ! " I cried, " it is you and such as you that are the beginning of our trouble. You thought there was no watch kept *up there ;* you thought God would not take the trouble to punish you ; you went about the streets of Semur tossing a *grosse pièce* of a hundred sous, and calling out, ' There is no God—this is my god ; *L'argent, c'est le bon Dieu.*' "

" M. le Maire, M. le Maire, be silent, I implore you ! It is enough to bring down a judgment upon us."

" It has brought down a judgment upon us. Go thou and try what thy *grosse pièce* will do for thee now—worship thy god. Go, I tell you, and get help from your money."

" I have no money, M. le Maire, and what could money do here ? We would do much better to promise a large candie for the next festival, and that the ladies of St. Jean——"

" Get away with thee to the end of the world, thou and thy ladies of St. Jean ! " I cried ; which was wrong, I do not deny it, for they are good women, not like this good-for-nothing fellow. And to think that this man, whom I despise, was more pleasant to me than the dear souls who loved me ! Shame came upon me at the thought. I too, then, was like the others, fearing the Unseen—capable of understanding only that which was palpable. When Jacques slunk away, which he did for a few steps, not losing sight of me, I turned my face towards the river and the town. The moonlight fell upon the water, white as silver where that line of darkness lay, shining, as if it tried, and tried in vain, to penetrate Semur ; and between that and the blue sky overhead lay the city out of which we had been driven forth—the city of the dead. " O God," I cried, " whom I know not, am not I to Thee as my little Jean is to me, a child and less than a child ? Do not abandon me in this darkness, Would I abandon him were he ever so disobedient ? And God, if thou art God, Thou art a better father than I." When I had said this, my heart was a little relieved. It seemed to me that I had spoken to someone who knew all of us, whether we were dead or whether we were living. That is a wonderful thing to think of, when it appears to one not as a thing to believe, but as something that is real. It gave me courage. I got up and went to meet the patrol which was coming in, and found that great good-for-nothing Jacques running close after me, holding my cloak. " Do not send me away, M. le Maire," he said, " I dare not stay by myself with *them* so near." Instead of his money, in which he had trusted, it was I who had become his god now.

¶

THERE are few who have not heard something of the suffering of a siege. Whether within or without, it is the most terrible of all the experiences of war.

I am old enough to recollect the trenches before Sebastopol, and all that my countrymen and the English endured there. Sometimes I endeavoured to think of this to distract me from what we ourselves endured. But how different was it! We had neither shelter nor support. We had no weapons, nor any against whom to wield them. We were cast out of our homes in the midst of our lives, in the midst of our occupations, and left there helpless, to gaze at each other, to blind our eyes trying to penetrate the darkness before us. Could we have done anything, the oppression might have been less terrible—but what was there that we could do?

Fortunately (though I do not deny that I felt each desertion) our band grew less and less every day. Hour by hour someone stole away—first one, then another, dispersing themselves among the villages near, in which many had friends. The accounts which these men gave were, I afterwards learnt, of the most vague description. Some talked of wonders they had seen, and were laughed at—and some spread reports of internal division among us. Not till long after did I know all the reports that went abroad. It was said that there had been fighting in Semur, and that we were divided into two factions, one of which had gained the mastery, and driven the other out. This was the story current in La Rochette, where they are always glad to hear anything to the discredit of the people of Semur; but no credence could have been given to it by those in authority, otherwise M. le Préfet, however indifferent to our interests, must necessarily have taken some steps for our relief.

Our entire separation from the world was indeed one of the strangest details of this terrible period. Generally the diligence, though conveying on the whole few passengers, returned with two or three, at least, visitors or commercial persons, daily—and the latter class frequently arrived in carriages of their own; but during this period no stranger came to see our miserable plight. We made shelter for ourselves under the branches of the few trees that grew in the uncultivated ground on either side of the road—and a hasty erection, half tent, half shed, was put up for a place to assemble in, or for those who were unable to bear the heat of the day or the occasional chills of the night. But the most of us were too restless to seek repose, and could not bear to be out of sight of the city. At any moment it seemed to us the gates might open, or some loophole be visible by which we might throw ourselves upon the darkness and vanquish it. This was what we said to ourselves, forgetting how we shook and trembled whenever any contact had been possible with those who were within. But one thing was certain, that though we feared, we could not turn our eyes from the place. We slept leaning against a tree, or with our heads on our hands and our faces towards Semur. We took no count of day or night, but ate the morsel the women brought to us, and slept thus, not sleeping, when want or weariness overwhelmed us. There was scarcely an hour in the day that some of the women did not come to ask what news. They crept along the roads in twos and threes, and lingered for hours sitting by the way weeping, starting at every breath of wind.

Meanwhile, all was not silent within Semur. The Cathedral bells rang often, at first filling us with hope, for how familiar was that sound! The first time, we all gathered together and listened, and many wept. It was as if we heard our mother's voice. M. de Bois-Sombre burst into tears. I have never seen him within the doors of the Cathedral since his marriage; but he burst into tears. "*Mon Dieu*, if I were but there!" he said. We stood and listened, our hearts melting, some falling on their knees. M. le Curé stood up in the midst of us and began to intone the psalm (he has a beautiful voice, it is sympathetic, it goes to the heart): "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go up . . ." And though there were few of us who could have supposed themselves capable of listening to that sentiment a little while before with any sympathy, yet a vague hope rose up within us while we heard him, while we listened to the bells. What man is there to whom the bells of his village, the *carillon* of his city, is not most dear? It rings for him through all his life; it is the first sound of home in the distance when he comes back—the last that follows him like a long farewell when he goes away. While we listened we forgot our fears. They were as we were; they were also our brethren, who rang those bells. We seemed to see them trooping into our beautiful Cathedral. Ah, only to see it again, to be within its shelter, cool and calm as in our mother's arms! It seemed to us that we should wish for nothing more.

When the sound ceased we looked into each other's faces, and each man saw that his neighbour was pale. Hope died in us when the sound died away, vibrating sadly through the air. Some men threw themselves on the ground in their despair.

And from this time forward many voices were heard, calls and shouts within the walls, and sometimes a sound like a trumpet, and other instruments of music. We thought, indeed, that noises as of bands patrolling along the ramparts were audible as our patrols worked their way round and round. This was a duty which I never allowed to be neglected, not because I put very much faith in it, but because it gave us a sort of employment. There is a story somewhere, which I recollect dimly, of an ancient city which its assailants did not touch, but only marched round and round till the walls fell and they could enter. Whether this was a story of classic times or out of our own remote history I could not recollect. But I thought of it many times while we made our way like a procession of ghosts, round and round, straining our ears to hear what those voices were which sounded above us, in tones that were familiar yet so strange. This story got so much into my head (and after a time all our heads seemed to get confused and full of wild and bewildering expedients) that I found myself suggesting—I, a man known for sense and reason—that we should blow trumpets at some time to be fixed, which was a thing the ancients had done in the strange tale which had taken possession of me. M. le Curé looked at me with disapproval. He said, " I did not expect from M. le Maire anything that was disrespectful to religion." Heaven forbid that I should be disrespectful to religion at any time of life, but then it was impossible to me. I remembered after that the tale of which I speak, which had so seized upon me, was in the sacred writings; but those who know me will understand that no sneer at these writings or intention of wounding the feelings of M. le Curé was in my mind.

¶

I WAS seated one day upon a little inequality of the ground, leaning my back against a half-withered hawthorn, and dozing with my head in my hands, when a soothing, which always diffuses itself from her presence, shed itself over me, and opening my eyes I saw my Agnès sitting by me. She had come with some food and a little linen, fresh and soft like her own touch. My wife was not gaunt and worn, like me, but she was pale and as thin as a shadow. I woke with a start, and seeing her there, there suddenly came a dread over me that she would pass away before my eyes and go over to Those who were within Semur. I cried " *Non, mon Agnès; non, mon Agnès;* before you ask, No! " seizing her and holding her fast in this dream, which was not altogether a dream. She looked at me with a smile, that smile that has always been to me as the rising of the sun over the earth.

" *Mon ami*," she said, surprised, " I ask nothing except that you should take a little rest and spare thyself." Then she added with haste what I knew she would say, " Unless it were this, *mon ami.* If I were permitted, I would go into the city—I would ask those who are there what is their meaning, and if no way can be found, no act of penitence—oh, do not answer in haste! I have no fear, and it would be to save thee."

A strong throb of anger came into my throat. Figure to yourself that I looked at my wife with anger, with the same feeling which had moved me when the deserters left us, but far more hot and sharp. I seized her soft hands and crushed them in mine. " You would leave me? " I said. " You would desert your husband? You would go over to our enemies! "

" O Martin, say not so," she cried with tears. " Not enemies. There is our little Marie, and my mother, who died when I was born."

" You love these dead tyrants. Yes," I said, " you love them best. You will go to—the majority, to the strongest. Do not speak to me! Because your God is on their side you will forsake us, too."

Then she threw herself upon me and encircled me with her arms. The touch of them stilled my passion, but yet I held her, clutching her gown, so terrible a fear came over me that she would go and come back no more.

" Forsake thee! " she breathed out over me with a moan. Then, putting her cool cheek to mine, which burned, " But I would die for thee, Martin."

" Silence, my wife; that is what you shall not do," I cried, beside myself. I rose up; I put her away from me. That is, I know it, what has been done. Their God

does this, they do not hesitate to say—takes from you what you love best, to make you better—*you*! And they ask you to love Him when He has thus despoiled you! "Go home, Agnès," I said, hoarse with terror. "Let us face them as we may; you shall not go among them, or put thyself in peril. Die for me! *Mon Dieu!* and what then, what should I do then? Turn your face from them; turn from them! Go, go; and let me not see thee here again!"

My wife did not understand the terror that seized me. She obeyed me, as she always does, but, with the tears falling from her white cheeks, fixed upon me the most piteous look. "*Mon ami*," she said, "you are disturbed, you are not in full possession of yourself. This cannot be what you mean."

"Let me not see thee here again!" I cried. "Would you make me mad in the midst of my trouble? No! I will not have you look that way. Go home! Go home!" Then I took her into my arms and wept, though I am not a man given to tears. "Oh, my Agnès!" I said. "Give me thy counsel. What you tell me I will do; but rather than risk thee I would live thus for ever and defy them."

She put her hand upon my lips. "I will not ask this again," she said, bowing her head. "But defy them—why should you defy them? Have they come for nothing? Was Semur a city of the saints? They have come to convert our people, Martin—thee, too, and the rest. If you will submit your hearts they will open the gates, they will go back to their sacred homes, and we to ours. This has been borne in upon me sleeping and waking, and it seemed to me that if I could but go and say, 'Oh, my fathers! Oh, my brothers! They submit!' all would be well. For I do not fear them, Martin. Would they harm me that love us? I would but give our Marie one kiss——"

"You are a traitor!" I said. "You would steal yourself from me, and do me the worst wrong of all——"

But I recovered my calm. What she said reached my understanding at last. "Submit!" I said. "But to what? To come and turn us from our homes, to wrap our town in darkness, to banish our wives and our children, to leave us here to be scorched by the sun and drenched by the rain? This is not to convince us, my Agnès. And to what, then, do you bid us submit——?"

"It is to convince you, *mon ami*, of the love of God, who has permitted this great tribulation to be, that we might be saved," said Agnès. Her face was sublime with faith. It is possible to these dear women. but for me the words she spoke were but words without meaning. I shook my head. Now that my horror and alarm were passed I could well remember often to have heard words like these before.

"My angel," I said, "all this I admire, I adore in thee. But how is it the love of God? And how shall we be saved by it? Submit! I will do anything that is reasonable, but of what truth have we here the proof——?"

Someone had come up behind as we were talking. When I heard his voice I smiled, notwithstanding my despair. It was natural that the Church should come to the woman's aid. But I would not refuse to give ear to M. le Curé, who had proved himself a man, had he been ten times a priest.

"I have not heard what Madame has been saying, M. le Maire, neither would I interpose but for your question. You ask of what truth have we the proof here? It is the Unseen that has revealed itself. Do we see anything, you and I? Nothing, nothing but a cloud. But that which we cannot see, that which we know not, that which we dread—look, it is there!"

I turned unconsciously as he pointed with his hand. Oh, heaven, what did I see? Above the cloud that wrapped Semur there was a separation, a rent in the darkness, and in mid-heaven the Cathedral towers, pointing to the sky. I paid no more attention to M. le Curé. I sent forth a shout that roused all, even the weary line of the patrol that was marching slowly with bowed heads round the walls; and there went up such a cry of joy as shook the earth. "The towers, the towers!" I cried. These were the towers that could be seen leagues off, the first sign of Semur; our towers, which we had been born to love like our father's name. I have had joys in my life, deep and great. I have loved, I have won honours, I have conquered difficulty, but never had I felt as now. It was as if one had been born again.

When we had gazed upon them, blessing them and thanking God, I gave orders that all our company should be called to the tent, that we might consider whether any new steps could now be taken: Agnès with the other women sitting apart on one side and waiting. I recognised even in the

excitement of such a time that theirs was no easy part. To sit there silent, to wait till we had spoken, to be bound by what we decided, and to have no voice—yes, that was hard. They thought they knew better than we did : but they were silent, devouring us with their eager eyes. I love one woman more than all the world ; I count her the best thing that God has made ; yet would I not be as Agnès for all that life could give me. It was her part to be silent, and she was so, like the angel she is, while even Jacques Richard had the right to speak. *Mon Dieu !* but it is hard, I allow it ; they have need to be angels. This thought passed through my mind even at the crisis which had now arrived. For at such moments one sees everything, one thinks of everything, though it is only after that one remembers what one has seen and thought.

¶

WHEN my fellow-citizens gathered together (we were now less than a hundred in number, so many had gone from us), I took it upon myself to speak. We were a haggard, worn-eyed company, having had neither shelter nor sleep nor even food, save in hasty snatches. I stood at the door of the tent and they below, for the ground sloped a little. Beside me were M. le Curé, M. de Bois-Sombre, and one or two others of the chief citizens. " My friends," I said, " you have seen that a new circumstance has occurred. It is not within our power to tell what its meaning is, yet it must be a symptom of good. For my own part, to see these towers makes the air lighter. Let us think of the Church as we may, no one can deny that the towers of Semur are dear to our hearts."

" M. le Maire," said M. de Bois-Sombre, interrupting, " I speak, I am sure, the sentiments of my fellow-citizens when I say that there is no longer any question among us concerning the Church ; it is an admirable institution, a universal advantage——"

" Yes, yes," said the crowd, " yes, certainly ! " and some added, " It is the only safeguard, it is our protection," and some signed themselves. In the crowd I saw Riou, who had done this at the *octroi*. But the sign did not surprise me now.

M. le Curé stood by my side, but he did not smile. His countenance was dark, almost angry. He stood quite silent, with his eyes on the ground. It gave him no pleasure, this profession of faith.

" It is well, my friends," said I, " we are all in accord ; and the good God has permitted us again to see these towers. I have called you together to collect your ideas. This change must have a meaning. It has been suggested to me that we might send an ambassador—a messenger, if that is possible, into the city——"

Here I stopped short ; and a shiver ran through me—a shiver which went over the whole company. We were all pale as we looked in each other's faces ; and for a moment no one ventured to speak. After this pause it was perhaps natural that he who first found his voice should be the last who had any right to give an opinion. Who should it be but Jacques Richard ? " M. le Maire," cried the fellow, " speaks at his ease—but who will thus risk himself ? " Probably he did not mean that his grumbling should be heard, but in the silence every sound was audible ; there was a gasp, a catching of the breath, and all turned their eyes again upon me. I did not pause to think what answer I should give. " I ! " I cried. " Here stands one who will risk himself, who will perish if need be——"

Something stirred behind me. It was Agnès who had risen to her feet, who stood with her lips parted and quivering, with her hands clasped, as if about to speak. But she did not speak. Well ! she had proposed to do it. Then why not I ?

" Let me make the observation," said another of our fellow-citizens, Bordereau the banker, " that this would not be just. Without M. le Maire we should be a mob without a head. If a messenger is to be sent, let it be someone not so indispensable——"

" Why send a messenger ? " said another, Philip Leclerc. " Do we know that these Messieurs will admit anyone ? And how can you speak, how can you parley with those "—and he too, was seized with a shiver—" whom you cannot see ? "

Then there came another voice out of the crowd. It was one who would not show himself, who was conscious of the mockery in his tone. " If there is anyone sent, let it be M. le Curé," it said.

M. le Curé stepped forward. His pale countenance flushed red. " Here am I," he said, " I am ready ; but he who spoke speaks to mock me. Is it befitting in this presence ? "

There was a struggle among the men. Whoever it was who had spoken (I did not wish to know) I had no need to condemn the mocker; they themselves silenced him; then Jacques Richard (still less worthy of credit) cried out again with a voice that was husky. What are men made of? Notwithstanding everything, it was from the *cabaret*, from the wine-shop, that he had come. He said, "Though M. le Maire will not take my opinion, yet it is this. Let them re-open the chapel in the hospital. The ladies of St. Jean——"

"Hold thy peace," I said, "miserable!" But a murmur rose. "Though it is not his part to speak, I agree," said one. "And I." "And I." There was well-nigh a tumult of consent; and this made me angry. Words were on my lips which it might have been foolish to utter, when M. de Bois-Sombre, who is a man of judgment, interfered.

"M. le Maire," he said, "as there are none of us here who would show disrespect to the Church and holy things—that is understood—it is not necessary to enter into details. Every restriction that would wound the most susceptible is withdrawn; not one more than another, but all. We have been indifferent in the past, but for the future you will agree with me that everything shall be changed. The ambassador—whoever he may be"—he added with a catching of his breath—"must be empowered to promise—everything—submission to all that may be required."

Here the women could not restrain themselves; they all rose up with a cry, and many of them began to weep. "Ah!" said one with a hysterical sound of laughter in her tears. "*Sainte Mère!* it will be heaven upon earth."

M. le Curé said nothing; a keen glance of wonder, yet of subdued triumph, shot from under his eyelids. As for me, I wrung my hands: "What you say will be superstition, it will be hypocrisy," I cried.

But at that moment a further incident occurred. Suddenly, while we deliberated, a long loud peal of a trumpet sounded into the air. I have already said that many sounds had been heard before; but this was different; there was not one of us that did not feel that this was addressed to himself. The agitation was extreme; it was a summons, the beginning of some distinct communication. The crowd scattered; but for myself, after a momentary struggle, I went forward resolutely. I did not even look back at my wife. I was no longer Martin Dupin, but the Maire of Semur, the community's saviour. Even Bois-Sombre quailed: but I felt it was in me to hold head against death itself; and before I had gone two steps I felt rather than saw that M. le Curé had come to my side. We went on without a word; gradually the others collected behind us, following yet straggling here and there upon the inequalities of the ground.

Before us lay the cloud that was Semur, a darkness defined by the shining of the summer day around, the river escaping from that gloom as from a cavern, the towers piercing through, but the sunshine thrown back on every side from that darkness. I have spoken of the walls as if we saw them, but there were no walls visible, nor any date, though we all turned like blind men to where the Porte St. Lambert was. There was the broad vacant road leading up to it, leading into the gloom. We stood there at a little distance. Whether it was human weakness or an invisible barrier, how can I tell? We stood thus immovable, with the trumpet pealing out over us, out of the cloud. It summoned every man as by his name. To me it was not wonderful that this impression should come, but afterwards it was elicited from all that this was the feeling of each. Though no words were said, it was as the calling of our names. We all waited in such a supreme agitation as I cannot describe for some communication that was to come.

When suddenly, in a moment, the trumpet ceased; there was an interval of dead and terrible silence; then, each with a leap of his heart as if it would burst from his bosom, we saw a single figure slowly detach itself out of the gloom. "My God!" I cried. My senses went from me; I felt my head go round like a straw tossed on the winds.

¶

TO know them so near, those mysterious visitors—to feel them, to hear them, was not that enough? But, to see! who could bear it? Our voices rang like broken chords, like a tearing and rending of sound. Some covered their faces with their hands; for our very eyes seemed to be drawn out of their sockets, fluttering like things with a separate life.

Then there fell upon us a strange and

wonderful calm. The figure advanced slowly; there was weakness in it. The step, though solemn, was feeble; and if you can figure to yourself our consternation, the pause, the cry—our hearts dropping back as it might be into their places—the sudden stop of the wild panting in our breasts; when there became visible to us a human face well known, a man as we were. "Lecamus!" I cried; and all the men round took it up, crowding nearer, trembling yet delivered from their terror; some even laughed in the relief. There was but one who had an air of discontent, and that was M. le Curé. As he said "Lecamus!" like the rest, there was impatience, disappointment, anger in his tone.

And I, who had wondered where Lecamus had gone; thinking sometimes that he was one of the deserters who had left us! But when he came nearer his face was as the face of a dead man, and a cold chill came over us. His eyes, which were cast down, flickered under the thin eyelids, in which all the veins were visible. His face was grey, like that of the dying. "Is he dead?" I said. But, except M. le Curé, no one knew that I spoke.

"Not even so," said M. le Curé, with a mortification in his voice which I have never forgotten. "Not even so. That might be something. They teach us not by angels—by the fools and offscourings of the earth."

"Lecamus," I said, my voice trembling in my throat, "have you been among the dead? And do you live?"

"I live," he said, then looked around with tears upon the crowd. "Good neighbours, good friends," he said, and put out his hand and touched them. He was as much agitated as they.

"M. Lecamus," said I, "we are here in very strange circumstances, as you know. Do not trifle with us. If you have, indeed, been with those who have taken the control of our city, do not keep us in suspense. You will see by the emblems of my office that it is to me you must address yourself. If you have a mission, speak."

"It is just," he said; "it is just—— But bear with me one moment. It is good to behold those who draw breath. If I have not loved you enough, my good neighbours, forgive me now!"

"Rouse yourself, Lecamus," said I with some anxiety. "Three days we have been suffering here; we are distracted with the suspense. Tell us your message—if you have anything to tell."

"Three days!" he said, wondering. "I should have said years. Time is long when there is neither night nor day." Then, uncovering himself, he turned towards the city. "They who have sent me would have you know that they come not in anger, but in friendship, for the love they bear you, and because it has been permitted——"

As he spoke his feebleness disappeared. He held his head high, and we clustered closer and closer round him, not losing a half word, not a tone, not a breath.

"They are not the dead. They are the immortal. They are those who dwell—elsewhere. They have other work, which has been interrupted because of this trial. They ask: 'Do you know now? Do you know now?' This is what I am bidden to say."

"What," I said (I tried to say it, but my lips were dry)—"what would they have us to know?"

But a clamour interrupted me. "Ah, yes, yes, yes!" the people cried, men and women. Some wept aloud, some signed themselves, some held up their hands to the skies. "Never more will we deny religion," they cried, "never more fail in our duties. They shall see how we will follow every office, how the churches shall be full, how we will observe the feasts and the days of the saints!" "M. Lecamus," cried two or three together, "go tell these Messieurs that we will have Masses said for them, that we will obey in everything. We have seen what comes of it when a city is without piety. Never more will we neglect the holy functions; we will vow ourselves to the holy Mother and the saints——"

"And if those ladies wish it," cried Jacques Richard, "there shall be as many Masses as there are priests to say them in the Hospital of St. Jean."

"Silence, fellow!" I cried. "Is it for you to promise in the name of the Commune?" I was almost beside myself. "M. Lecamus, is it for this that they have come?"

His head had begun to droop again, and a dimness came over his face. "Do I know?" he said. "It was them I longed for, not to know their errand. But I have not yet said all. You are to send two—two whom you esteem the highest—to speak with them face to face."

(To be continued in next month's "Argosy.")

God Sees The Truth

—But bides His time

By LEO TOLSTOY

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by* REGINALD MERTON)

IN the town of Vladimir lived a young merchant named Axionov. Besides his house he had two shops.

He was a handsome man with fair, curly hair, of a jovial disposition, and fond of singing. When he was younger he had drunk much, and when drunk had been very wild. But since he had been married he had given up drinking, and now seldom had recourse to it.

One summer day Axionov was going to the fair at Nijni Novgorod. As he was saying farewell to his family, his wife said to him, " Ivan Dmitryevich, do not go to-day. Last night I dreamed a bad dream about you."

Axionov laughed and said :

" You are afraid of everything. But I must go to the fair."

His wife said :

" I do not know myself what it is of which I am afraid, but my dream was so bad. I dreamed that you were going out of the town without your hat. I looked at you, and your hair was grey."

Axionov laughed again, and said :

" But I must go and make money at the fair, and when I have done that I will bring back rich presents."

And he bade his family farewell and started.

When he had done half his journey he met another merchant whom he knew, and with him he stopped to rest for the night. They drank tea together, and then lay down to sleep in two adjoining rooms. Axionov was not used to sleep long ; he awoke in the middle of the night and, so that he might travel in the cool of the day, roused his coachman and bade him harness the horses. Then he entered the dark hut where the landlord lay, paid his reckoning, and went on his way.

When he had journeyed twenty-five miles he stopped again to refresh himself and rested at an inn. Here he ordered food and called for a samovar. Then he took his guitar and began to play. Suddenly he heard in the yard the bell of a troika, from which there got out an official, with two soldiers. The official approached Axionov and asked him who he was and whence he came. Axionov told him everything and invited him to drink tea with him. But the official persisted in his enquiries : Where had he passed the previous night ? Was he alone or with a merchant ? Had he seen the merchant in the morning ? Why had he resumed his journey so early ? Axionov was surprised at the persistence and closeness of these inquiries, but he recounted everything as it had happened, and then said : " But why do you question me so ? I am no thief or robber. I am travelling on my own affairs, and your questions are misplaced."

Then the man called to the soldiers, and said to Axionov :

" I am a police official, and I have been questioning you because the merchant in whose company you spent last night has been murdered. Tell me where your baggage is, and do you "—turning to the soldiers—" search him."

Then they took his bag and sack that he had with him, undid them and started to search them. Suddenly the official took from the sack a knife, and cried :

" Whose knife is this ? "

Axionov looked and saw that they had taken a blood-stained knife from his sack, and he was afraid.

" Why is there blood on the knife ? "

Axionov tried to reply, but the words would not come.

" I . . . I do not know. I . . . the knife . . . is not mine," he said.

Then the police official said : " This morning the merchant was found murdered in his bed. There was no one there who could have done this. The house was locked from the inside, and no one was in the house but you. And the blood-stained knife which I have found in your sack is yours, as is evident from your face. Tell

me how you killed him, and how much money you took from him."

Axionov swore that he had not murdered the man, that he had not seen him after drinking tea with him, that he only had eight thousand roubles with him, that the knife was not his. But his voice broke, his face was pale, and he trembled all over with fear, as though he was guilty.

The police official called the soldiers and told them to pinion Axionov and take him to the troika. When they had pinioned his legs and lifted him into the troika, Axionov crossed himself and began to weep. They took his bags and money, and he was sent off to prison in the next town. They sent to Vladimir to find out what kind of man Axionov was, and all the merchants and neighbours in Vladimir said that Axionov had drunk and led a wild life when he was young, but that he was a good man. And then he was tried for the murder of the Riazan merchant and for the theft of twenty thousand roubles.

Axionov's wife was torn with anxiety for her husband, and knew not what to think. All her children were still young, and one was at the breast. She made all her preparations and journeyed to the town in which he was in prison. At first they would not admit her, but she petitioned the authorities, and they allowed her to see her husband. When she saw him in his prison dress and fetters, herded with robbers, she fell to the ground, and for a long time lay senseless. Then she gathered her children round her, sat near him, told him of matters concerning their household, and asked him about all that had happened to him. He told her everything. She said:

"What can we do now?"

He answered: "We must petition the Czar. An innocent man should not be condemned."

His wife told him that she had already petitioned the Czar, but that the petition had never reached him. Axionov said nothing and only lowered his eyes. Then his wife said:

"It was not without cause that I dreamed that dream, you remember, in which I saw you with grey hairs. For, in truth, your hair is grey with grief. You ought not to have gone on that journey."

And she stroked his hair and said: "Vanya, my dear, tell your wife the truth. Did you do this thing?"

He said: "And you thought that of me?" And he covered his face with his hands and wept. Then a soldier came in and said that the wife and children must leave the prison. And so Axionov took farewell of his family for the last time.

When his wife had gone Axionov tried to remember what she had said. And when he remembered what even she had thought of him and how she had asked him whether he had killed the merchant, he said to himself: "Except God, no one can know the truth; therefore I must pray to God and await His mercy." After this Axionov ceased to make petitions and, ceasing also to hope, he only prayed to God.

Axionov was condemned to be whipped with the knout and to be sent to Siberia. And so it was done with him.

He was whipped with the knout and, when the wounds were healed, he was sent with other convicts to Siberia.

¶

IN the Siberian convict-prison he lived twenty-six years. His hair had become white as snow, and he had grown a beard, which was long, thin and grey. All his light-heartedness had gone from him. He was bent, and he walked slowly, spoke little, never laughed, and continually prayed to God.

In prison he learned to sew shoes, and with the money that he earned he bought a Book of Martyrs, which he read when it was light in the prison. On Sundays and holy days he went to the prison church, read the Gospel and sang in the choir, for his voice was still good. The authorities liked Axionov for his humility, while his comrades of the prison respected him and called him "grandfather" and "man of God." When there were petitions to be made it was always Axionov who was sent to the authorities, and when the convicts quarrelled they always asked Axionov to settle their quarrel.

No one wrote to him from home, and he did not know whether his wife and children were alive or not.

One day a batch of new convicts arrived at the prison. In the evening all the old convicts gathered round the new ones and began to ask them questions about what town or village they came from, and what crime they had committed. Axionov sat with the rest and, with his eyes cast down, listened to what they were saying.

One of the new convicts was a tall, strong man of sixty, with a trimmed, grey beard. He was telling them why he had been taken. " There was really no reason for sending me here. I took a horse out of a sledge, and they said I had stolen him. I said, ' I only wanted to go faster, and so I took the horse. And besides, I know the coachman. It was quite in order.' ' No,' they said, ' you stole him.' But they do not know what and where I stole. There were things for which I ought to have been sent here long ago, but they could not find out. And so now they sent me here unjustly."

One of them asked him where he came from.

" I am from the town of Vladimir, and my name is Makar Semyonov."

Axionov raised his head and asked :

" Have you ever heard of the family of Axionov, the merchant, in the town of Vladimir ? Are they alive ? "

" Yes, of course I have heard of them. They are rich merchants, although the father is in Siberia, a sinner like us. And you, grandfather, for what did they take you here ? "

Axionov did not care to speak of his misfortune ; he sighed and said : " For my sins I have been twenty-six years in Siberia."

Makar Semyonov said :

" But what were those sins ? "

Axionov replied only " I have deserved it," and would not say any more. But others of the old convicts told the new convict the tale of how Axionov had come to be sent to Siberia. They told him how someone had killed the merchant at the inn and hidden a knife in Axionov's sack, so that Axionov had been unjustly condemned.

When Makar Semyonov heard this he looked at Axionov, slapped himself on the knee, and said :

" Now that is extraordinary ! You have aged, grandfather."

They asked him why he was surprised, and where he had seen Axionov before, but Makar Semyonov did not reply to their questions, saying only : " It is marvellous, friends, that we should meet again here ! "

From these words it seemed possible to Axionov that this man might know who it was who had killed the merchant. He said :

" Have you heard about the crime before, Semyonov, or have you seen me before ? "

" Of course I have heard before ; the whole district resounded with the fame of it. But it happened long since—I heard and forgot."

" You heard, perhaps, who killed the merchant ? " Axionov asked.

" He must have killed him in whose sack the knife was found, and if someone did put the knife in your sack he was no robber. And how would it have been possible for a man to do this ? The sack stood at your head. You would have heard."

No sooner had Axionov heard these words than he thought that this same man must be he who had murdered the merchant. He rose and left them, and all that night he could not sleep. Sadness came over him, and he began to imagine his wife as she was the last time that she accompanied him to the fair. He saw her as though she was before him ; he saw her face and eyes, heard her speak to him and laugh. And he saw his children as they were then, one in his little fur-coat, another at the breast. And he remembered himself as he was then, young and happy ; he remembered how he had been sitting in the inn where they took him, playing his guitar, and how light-hearted he had been then. And he remembered the place where he had been whipped with the knout, and the executioner, and the people standing near, and his fetters, and the convicts, and the long twenty-six years of his prison life, and his old age there—all these things he remembered. And so great a sadness came over Axionov that he had it in his heart to lay hands on himself.

" And all because of that evil-doer . . ." he thought.

There came over him such anger against Makar Semyonov that he desired at any cost to have his vengeance. He prayed all night, but did not find peace. The next day he did not approach Makar Semyonov, nor did he look at him.

¶

SO passed two weeks. Axionov could not sleep at night , he was so wearied and sad he knew not what to do.

One night he was walking in the prison when he saw earth strewn under one of the pallet beds. He stopped to look. Suddenly Makar Semyonov rose up from under the pallet and looked at him with frightened face. Axionov would have passed on, wishing not to see him ; but

Makar seized his arm and told him that he had dug a passage under the walls, and that every day he brought out the earth in his boots and scattered it in the street when they went out of the prison to work. He said :

" Only keep silence and I will take you out with me. But if you speak they will flay me ; and then I will show you no mercy—I will kill you."

When Axionov saw the man who had done him this great wrong, his whole body trembled with anger. He freed his arm and said :

" I do not wish to escape, and as for killing me—you have killed me long since. I shall speak or keep silence as God bids me."

When the convicts were being taken out to work on the following day the soldiers noticed that Makar Semyonov was scattering earth. They looked in the prison and found the hole. The commandant came and examined them all as to who had dug the hole. They all denied it. Those who knew did not betray Makar, because they knew that for this he would be beaten almost to death. The commandant turned to Axionov, for he knew that Axionov was a just man, and said to him : " Now you are a truthful man ; tell me who it was that dug the hole."

Makar stood as though he was in no way concerned, and looked at the commandant but not at Axionov.

Axionov's hands and lips trembled, and for a long time he could not speak a word. He was thinking : " Why should I show mercy and not betray the man who has destroyed me ? He shall pay for my tormented life. But if I speak they will beat him perhaps to death. Why do I have these thoughts against him ? If I betray him, will my life be easier ? "

The commandant asked him once again who had dug the hole.

Axionov looked at Makar Semyonov and answered : " I cannot tell you, sir. God forbids me to speak, and speak I will not, whatever you may do to me."

Hard as the commandant tried to make him speak, Axionov would not say a word more. So that it was not known who had dug the hole.

On the following night, as Axionov lay dozing on his pallet, he heard someone come up to him and sit at his feet. He looked into the darkness and recognised Makar. Axionov said :

" What do you want of me ? What are you doing there ? "

Makar did not speak, and Axionov said, raising himself in bed : " What do you want ? Go, or I shall call a guard ! "

Makar bent down to him and whispered : " Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me ! "

" Forgive you for what ? "

" I murdered the merchant and put the knife into your sack. I was going to kill you, too, but I heard a noise outside, so I put the knife in your sack and climbed out through the window."

Axionov said nothing, for he knew not what to say. Makar rose from the pallet, bent down to the ground and said :

" Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me—forgive me, for the love of God. I will confess that I killed the merchant, and you will be pardoned. You will go home again."

Axionov said : " It is easy for you to speak, but hard for me to listen. Where can I go now ? My wife is dead ; my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go . . ."

Makar did not rise, but beat his head on the ground and said :

" Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me ! When they scourged me with the knout I bore it more easily than I can bear now to look upon you. You pitied me and did not betray me. For Christ's sake forgive me now in my wickedness." And he broke into sobs.

When Axionov heard his sobs he wept himself and said :

" God will forgive you. I may be a hundred times worse than you." And suddenly his heart felt lighter within him. And he no longer grieved for his home ; nor would he leave the prison ; but his thoughts were only of his last hour.

Makar Semyonov did not obey Axionov, but confessed his crime.

When pardon came to Axionov he was dead.

The Truth About Pyecraft

The story of a reluctant pioneer

By H. G. WELLS

HE sits not a dozen yards away. If I glance over my shoulder I can see him. And if I catch his eye—and usually I catch his eye—it meets me with an expression——

It is mainly an imploring look—and yet with suspicion in it.

Confound his suspicion! If I wanted to tell on him I should have told long ago. I don't tell and I don't tell, and he ought to feel at his ease. As if anything so gross and fat as he could feel at ease! Who would believe me if I did tell?

Poor old Pyecraft! Great, uneasy jelly of substance! The fattest clubman in London.

He sits at one of the little club tables in the huge bay by the fire, stuffing. What is he stuffing? I glance judiciously and catch him biting at a round of hot buttered teacake, with his eyes on me. Confound him!—with his eyes on me!

That settles it, Pyecraft! Since you *will* be abject, since you *will* behave as though I was not a man of honour, here, right under your embedded eyes, I write the thing down—the plain truth about Pyecraft. The man I helped, the man I shielded, and who has requited me by making my club unendurable, absolutely unendurable, with his liquid appeal, with the perpetual "don't tell" of his looks.

And, besides, why does he keep on eternally eating?

Well, here goes for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Pyecraft—— I made the acquaintance of Pyecraft in this very smoking-room. I was a young, nervous new member, and he saw it. I was sitting all alone, wishing I knew more of the members, and suddenly he came, a great rolling front of chins and abdomina, towards me, and grunted and sat down in a chair close by me and wheezed for a space, and scraped for a space with a match and lit a cigar, and then addressed me. I forget what he said—something about the matches not lighting properly, and afterwards as he talked he kept stopping the waiters one by one as they went by, and telling them about the matches in that thin, fluty voice he has. But, anyhow, it was in some such way we began our talking.

He talked about various things and came round to games. And thence to my figure and complexion. "You ought to be a good cricketer," he said. I suppose I am slender, slender to what some people would call lean, and I suppose I am rather dark, still—— I am not ashamed of having a Hindu great-grandmother, but, for all that, I don't want casual strangers to see through me at a glance to *her*. So that I was set against Pyecraft from the beginning.

But he only talked about me in order to get to himself.

"I expect," he said, "you take no more exercise than I do, and probably you eat no less." (Like all excessively obese people he fancied he ate nothing.) "Yet"—and he smiled an oblique smile—"we differ."

And then he began to talk about his fatness and his fatness; all he did for his fatness and all he was going to do for his fatness; what people had advised him to do for his fatness and what he had heard people doing for fatness similar to his. "*A priori*," he said, "one would think a question of nutrition could be answered by dietary and a question of assimilation by drugs." It was stifling. It was dumpling talk. It made me feel swelled to hear him.

One stands that sort of thing once in a way at a club, but a time came when I fancied I was standing too much. He took to me altogether too conspicuously. I could never go into the smoking-room but he would come wallowing towards me, and sometimes he came and gormandised round and about me while I had my lunch. He seemed at times almost to be clinging to me. He was a bore, but not so fearful a bore as to be limited to me; and from the first there was something in his manner—almost

as though he knew, almost as though he penetrated to the fact that I *might*—that there was a remote, exceptional chance in me that no one else presented.

"I'd give anything to get it down," he would say—"anything," and peer at me over his vast cheeks and pant.

Poor old Pyecraft! He has just gonged, no doubt to order another buttered teacake!

He came to the actual thing one day. "Our Pharmacopœia," he said, "our Western Pharmacopœia, is anything but the last word of medical science. In the East, I've been told——"

He stopped and stared at me. It was like being at an aquarium.

I was quite suddenly angry with him. "Look here," I said, "who told you about my great-grandmother's recipes?"

"Well," he fenced.

"Every time we've met for a week," I said—"and we've met pretty often—you've given me a broad hint or so about that little secret of mine."

"Well," he said, "now the cat's out of the bag, I'll admit, yes, it is so. I had it—"

"From Pattison?"

"Indirectly," he said, which I believe was lying, "yes."

"Pattison," I said, "took that stuff at his own risk."

He pursed his mouth and bowed.

"My great-grandmother's recipes," I said, "are queer things to handle. My father was near making me promise——"

"He didn't?"

"No. But he warned me. He himself used one—once."

"Ah! . . . But do you think——? Suppose—suppose there did happen to be one——"

"The things are curious documents," I said. "Even the smell of 'em . . . No!"

But after going so far Pyecraft was resolved I should go farther. I was always a little afraid if I tried his patience too much he would fall on me suddenly and smother me. I own I was weak. But I was also annoyed with Pyecraft. I had got to that state of feeling for him that disposed me to say, "Well, *take* the risk!" The little affair of Pattison to which I have alluded was a different matter altogether. What it was doesn't concern us now, but I knew, anyhow, that the particular recipe I used then was safe. The rest I didn't know so much about, and, on the whole, I was inclined to doubt their safety pretty completely.

Yet even if Pyecraft got poisoned——

I must confess the poisoning of Pyecraft struck me as an immense undertaking.

¶

THAT evening I took that queer, odd-scented sandal-wood box out of my safe and turned the rustling skins over. The gentleman who wrote the recipes for my great-grandmother evidently had a weakness for skins of a miscellaneous origin, and his handwriting was cramped to the last degree. Some of the things are quite unreadable to me—though my family, with its Indian Civil Service associations, has kept up a knowledge of Hindustani from generation to generation—and none are absolutely plain sailing. But I found the one that I knew was there soon enough and sat on the floor by my safe for some time looking at it.

"Look here," said I to Pyecraft next day, and snatched the slip away from his eager grasp.

"So far as I can make it out, this is a recipe for Loss of Weight. ("Ah!" said Pyecraft.) I'm not absolutely sure, but I think it's that. And if you take my advice you'll leave it alone. Because, you know—I blacken my blood in your interest, Pyecraft—my ancestors on that side were, so far as I can gather, a jolly queer lot. See?"

"Let me try it," said Pyecraft.

I leant back in my chair. My imagination made one mighty effort and fell flat within me. "What in Heaven's name, Pyecraft," I asked, "do you think you'll look like when you get thin?"

He was impervious to reason. I made him promise never to say a word to me about his disgusting fatness again whatever happened—never, and then I handed him that little piece of skin.

"It's nasty stuff," I said

"No matter," he said, and took it.

He goggled at it. "But—but——" he said.

He had just discovered that it wasn't English.

"To the best of my ability," I said, "I will do you a translation."

I did my best. After that we didn't speak for a fortnight. Whenever he approached me I frowned and motioned him away, and he respected our compact, but at the end of the fortnight he was as fat as ever. And then he got a word in.

"I must speak," he said. "It isn't fair.

There's something wrong. It's done me no good. You're not doing your great-grandmother justice."

" Where's the recipe ? "

He produced it gingerly from his pocket-book.

I ran my eye over the items. " Was the egg addled ? " I asked.

" No. Ought it to have been ? "

" That," I said, " goes without saying in all my poor dear great-grandmother's recipes. When condition or quality is not specified you must get the worst. She was drastic or nothing . . . And there's one or two possible alternatives to some of these other things. You got *fresh* rattlesnake venom ? "

" I got a rattlesnake from Jamrach's. It cost—it cost——"

" That's your affair, anyhow. This last item——"

" I know a man who——"

" Yes. H'm. Well, I'll write the alternatives down. So far as I know the language, the spelling of this recipe is particularly atrocious. By the by, dog here probably means pariah dog."

For a month after that I saw Pyecraft constantly at the club and as fat and anxious as ever. He kept our treaty, but at times he broke the spirit of it by shaking his head despondently. Then one day in the cloak-room he said, " Your great-grandmother—"

" Not a word against her," I said ; and he held his peace.

I could have fancied he had desisted, and I saw him one day talking to three new members about his fatness as though he was in search of other recipes. And then, quite unexpectedly his telegram came.

" Mr. Formalyn ! " bawled a page-boy under my nose, and I took the telegram and opened it at once.

"*For Heaven's sake come.—Pyecraft.*"

" H'm," said I, and to tell the truth I was so pleased at the rehabilitation of my great-grandmother's reputation this evidently promised that I made a most excellent lunch.

¶

I GOT Pyecraft's address from the hall porter. Pyecraft inhabited the upper half of a house in Bloomsbury, and I went there so soon as I had done my coffee and Trappistine. I did not wait to finish my cigar.

" Mr. Pyecraft ? " said I, at the front door.

They believed he was ill ; he hadn't been out for two days.

" He expects me," said I, and they sent me up.

I rang the bell at the lattice-door upon the landing.

" He shouldn't have tried it, anyhow," I said to myself. " A man who eats like a pig ought to look like a pig."

An obviously worthy woman, with an anxious face and a carelessly placed cap, came and surveyed me through the lattice.

I gave my name and she opened his door for me in a dubious fashion.

" Well ? " said I, as we stood together inside Pyecraft's piece of the landing.

" 'E said you was to come in if you came," she said, and regarded me, making no motion to show me anywhere. And then, confidentially, " 'E's locked in, sir."

" Locked in ? "

" Locked himself in yesterday morning and 'asn't let anyone in since, sir. And ever and again *swearing*. Oh, my ! "

I stared at the door she indicated by her glances. " In there ? " I said.

" Yes, sir."

" What's up ? "

She shook her head sadly. " 'E keeps on calling for vittles, sir. *'Eavy* vittles 'e wants. I get 'im what I can. Pork 'e's 'ad, sooit puddin', sossiges, noo bread. Every-think like that. Left outside, if you please, and me go away. 'E's eatin', sir, somethink *awful*."

There came a piping bawl from inside the door : " That Formalyn ? "

" That you, Pyecraft ? " I shouted, and went and banged the door.

" Tell her to go away."

I did.

Then I could hear a curious pattering upon the door, almost like someone feeling for the handle in the dark, and Pyecraft's familiar grunts.

" It's all right," I said, " she's gone."

But for a long time the door didn't open.

I heard the key turn. Then Pyecraft's voice said, " Come in."

I turned the handle and opened the door. Naturally I expected to see Pyecraft.

Well, you know, he wasn't there !

I never had such a shock in my life. There was his sitting-room in a state of untidy disorder, plates and dishes among the books and writing things, and several chairs overturned, but Pyecraft——

" It's all right, o' man ; shut the door," he said, and then I discovered him.

There he was right up close to the cornice in the corner by the door, as though someone had glued him to the ceiling. His face was anxious and angry. He panted and gesticulated. "Shut the door," he said. "If that woman gets hold of it——"

I shut the door, and went and stood away from him and stared.

"If anything gives way and you tumble down," I said, "you'll break your neck, Pyecraft."

"I wish I could," he wheezed.

"A man of your age and weight getting up to kiddish gymnastics——"

"Don't," he said, and looked agonized. "Your damned great-grandmother——"

"Be careful," I warned him.

"I'll tell you," he said, and gesticulated.

"How the deuce," said I, "are you holding on up there?"

And then abruptly I realized that he was not holding on at all, that he was floating up there—just as a gas-filled bladder might have floated in the same position. He began a struggle to thrust himself away from the ceiling and to clamber down the wall to me. "It's that prescription," he panted, as he did so. "Your great gran——"

"*No!*" I cried.

He took hold of a framed engraving rather carelessly as he spoke and it gave way, and he flew back to the ceiling again, while the picture smashed on to the sofa. Bump he went against the ceiling, and I knew then why he was all over white on the more salient curves and angles of his person. He tried again more carefully, coming down by way of the mantel.

It was really a most extraordinary spectacle, that great, fat, apoplectic-looking man upside down and trying to get from the ceiling to the floor. "That prescription," he said. "Too successful."

"How?"

"Loss of weight—almost complete."

And then, of course, I understood.

"By Jove, Pyecraft," said I, "what you wanted was a cure for fatness! But you always called it weight. You would call it weight."

Somehow I was extremely delighted. I quite liked Pyecraft for the time. "Let me help you!" I said, and took his hand and pulled him down. He kicked about, trying to get foothold somewhere.

"That table," he said, pointing, "is solid mahogany and very heavy. If you can put me under that——"

I did, and there he wallowed about like a captive balloon, while I stood on his hearthrug and talked to him.

I lit a cigar. "Tell me," I said, "what happened?"

"I took it," he said.

"How did it taste?"

"Oh, *beastly!*"

I should fancy they all did. Whether one regards the ingredients or the probable compound or the possible results, almost all my great-grandmother's remedies appear to me at least to be extraordinarily uninviting. For my own part——

"I took a little sip first."

"Yes?"

"And as I felt lighter and better after an hour, I decided to take the draught."

"My dear Pyecraft!"

"I held my nose," he explained. "And then I kept on getting lighter and lighter—and helpless, you know."

He gave way suddenly to a burst of passion. "What the goodness am I to *do?*" he said.

"There's one thing pretty evident," I said, "that you mustn't do. If you go out of doors you'll go up and up." I waved an arm upward. "They'd have to send Santos-Dumont after you to bring you down again."

"I suppose it will wear off?"

I shook my head. "I don't think you can count on that," I said.

And then there was another burst of passion, and he kicked out at adjacent chairs and banged the floor. He behaved just as I should have expected a great, fat, self-indulgent man to behave under trying circumstances—that is to say, very badly. He spoke of me and of my great-grandmother with an utter want of discretion.

"I never asked you to take the stuff," I said.

And generously disregarding the insults he was putting upon me, I sat down in his armchair and began to talk to him in a sober, friendly fashion.

¶

I POINTED out to him that this was a trouble he had brought upon himself, and that it had almost an air of poetical justice. He had eaten too much. This he disputed, and for a time we argued the point.

He became noisy and violent, so I desisted from this aspect of his lesson. "And then,"

said I, " you committed the sin of euphuism. You called it, not Fat, which is just and inglorious, but Weight. You——"

He interrupted to say that he recognised all that. What was he to *do?*

I suggested he should adapt himself to his new conditions. So we came to the really sensible part of the business. I suggested that it would not be difficult for him to learn to walk about on the ceiling with his hands——

" I can't sleep," he said.

But that was no great difficulty. It was quite possible, I pointed out, to make a shake-up under a wire mattress, fasten the under things on with tapes, and have a blanket, sheet, and coverlet to button at the side. He would have to confide in his housekeeper, I said; and after some squabbling he agreed to that. (Afterwards it was quite delightful to see the beautifully matter-of-fact way with which the good lady took all these amazing inversions.) He could have a library ladder in his room, and all his meals could be laid on the top of his bookcase. We also hit on an ingenious device by which he could get to the floor whenever he wanted, which was simply to put the *British Encyclopædia* (tenth edition) on the top of his open shelves. He just pulled out a couple of volumes and held on, and down he came. And we agreed there must be iron staples along the skirting, so that he could cling to those whenever he wanted to get about the room on the lower level.

As we got on with the thing I found myself almost keenly interested. It was I who called in the housekeeper and broke matters to her, and it was I chiefly who fixed up the inverted bed. In fact, I spent two whole days at his flat. I am a handy, interfering sort of man with a screwdriver, and I made all sorts of ingenious adaptations for him—ran a wire to bring his bells within reach, turned all his electric lights up instead of down, and so on. The whole affair was extremely curious and interesting to me, and it was delightful to think of Pyecraft like some great, fat blow-fly, crawling about on his ceiling and clambering round the lintel of his doors from one room to another, and never, never, never coming to the club any more . . .

Then, you know, my fatal ingenuity got the better of me. I was sitting by his fire drinking his whisky, and he was up in his favourite corner by the cornice, tacking a Turkey carpet to the ceiling, when the idea struck me. " By Jove, Pyecraft! " I said, " all this is totally unnecessary."

And before I could calculate the complete consequences of my notion I blurted it out. " Lead underclothing," said I, and the mischief was done.

Pyecraft received the thing almost in tears. " To be right ways up again——" he said.

I gave him the whole secret before I saw where it would take me. " Buy sheet lead," I said, " stamp it into discs. Sew 'em all over your underclothes until you have enough. Have lead-soled boots, carry a bag of solid lead, and the thing is done! Instead of being a prisoner here you may go abroad again, Pyecraft; you may travel——"

A still happier idea came to me. " You need never fear a shipwreck. All you need do is just slip off some or all of your clothes, take the necessary amount of luggage in your hand, and float up in the air——"

In his emotion he dropped the tack-hammer within an ace of my head. " By Jove! " he said, " I shall be able to come back to the club again."

The thing pulled me up short. " By Jove! " I said, faintly. " Yes. Of course—you will."

He did. He does. There he sits behind me now, stuffing—as I live!—a third go of buttered tea-cake. And no one in the whole world knows—except his housekeeper and me—that he weighs practically nothing; that he is a mere boring mass of assimilatory matter, mere clouds in clothing, *niente*, *nefas*, the most inconsiderable of men. There he sits watching until I have done this writing. Then, if he can, he will waylay me.

He will tell me over again all about it, how it feels, how it doesn't feel, how he sometimes hopes it is passing off a little.

And always somewhere in that fat, abundant discourse he will say, " The secret's keeping, eh? If anyone knew of it—I should be so ashamed . . . Makes a fellow look such a fool, you know. Crawling about on a ceiling and all that . . ."

And now to elude Pyecraft, occupying, as he does, an admirable strategic position between me and the door.

Facino Cane

An exile of Venice and his lust for gold

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by* RICHARD VERNON)

ONE day my housekeeper, who was the wife of a workman, begged me to honour the wedding of one of her sisters with my presence. To give you some idea of what this wedding was likely to be, I must tell you that I gave the poor woman forty sous a month ; she came every morning to make my bed, clean my shoes, brush my clothes, sweep the room and get my meal ready. During the rest of the day she turned a crank in a factory, for which she earned ten sous a day. Her husband, a journeyman cabinet-maker, earned four francs a day ; but, as they had three children, the family had barely enough to eat.

I have never met with a stronger sense of honesty and courtesy than this couple possessed. After I had left the district Madame Vaillant came to see me, bringing some flowers and oranges—she who never had ten sous to spare. Our common poverty had drawn us together.

This preface may serve to explain my reasons for the promise that I gave to go to the wedding ; I wanted to have a share in these poor souls' happiness.

The wedding festivities, which consisted mainly of dancing, took place on the first floor of a tavern in the rue de Charenton, in a big room illuminated by lamps with tin reflectors. Wooden benches had been placed along the walls. In this room eighty people, dressed in their best clothes, be-flowered and be-ribboned, their faces burning, were dancing as though the world was on the point of coming to an end. There was a look of downright enjoyment about them all that was decidedly infectious.

But neither the guests nor the festivities have much to do with my story. I want you to bear in mind only the strangeness of the setting. Picture a humble tavern, painted red ; have the smell of wine in your nostrils ; listen to the screams of joy ; get the atmosphere of the lowly district, and think of these workmen and old men and poor women all giving themselves up to a single night's pleasure !

The orchestra consisted of three blind men from the Blind Hospital. They played the fiddle, the clarionet and the flute. For the evening they were paid seven francs between them, for which sum you could not expect to hear Rossini or Beethoven. They played what they wished and what they could, and everybody refrained, with perfect tact, from asking for some special tune. Their music assailed my ear-drum with such violence that I turned to look at the three of them and was at once disposed to compassion when I recognised their uniform.

They were sitting in the embrasure of a window, and one had to be near them to distinguish their features. When I went up to them I forgot the festivities, so interested was I in the figure of the clarionet-player. There was nothing exceptional about the faces of the other two : they had the usual concentration and solemnity of the blind. But the clarionet-player had a face to bring an artist or a philosopher up short.

Imagine a Dantesque face lighted up by the lamplight and topped by a forest of silver-white hair. The bitter, suffering expression was intensified by blindness, for there was a burning light in the dead eyes caused by a single overmastering desire, which had left its mark in wrinkles on the bulging forehead.

The old man seemed to play his instrument casually without paying attention either to tune or rhythm. His fingers rose and fell on the keys quite mechanically, and he did not mind playing false notes, which were noticed neither by the dancers nor by his two colleagues.

I hoped he was Italian, and he *was* Italian. There was something grand and despotic about this old Homer, who carried within him an Odyssey that was destined

to oblivion. It was so real, this grandeur of his, that it triumphed over his pitiful condition ; his despotism was so active that it dominated poverty. Not one of the violent passions which lead man alike to good and evil, make of him a convict or a hero, was lacking in his nobly-cut Italian face, with its greying eyebrows which overhung the deep cavities where one feared to see the light of the mind, just as one fears to see brigands with torches and daggers appear at the mouth of a cave from the darkness inside. A lion was imprisoned in that cage of flesh, a lion whose frenzy had spent itself in vain against the iron bars. The fire of despair had died down to ashes ; the lava had grown cold.

¶

BETWEEN the dances the fiddler and the flute-player, busy with glass and bottle, fastened their instruments to a button of their red uniform coats, reached forward to a little table which served them as a bar, and handed to the Italian a full glass. He could not take it himself, for the table was behind his chair. Each time this happened the clarionet-player thanked them with a friendly nod of the head. All their movements were executed with a marvellous precision which made one think they had eyes.

I went near them to hear what they were saying, but they felt my presence, evidently realised I was not a workman, and kept quiet.

" Where do you come from, clarionet-player ? " I asked.

" From Venice," he said, with a slight Italian accent.

" Were you born blind, or——? "

" No ; the optic nerve suddenly became paralysed."

" It's a beautiful city, Venice. I have always wanted to go there."

The old man's face lit up, his wrinkles lifted—he was in the grip of a strong emotion.

" If I went with you you wouldn't lose your time," he said to me.

" Don't start talking to him about Venice," the fiddler said ; " if you do our Doge will get started, and you'll never stop him, seeing that he's got two bottles inside him ! "

All three began to play again, but during the whole time that they were playing four quadrilles the old Venetian was taking stock of me—he knew that he had roused my interest. His face lost its cold sadness, and hope brightened his features ; he smiled and wiped his bold, impressive forehead.

" How old are you ? " I asked him.

" Eighty-two."

" When did you go blind ? "

" Nearly fifty years ago." And something about his voice seemed to show me that besides the loss of his sight he mourned the loss of some great power or faculty.

" Why do they call you the Doge ? "

" Ah ! I am a patrician of Venice, and I should have become Doge in the ordinary way."

" What is your name, then ? "

" Here they call me Père Canet. They've never been able to get my name right in France. But in Italian my name is Marco Facino Cane, Principe di Varese."

" What ? Are you descended from the great *condottiere* Facino Cane, whose conquests passed to the dukes of Milan ? "

" I am," he said. " The great Cane's son, in order to escape death at the hands of the Visconti, took refuge in Venice, where he inscribed his name in the Golden Book. But the Book and the Cane family are no more."

" But if you were a Venetian senator you must have been rich. How did you lose your fortune ? "

At this question he raised his head towards me and said :

" I was unlucky."

He did not want to drink any more, refused a glass that the flutist offered him, and bent his head.

During the quadrille that followed I looked at the old man with all the eager imagination of a young man of twenty. I saw Venice and the Adriatic—in this broken old man I saw Venice in ruins. I wandered in fancy through Venice, that is so dear to her people—from the Rialto to the Grand Canal, from the Riva degli Schiavoni to the Lido. I went back to the grandeur of St. Mark's : I visited the rich marble palaces and all the wonders of Venice. I went back over what I knew of the life of this descendant of the greatest of the *condottieri*, and tried to find the causes of his misfortune and of his deep physical and moral degeneration, which yet lent added grandeur to the sparks of his former spirit that were now called into being.

I think he had the same thoughts, for

blindness makes communication between men easier by preventing the attention from straying to external objects. I had not long to wait for proof of the sympathy that had been set up between us. Facino Cane stopped playing, rose from his chair, came over to me and said: "Let us go out," in a way that produced on me the effect of an electric shock. I gave him my arm, and we went out.

¶

WHEN we were in the street he said to me: "Will you take me to Venice—lead me there? Will you have faith in me? If you will you shall be richer than the ten richest firms in London and Amsterdam put together, richer than all the Rothschilds, as rich as the Arabian Nights."

I thought he was mad, but there was an authority in his voice which I obeyed. He led me towards the moat of the Bastille as though he had sight. He sat down on a stone in a lonely place where, since those days, they have built the aqueduct that connects the Canal Saint Martin with the Seine. I sat on another stone beside him, and his white hair glistened like silver wire in moonlight. The silence, which was hardly broken by the distant noise of the boulevards, the clearness of the night—everything went to make the scene fantastic.

"You speak to a young man about great riches," I said. "Do you think he would hesitate to endure a thousand hardships if at the end he could have riches in his grasp?"

"May I die unshriven," he said vehemently, "if what I am about to tell you is not the truth.

"I was once twenty, as you are now; I was rich, good looking, of noble birth. Then I killed a man for love of Bianca Vendramini. Bianca would not fly with me, so I went alone. I was condemned in absence, and my property sequestrated in favour of my heirs. But I took my diamonds with me, five pictures by Titian, rolled up, and all my gold. I went to Milan, and there I was quite safe, for my crime was no state affair."

He paused for a minute, and then said: "Before I take my story any further I must tell you this: I have for gold a mad lust, of which the gratification is so necessary to my life that wherever I have been I have always carried gold on my person. I handle gold constantly; when I was young I always had two or three hundred ducats about me."

As he said these words he drew a couple of ducats out of his pocket and showed them to me.

"I smell gold. Though I am blind I stop before jewellers' shops. This passion was my ruin; I became a gambler so that I might handle gold. When I had lost all my money I had a longing to see Bianca again. I went back to Venice secretly, found her and had six months' happiness. Then I suspected the Governor of being my rival, fought him and wounded him seriously. But the Governor had his men outside, the palace was surrounded, and I was overpowered. They put a cloak over my head, and I was carried off in a gondola and cast into a dungeon.

"I was young and strong then, and I held so hard on to the shattered hilt of my sword that they could not get it from me without cutting off my hand. By great good luck, or, rather, with a half-conceived plan in my mind, I was able to hide the sword in a corner.

"Well—none of my wounds was mortal. At twenty-two one can recover from anything. I knew I should be condemned to death, and I shammed illness in order to gain time. I thought my cell was probably near the canal, and it occurred to me to cut through the wall and escape by swimming the canal.

"These were the grounds for my hope: whenever the gaoler came in with my food I could see directions on the wall: 'palace side,' 'canal side,' 'underground chamber side.' And finally I got into my head a rough plan of the position of my cell. One day I managed to decipher, by feeling it with my hands, an inscription in Arabic which a former prisoner had cut in the wall. It conveyed to his successors the information that he had loosened two stones in the lowest layer and had then dug eleven feet underground. The gaolers or inquisitors had thought the construction of the building so strong that attempts at escape were impossible, and the cell was, therefore, never inspected. But even if it had been, there were deep wells, to which steps led down from the cell, and down which he was able to throw the displaced stones and mortar.

"But the great work had proved useless, at least for the man who had begun it, for the fact that he had left it unfinished showed

that he died. In order that his devotion should not be lost for ever it was necessary that a prisoner should know Arabic, and mercifully I had studied Oriental languages in the Armenian Convent. A single sentence behind the loosened stone showed that the poor unfortunate had died a victim to his great riches, which the Venetian Republic had coveted and seized.

" It took me a month to do what I wanted. While I worked and at moments when I was overwhelmed with fatigue I heard the clink of gold, I saw gold before my eyes, I was dazzled by diamonds. Listen ! One night my blunted sword-hilt met wood. I sharpened the sword and made a hole in the wood. I worked on my stomach like a snake, stripped to the skin, and burrowed like a mole. Two days before my trial I decided to make my last great effort. It was night. I penetrated the wood and imagine my amazement when my sword met nothing beyond the wood. I put my eyes to the hole, and there before me was an underground chamber, in which I saw by a dim light a heap of gold. The Doge and one of the Council of Ten were in the chamber—I could hear their voices. From what they said I understood that I had hit on the secret treasure of Venice, which consisted of gifts made by Doges and booty taken during wars.

" I was saved ! When the gaoler came in I proposed that we should both escape with as much of the treasure as we could carry. He agreed at once. A ship was sailing for the Levant, all our plans were made, and Bianca helped us. In order not to arouse suspicion Bianca was to join us in Smyrna. Next night we enlarged the hole and went down into the secret treasure-chamber of Venice. What a night that was ! I saw four great barrels full of gold. In the next chamber were two huge piles of silver, and gold pieces were piled five feet high against the walls. I thought the gaoler would go mad. He leaped and sang and danced in the gold, and I had to threaten to strangle him if he did not make less noise. On a table were diamonds ; I threw myself on to it and filled my coat and trousers with them. But I did not take the third part of them. Under the table were bars of gold. I persuaded my companion to fill with gold as many bags as we could carry, telling him that if we took pearls and diamonds we might be traced when we had escaped. He had not seen me fill my pockets with diamonds. For all our greed, we could not take more than two thousand livres of gold with us, and that needed six journeys between the prison and the gondola. The sentry at the gate of the prison had been bribed with ten livres. The two gondoliers were under the impression that they were on the service of the Republic.

¶

" AT daybreak we sailed. When we were on the high seas the fever of gold attacked me at the thought of the untold treasure in gold and diamonds, pearls and rubies, that we had left behind us. We disembarked at Smyrna and at once took ship for France.

" You will see how God punished me. I considered myself safe only after I had sold two-thirds of my diamonds in London and Amsterdam, together with my gold-dust. For five years I was in hiding in Madrid. In 1770 I came to Paris under a Spanish name and led a dazzling life of pleasure. Bianca was dead. In the midst of my dissipation, when I was the possessor of six million francs, I was struck with blindness. It was, no doubt, the result of my life in the dungeon and of my work on the stone there, though possibly my capacity to see gold may have involved some abuse of my ordinary sight which destined me to blindness.

" At this time I was in love with a woman with whom I intended to link my fate, and to whom I had divulged the secret of my name. She was a friend of Madame du Barry, and I trusted her. She advised me to consult a famous oculist in London. I went to London and, after some weeks there, she abandoned me in Hyde Park, having first robbed me of my entire fortune. I was obliged to keep my name hidden and could invoke nobody's assistance, for I feared Venice. My infirmity was exploited by this woman, who surrounded me with spies. I had adventures worthy of Gil Blas, but those I will spare you.

" Then came the French Revolution. I was compelled to enter the Blind Hospital, into which she obtained my admission after keeping me shut up for two years as a madman. I was never able to kill her, for I could not see myself, and I was too poor to hire an arm to do it for me. The gaoler had died some years before, and I bitterly regretted that I had not discovered from him the exact position of my cell ; for if I had I might have gone back to Venice

and recovered the treasure when the Republic was overthrown by Napoleon.

"But for all my blindness, let us go to Venice. The secret of the treasure must have died with Bianca's brother. I shall find the prison-gate again; I shall see the gold through the walls!

"I have made proposals to the First Consul and to the Emperor of Austria, but they pay no more attention to me than to a lunatic. Come, let us go to Venice now! We shall start as beggars, but we shall come back millionaires. We will buy back my property and you shall be Principe di Varese!"

My senses benumbed by his story, which to me was a poem, I looked at his white head and at the moat of the Bastille, in which the water was stagnant, as it is in the canals of Venice. I replied not a word—I could not. Facino Cane must have thought that I looked at him as other men did, with contemptuous pity, for he made a gesture of utter despair. The telling of his story must have taken him back to his happy days in Venice, for he took up his clarionet and played a sad Venetian song, a barcarolle, something in the nature of "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat us down and wept when we remembered thee, O Zion."

His old skill had come back to him, and my eyes filled with tears. Any belated passers-by who happened to be walking along the Boulevard Bourdon must have stopped to listen to this last prayer of the exile, this last dirge of a nameless man.

"I see this treasure before me," he said. "I tread in it, and the diamonds sparkle. I am not so blind as you think, for gold and diamonds lighten my darkness, the darkness of the last Facino Cane."

"We will go to Venice!" I cried when he got up.

"At last I have found a man!" he said, his face aglow.

I took his arm and led him away. At the gate of the Blind Hospital he shook my hand, and at that moment some of the wedding-guests passed by, shouting at the top of their voices.

"Shall we go to-morrow?" the old man said.

"As soon as we have some money."

"But we can go on foot—I can beg my way. I am strong, and one is young again when one sees gold before him."

But Facino Cane died during the winter after two months' illness.

THE ARGOSY VOTING COMPETITION

WE again offer two prizes—one of Two Guineas and the other of One Guinea—to the readers who send in the titles of the four best stories in the order of merit which most nearly coincides with the votes of the majority. Stories must be selected from this issue. The Editor's decision will be final.

Entries should be made on postcards addressed to: "Vote," THE ARGOSY, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C. 4 (Comp.), and sent in by October 31, 1928. The result will be announced in THE ARGOSY for JANUARY.

For the August competition five equal prizes have been awarded to: A. R. FREWEN, Ardnachree, Tipperary, Ireland; W. GALLAGHER, 36, Lorne Grove, Fallowfield, Manchester; C. HEEDE, 1, Bower Street, Hollinwood, Oldham; A. NASH, 58, Fairfield Road, Bow, E. 3; H. M. ROBERTSON, 3, Ailsa Villas, Muirend, Glasgow.

The Lady of the Terrace

An Englishman's romance in the days of Garibaldi

By WARWICK DEEPING

THE lane had promised well from the moment that it had lured Quentin North through that ruinous archway near the church of Santa Maria. It was a tortuous and elusive alley, refusing to surrender itself to one bold glance, but playing its part behind the star-bright veil of the Roman night. High walls shut it in, walls that were covered with ivy and flowers, but here and there it rewarded a romantic soul with the glimpse of a garden or a vineyard, a grove of cypresses or the bell-tower of a church. It went gently uphill with persuasive persistence, like a woman beckoning a man on.

" I wonder if you are fooling me."

He paused, glanced at the stars, and then strolled on again.

" I'll put up with your tricks till I have seen round the next corner."

The lane might have laughed softly to itself. It had played upon his patience, but at the next corner it was ready to justify itself, to uncover something with a dramatic gesture.

" Hallo ! "

North stopped dead. A great black cloud seemed to glide across the stars, a cloud built of ilexes, cypresses and stone-pines towering above the white retaining wall of a terrace. The wall was a smother of creepers that hung like shadows, and the lane looked like a narrow gorge running at the foot of a cliff. The black trees, the white stonework and the silver gleam of the stars made North draw a deep and half-exultant breath.

" And I thought I knew all Rome ! "

Quentin North strolled on till he was under the wall, and then stood looking up at the trees above. He had a great love for trees, and these Roman cypresses and pines made noble outlines against the stars.

Stone vases were ranged along the coping of the wall, with clipped box trees growing in them, and these vases played a trick on Quentin North. He noticed their existence, and yet failed to observe that their regular spacing was broken in one place, for just above him there appeared to be one vase too many. Had he been less absorbed in studying the trees he might have discovered that the whitish thing just above him was not a vase at all.

It was nothing less than a woman wearing a white cloak and leaning her arms on the coping of the wall. She remained there, quite motionless, looking out over Rome.

But she was fully alive to the presence of the man below her. In fact, he had taken such a stand that he was not to be overlooked. In staring at the trees, Quentin North was staring right over the woman's head with a persistency that might have been either insolent or amusing.

Possibly she chose to see in it an element of humour. Perhaps she herself was not innocent of an impulse towards devilry. At all events, she gathered a handful of moss and earth from the wall and flung it down on the man below.

The stuff landed on the brim of North's slouch hat. It came like a bolt from the blue, compelling him to leave his star-gazing and to take note of something more vital. And then it was that he discovered the white shape above him to be out of rhythm with the stone vases spaced along the parapet.

" Thank you. I am very much obliged."

He spoke ironically in Italian, and proceeded to dust his hat. The woman was smiling with an air of casual, girlish wickedness, but she caught the foreign flavour of his Italian and drew her own conclusions. The man spoke Italian like an Englishman, and his slouch hat, coat and belt marked him out as one of Garibaldi's legionaries.

" Did you speak, signore ? "

Her voice was the voice of an actress, a voice of infinite flexibility.

" I beg your pardon—I did. After all, you were quite right in throwing that stuff at me. I must have seemed a rude beast."

She laughed softly.

" Oh, no ; just a mad Englishman."

He stood back against the opposite wall.

" How do you know that I'm English ? "

" Because your Italian is so perfect."

" Oh, come now, that's rather brutal. I admit that I must have seemed a rude beast, staring up like that, but the truth is, I did not see you."

" No ? "

Her voice was mockingly incredulous.

" The fact is, I thought you were one of those vases—I mean—I suppose I must have thought so—subconsciously."

" Thank you," she said ; " I know the English have a way of turning people into stone ! "

Her voice provoked him, for it was a very beautiful voice, not only in the subtlety of its tones, but in its hinting at the fineness of the instrument that produced it.

" I am afraid I put that very clumsily. I was enthralled by those trees of yours."

He had come by a sudden desire to make her talk to him, to discover who she was, but she remained silent ; and her silence made him feel like a fool of a bear begging for cakes at the bottom of a pit. He put on his hat, moved a few steps, still looking up at her.

" I hope you have forgiven me, signorina ? Good-night."

She answered him with an air of careless abstraction.

" Oh—of course. Good-night."

¶

THE year was 1849, and Rome had once more become a city of romance. The Byronic spirit was abroad in her. Garibaldi and Mazzini were her men of the moment ; the Republic had been declared ; the Pope had fled. There was stir and passion in Rome ; men walked with their heads a little nearer to the stars, and their blood simmered with heroic audacity. Half Europe was sending her soldiers to smother this breath of liberty that had been born in the great city. The Austrians were moving in the north ; the French had landed at Civita Vecchia ; the Neapolitans and the Spaniards were on the march. A desperate enterprise this for reckless idealists and adventurous fanatics, and for men who had grown tired of a tame life.

Quentin North had run to help brandish the torch. He was young, an aristocrat, a poet, Byronic in his intensity, and yet nothing of a cynic. A kind of romantic restlessness had made him an adventurer.

" I wonder whom that villa belongs to ? I wonder who she is ? "

Such was the drift of his thoughts as he walked on down the lane. Her voice had provoked in him a rebellious curiosity.

" Some mad Englishman ! "

She smiled over the incident, this lady of the terrace, resting her chin on her hands, and gazing out over Rome. The fingers of her hands were long, slender and delicate. She carried her head proudly, even with a suggestion of arrogance, the arrogance of one who despised many of the things that simpler folk held sacred.

" Dear Saints ! What a dust men raise over a few words or phrases ! I am very tired of preachers and prophets."

She yawned, and then turned her head as though to listen. Someone was coming along the terrace under the shadows of the trees, someone whose shoes flip-flapped grotesquely on the stones. There was a sound of heavy, stertorous breathing, as of some ponderous animal making its way uphill.

She turned from the balustrade.

" I am here, Father."

" So I see, my child ; a white plume in the helmet of the night."

" You are late, Father."

" True, my child."

" And out of breath."

" Still more true, my child."

" Which comes of walking fast after supper ! "

" In order, my dear, to enjoy your wit ! "

He was a very fat man was Father Giuseppe ; the irreverent called him the " good Silenus." A great, rotund mass of good humour, with little eyes twinkling in a rosy face, he seemed the most benign and harmless of creatures. No one would have suspected such a fat man of possessing a fierce share of energy and ambition. He was a great laugher was Father Giuseppe, and when he laughed men forgot to wonder whether he was cunning.

" Rome is quiet to-night. Let us sit down, Father I have remembered your cushion "

He was still blowing like a grampus, but he could behave gallantly even when out of breath.

" The Contessa is very kind to a fat old man. I kiss your hand."

She smiled cynically, and led the way to

a marble bench under a stone-pine. La Contessa Venosta was a widow, and still young; but if she retained any of her illusions, she did not boast of them. It did not thrill her to know that she was called "La Belle Anna." Pride and the dissolute escapades of the vain dandy, her husband, had made her look at life with ironical eyes.

"Well, what are the heroes doing?"

Father Giuseppe chuckled.

"They have been a little sobered by the news. They are not crowing so loudly, and their feathers look ruffled. And yet you are not tempted to fall in love with these noble fellows?"

"Since my husband's death I have ceased to believe in heroics."

"Come, come! I know the poor man was very foolish. Your pride has no pity."

"My pride is a statue, Father; it demands a cold repose. I have no patience with these fanatics, these ferocious egoists. They wish to change things to their own advantage, that is all."

Giuseppe rubbed his hands.

"Of course. It is ridiculous to believe in people who would make a flag out of the tail of a shirt. Mazzini is that sort of man. Well, the French are coming."

"And you are in touch with the French?"

"Possibly, possibly," he chuckled. "I think we shall manage the business for them. Besides, I know the Italians; they are my people. They will clank their swords and talk a great deal, but they will not fight."

"None of them?"

"Then you believe that some are brave men?"

"Oh, I believe in nothing," she said coldly.

Father Giuseppe wagged a fat forefinger at her, and read her a little lecture upon the perils of too casual a philosophy. He enjoyed being sententious, especially when he could end his discourse with a wink of the eyelid.

¶

THE terrace of the Villa Venosta was a noble platform from which one could view the sunset and watch the dome of St. Peter's floating like a great black bubble upon a sea of gold. Monte Maria and the Janiculum were outlined against the glow. Rome herself lay deep in a kind of purple haze.

A spruce little officer in the uniform of the *carabinieri* straddled a chair on the terrace, as though he were riding a horse, and talked gallant nonsense to the Contessa Anna. This Captain Costello had a plump, wax-coloured face, a neat black moustache, sleepy eyes, and an air of cynical self-confidence. He was giving a humorous description of the Republican troops in Rome.

"Yes, we are very gay birds, I assure you. We have plenty of feathers and gold lace; we crow like game-cocks. The French will fire a few cannon-balls; the cocks will turn into a cackling crowd of hens; we shall surrender; everybody will laugh; a few fools will be shot."

"And you?"

He laughed.

"Oh, I am not nervous; I am quite impartial; I can cheer for both parties. Besides, I am such a good fellow, and my uncle is a cardinal. It is an amusing farce."

Captain Costello continued to entertain her with descriptions of heroes whose hair hung down to their waists and who made a boast of never washing, but Anna had the air of a woman whose interest was wholly artificial. She was listening to a sound that emerged from behind Captain Costello's chatter. Someone was walking up and down the lane at the bottom of the wall with the regularity and the persistence of a sentinel.

"It is a woman's right to be inquisitive."

She rose from the seat, leaving Costello poised open-mouthed in the middle of a droll word-picture of Mazzini, and crossing the terrace, looked down into the lane. The coincidence proved dramatic. That absurd Englishman was standing there, staring up at her with innocent intentness.

"Good evening, signorina."

He saluted her with just a trace of embarrassment. His lean, brown face looked boyish under the brim of his plumed hat. By his long blue coat and black belt she knew him to be one of Garibaldi's men.

"It seems that my trees still interest you, sir."

He answered quite gravely.

"I desired to see them by daylight." And then, as though to smother any possible repulse: "That glimpse of Rome down yonder is particularly fine. I thought I knew Rome, but this is a discovery."

She smiled enigmatically.

"Your military duties cannot be very exacting. Does the general never drill you?"

" Garibaldi is not a pedagogue."

" I see. He believes in liberty, of course—liberty in the ranks."

Costello had twisted his chair round and was listening with both his ears. Then curiosity overcame his discretion. He got up, crossed the terrace, and poked his head over the wall.

" The devil ! It's North—Garibaldi's ' Englishman.' Greetings, my dear sir."

The Contessa threw a quick and angry side-glance at Costello. He should have effaced himself, waited her pleasure, before thrusting himself into evidence.

North's eyes seemed to darken slightly.

" It's you, Costello ! "

" Most certainly."

And then, glancing from North to the Contessa Venosta's cold face, he chattered on.

" Am I to be called officious ? But it seems that I can play the part of cicerone. Quentin North, Esq., private in the Legion, be honoured by being presented to La Contessa Anna Venosta. Now we all know each other, and the world is at ease."

North saluted. The Contessa bent her head with sudden mock graciousness.

" If Signor North is a friend of yours, Captain Costello, no doubt it would please you to show him the view from the terrace. The little gate and the steps—you know them."

Costello gave her a wondering look, and bowed.

" An excellent notion, Contessa." And in an undertone : " Really, the man will amuse you ; he is so grim, so drunk with star-wine. I will fetch him up."

Yet Captain Costello was disappointed in his idea of making the Englishman play the heroic fool. The sunset was splendid, a pageant of scarlet and gold, but Quentin North remained as stiff and grey as an English landscape in winter.

They walked the terrace, the three of them, and it was Costello who did the talking. Anna Venosta seemed absorbed in her own thoughts. Every now and again North stole a look at her, while he pretended to listen to Costello's vapourings.

The evening grew chilly, and the Contessa's manner suggested frost.

The Carabineer flattered himself on being a man of subtle sensibilities.

" Phœbus Apollo has thrown us a hint. And I have to inspect the guard. We will drag ourselves away, Contessa."

He made his bow with a flourish, and glanced meaningly at Quentin North ; but the Englishman might have been blind by the calm way he took Costello's departure for granted.

" Good-night, captain."

" Then you do not go my way, North ? "

" I think not."

Costello left them with a blank face and the air of a man who could not quite decide whether he ought to feel insulted. He loitered for a few moments outside the gate that opened into the lane, as though he expected to be joined by a very much chastened and routed Englishman. But no Quentin North appeared. Costello shrugged his shoulders and walked on.

Anna Venosta and Quentin North were talking to each other with strange frankness.

" You have seen the view from my terrace, Mr. North. If you are quick you will be able to overtake Captain Costello."

" I am very grateful to you, but I have no wish to overtake the Captain."

" And you are very slow to take a hint ! "

He looked at her with those keen, unflinching eyes of his.

" Contessa, if I am in the way—if I am offensive to you—send me off. But I have never liked being the slave of whims and little conventions. I want to talk to you ; I have been waiting for that chatterer to go."

His calm directness challenged her, though she could detect no shade of insolence in this attitude of his. It appeared to her that he was unlike any other man that she had ever met, a kind of new creature whose behaviour piqued her curiosity.

" Are we such old friends ? "

Her eyes studied him.

" Perhaps Captain Costello is an old friend ? "

" Mr. North ! And yet I do not think you wish to be rude to me ! "

" What is rudeness ? To insinuate mean things ? Let's ignore such an idea——"

" Well ? "

" If a man like Costello can be suffered to talk to you—then—I—ask at least an equal right."

She began to smile a little. The man was an original ; his swordplay was strangely virile and aggressive.

" But all this is beyond me——"

" Beyond you ? "

" You arrive here—by chance ; you are absolutely unknown to me ; you claim a kind of intimacy that in Italy— —"

They turned by some mutual impulse and stood facing each other, with the sunset dying in the west and night falling like a curtain from the branches of the trees. A sudden subtle curiosity possessed them. They looked at each other with questioning intentness, and with something of the naive hostility of children who meet for the first time.

" Contessa, life is very simple for all of us—here in Rome."

" I see nothing but complexity."

" Impossible."

" Be arrogant—like most Englishmen."

" Arrogance ! I don't think I am guilty of that. Let me explain. You are La Contessa Venosta, a Roman woman ; I am a man who chooses to see in this blaze of liberty one of the finest things on God's earth. The facts are very simple—I want to talk to you, a Roman woman, about Rome, Italy, Garibaldi."

A flash of wickedness escaped her.

" But why to me ? "

His eyes held hers.

" That puzzles me. Why does one desire any particular thing in this world ? Why does one walk a mile to look at some particular view ? "

She laughed softly to defend herself. His frankness and the strange sincerity of those eyes of his troubled her.

" You spoke of facts. Has it not occurred to you that I am an aristocrat ? "

" Of course."

" And a devout Catholic ? "

" Certainly."

" And that, therefore, I may have no love for these excitable and loquacious —ragamuffins ? "

She had scored a hit. He looked at her almost blankly.

" No ; I refuse to believe that."

" And why, indeed ? "

" Because anyone with a living soul——"

The steel of his intensity began to glitter, and something within her hardened and clashed with it.

" Thank you. Please do not create a heroic atmosphere for me. Let us be frank. I have no faith in Italy."

" No faith in your own country ? "

" No."

Their spirits were in combat—instantly. It was as though his intense idealism exasperated and touched her pride. She counted herself a worldling and a cynic, and this man seemed ready to hold up a light to her soul and boldly catechise her upon her most intimate prejudices.

" And you tell me that this great adventure does not move you ? "

She answered him with hot perversity.

" Not in the least. It strikes me as pathetic and ridiculous—even a little contemptible."

" My dear lady ! "

She flushed.

" You are one of those heroic people who rush about the world in search of adventures. Believe me, you will be disillusioned here in Rome."

" I refuse to believe it—I refuse even to believe that you believe it."

She shrugged her shoulders.

" I find your obstinacy rather tiresome. I am afraid the French will soon drive your heroes into the cellars."

" On the contrary, I can swear that we shall give the gallant French a very gallant repulse."

" Oh, as you will. A few days will settle the question——"

" Shall we make a wager of it ? I will lay you a challenge. If we do not win our first battle—then I will forget that there is such a place as the Villa Venosta."

" Then, my dear Mr. North, I think I shall be certain to be rid of you. Good-night. I am sorry that our acquaintanceship has been so brief."

She gave him an ironical and tantalising glance, and swept away down the terrace towards the flight of steps that led up through the ilexes to her villa. Quentin North had to find his own way back into the lane. His eyes had a set and almost fierce look, for he chose to feel very much in earnest about that rather extraordinary wager.

¶

IT was close upon noon on that cloudless April day when the Roman cannon near the Porta Pertusa fired their first shots at the attacking French.

Anna had been reading in her boudoir, but the sound of the guns brought her out upon the terrace. She had tried to treat the whole affair with dispassionate and casual curiosity, but the thunder of the guns sent a sudden thrill through her.

She chose a place where a stone-pine threw its shade, and leaning her arms on the wall, looked westwards over Rome. She could see the Janiculum, St. Peter's, and

the mass of the Vatican, and here and there the flash of the cannon on the walls. The rattle of musketry swelled the increasing thunder of the guns. A haze of smoke began to rise, and hung like a thin cloud of diaphanous silver. Overhead the sky was as blue as a sapphire, and birds twittered in the branches of the stone-pine, whose flat top shaded the terrace.

The sound of musketry over yonder came in gusts, and then died away to nothingness. She was conscious of an effort to retain her poise and to smother an incipient and passionate curiosity. She did not feel any fear, but a kind of wonder stole upon her. Men were killing each other, letting blood flow for the sake of an idea.

And somewhere that irresponsible Englishman was taking his share in it. She could almost see that brown, intense face of his, rather grim and a little exultant. Had he forgotten that wager of his? Of course there could be but one end to the business, for raw volunteers and Italians could not be expected to stand against troops like the French.

Yet she stayed there on the terrace the whole of that afternoon, lunching on some cold chicken, bread and red wine that a servant brought her from the villa. The battle enthralled her. It had spread like a storm along the western walls of Rome, and had enveloped the Janiculum and the villa gardens outside the walls. Now and again she could hear a faint cheer or a confused roar of voices drifting between the fiercer bursts of musketry.

And Quentin North? He was standing at the upper window of a little stone house near the Villa Pamfili, firing steadily at the French. There had been a wild tussle in the gardens, an affair of bayonets and clubbed muskets, discipline and gallantry pitted against gallantry and ardour, and for the moment discipline had won the day. Garibaldi's legionaries were holding on in the grounds of the Villa Pamfili, little parties of desperate men, but elsewhere the Italians had been driven back under the walls of Rome.

A youngster, who had had his arm broken by a musket ball, sat on the floor and watched North loading and firing. There had been a bayonet attack on the house, and a bloody fight in the room below, but the defenders had driven the French out and piled furniture against the broken door. The French had taken cover behind shrubs and walls, and were firing at the windows.

The youngster with the broken arm seemed fascinated by North's steadiness. More than one bullet had entered the window and flattened itself against the wall.

"The devil! But you have a cool head, comrade!"

North was ramming home a charge with the pleasant smile of a man who had no trouble in the whole wide world.

"A charging elephant is worse than this."

The boy's eyes grew rounder.

"So you have shot elephants?"

"Yes. But this is fairer sport. The other man always has an honest chance of potting you."

So the afternoon wore on, and North kept firing steadily. Great things were preparing—a gallant storming forth of men, with Garibaldi riding on his white horse, a figure of Liberty. But of all this North knew nothing. He and the men who held the house saw no more than the flash of the French muskets and an occasional blue-coated, red-legged figure moving in the background.

"Hallo! Listen!"

It was the boy who spoke, bending forward, eyes ablaze.

"'Garibaldi! Garibaldi!' Hear them shouting?"

Over the Corsini Hill and up into the Pamfili grounds came that great charge, cheering, storming, glittering towards victory. The red blouses of the men who led the Legion flamed like torches in the van. Young Italy followed with a shout of exultation.

North forgot all caution. He leant out of the window, waved his hat, and cheered. But the French sharpshooters had forgotten him. There was sterner trouble to hand.

"By God, they are rushing on like a forest fire!"

Men were shouting in the room below.

"Come on, comrades!"

"Charge!"

"Out of this rat-trap, Garibaldini!"

North fixed his bayonet and half-tumbled down the stairs. And in ten seconds he was in the thick of a bayonet fight, lunging at blue-coated Frenchmen in a world of rose bushes and flowering shrubs.

Anna Venosta still kept her watch as the sun sank towards the west. The sound of musketry had died away, the cannon on the walls were silent, but she could hear people shouting in the streets. The battle was over. She imagined that the French had forced their way into Rome.

So the Englishman had lost his wager! She was conscious of a sudden spasm of regret, and was angry with herself for being guilty of such an emotion. The man had annoyed her; he was an arrogant, hot-headed fool.

Then she heard someone coming up the lane, and the slovenly, pattering footsteps were very familiar. Bending to look over the wall, she saw a fat man in a black soutane and big beaver hat perspiring up the slope. It was Father Giuseppe.

"You have brought news?"

He stared up at her, and his face was purple and furious. He had the air of a man who had been shocked and scandalised beyond belief; his eyes rounded off their astonishment.

"News! My dear lady, I have never walked so fast in my life!"

"To oblige me?"

He frothed at the mouth.

"The French have been beaten—beaten by that mob of tailors and schoolboys! You would hardly believe it—they are on the retreat to Civita Vecchia!"

She could not help smiling at his glowing disgust.

"What! Garibaldi—that man who never combs his beard—has won a victory?"

"The devil's in the fellow!"

"And you, Father, are you going to sup with me?"

He fidgeted from foot to foot.

"Well—no, Contessa—not to-night. Desolated, I assure you. But to be frank, Rome may be a rather unpleasant place for a day or so. I have a friend over yonder—a quiet, retiring fellow who has offered me a bed."

She waved him away.

"I understand you, Father—yet how could anyone have the heart to hurt you? Sleep well. Besides, these people should be in a good temper to-night. There will be illuminations and rejoicings."

Father Giuseppe went perspiring up the lane, a conspirator whose plan had gone very much astray.

An hour or two later, just as the sun was nearing the horizon, Winged Victory followed in Father Giuseppe's steps—so far as the Villa Venosta, and no farther. It was Quentin North, a little drunk with exaltation, his lips black with biting off the ends of cartridges, a red bandage round his left arm. He stopped by the gate in the wall, pushed it open, and climbed the steps to the terrace.

¶

THE level rays of the sun shone on him as he emerged from the deep shade of a grove of ilexes and cypresses. Nor had the dramatic chance miscarried, though he had not calculated on such a chance. She stood there as though she had been awaiting him, her head held high, a glint of arrogance in her eyes.

"Yes, I have heard the news. It is amazing, but I suppose it is true."

His eyes laughed in his exultant face.

"True. And I have won my wager, madam. And Italy has proved herself against the most gallant troops in all the world."

She looked him over, her nostrils touched with a fastidious pride.

"Pah! And is this what a victorious soldier looks like? Thanks, Mr. North, for the favour of your presence."

He smiled a little grimly.

"The picture-books make us look too clean and pretty."

"But that dirty red rag!"

"A little fellow did it with a bayonet."

"And have you been dining on powder?"

"One has to bite the cartridges, you know."

"Yes; and it interests me in a way—this sordid reality."

"Sordid! Is blood spilt bravely sordid?"

"Are you aware that half your coat is hanging like a beggar's?"

He gave a whimsical tug to the offending fragment.

"Somebody did that in the scuffle—or I may have caught it on a spike when I jumped down into that sunken road."

His eyes flashed to hers.

"And you are a Roman woman. Do you think the Roman legionaries looked like show soldiers when they had broken a charge of the Gauls? And the Roman women would have kissed their bloody harness."

The hot colour rose to her face.

"Mr. North, this terrace of mine is not a stage for ranting. I choose to take my own

view of life ; I do not quarrel with yours."

" But I do most certainly quarrel with yours, madam."

" Your frankness is irrepressible."

" I ask you to believe in Italy—the new Italy, not the old Italy, ridden by Germans, priests and petty pomposities——"

" Perhaps I insist on being part of the old Italy."

He looked at her steadily and with sudden strange gentleness.

" No, I refuse to believe it. Doesn't this struggle of a people to be free touch your heart ? Doesn't the splendour of a Roman Empire stir you ? "

" Not in the least."

" It must."

She shrugged her shoulders.

" Mr. North, I do not know why Fate should have thrust you upon me. You are a very extraordinary man, and I have suffered you with great patience. I think I am older than you are—if not in years, at least in knowledge of the world. You are the slave of dreams."

" Dreams ! Why, to be sure, if one did not dream, where would the world be ? And would you call yourself the slave of facts ? "

" Yes."

" Well, I saw youngsters in anguish to-day who cheered and laughed in spite of their wounds. Those are plain facts. And do I look on you as no more than a thing of so much bone and flesh, a complicated bit of chemistry, a pretty machine ? What does an artist put into his picture ? The mysterious, dream-soul of life as he sees it. You might call that stone-pine there a chunk of wood, but it is more than that—the tree has outlines, character, beauty."

She turned away and leant her arms upon the wall, perhaps because she wished to avoid his eyes.

" Mr. North, I am an incurable cynic. Life has not taught me to believe in people."

" Then life might begin to-day."

She cried out at him as though she were in pain.

" Oh, you weary me ! This is an infliction! Please go ! "

He watched her a moment with grave eyes.

" Contessa, I ask you to pardon me. Perhaps I have been preaching, playing the prig. I will wish you good-night."

He drew himself up, saluted, and marched away, leaving her to watch Rome decking herself with the lights of a great rejoicing. The city was in a triumphant, carnival mood, and a candle seemed to shine in every window. But Anna Venosta's heart was full of restlessness and vague rebellion.

It is possible for a soul to wither little by little, to grow cynical and apathetic, and remain contented with the small, luxurious happenings of a selfish life. Such a soul may resent any attempt to revitalise it, for the rebirth of emotion may mean the rebirth of pain.

Such, in measure, was Anna Venosta's fate. The passion had died out of her life. She had satisfied herself with a proud and ironical scepticism.

And suddenly a bold and impetuous force had thrust itself into her life. A voice cried to her almost brutally : " Dead woman, awake ! "

It was as though someone had roughly roused her from sleep to bid her go out into the thick of a storm. Her pride and self-love turned angrily upon the intruder. She repulsed the idea of being dominated by any man's personality.

Yet Quentin North had roused her to a sense of spiritual pain. She, the woman, had most strangely inflamed the living man in him ; she had seen that in his eyes. He was no ordinary man ; he did not come mincingly to kiss her hands, but he came with passion and a scourge.

Each day, towards sunset, North walked up the lane to the villa, entered the gate, and made his way to the terrace. She was there, ready to give him battle—for a battle it had become. She could have had the gate locked against him, but Anna Venosta was no coward, and even discovered a bitter fascination in the conflict.

Such a woman was not to be won with sighs and little tendernesses. Only the shock of a defeat could break her cold and hostile self-confidence. Quentin North never realised that fact, but the blood of his ancestors was more potent than mere intuition. There was much of the Puritan in North, a glow of ethical passion that made him say and do things that would have seemed outrageous in a mere worldling.

" You are a woman in bondage," he told her, " in bondage to old, selfish prejudices. And I am going to break those chains."

She taunted him and accused him of arrogance.

" Are all Englishmen such egoists ? You wish to dominate the world. And you talk

to me as though I were a soul to be saved from purgatory."

"And so you are—you, a daughter of Dante, who should be in Paradise."

"My Savonarola!"

She would laugh at him, making a kind of cloud of her mockery in which she could hide herself from his too fierce sincerity. And often he laughed with her at himself, and then she was near loving him, despite her obstinate pride.

So the days passed; and then he came to say good-bye. He was in a crusading spirit, elated, happy, bright and clear of eye.

"We march to-night. We are going to discourage the Neapolitans. Pray for us."

She shook her head.

"No; I shall show you no mercy."

"Au revoir, then—till I come back."

His eyes looked at her with a sudden challenge.

"I believe you hate me."

"No, not quite; but I defy you. You have made me declare war to the death. I may be a woman, but I do not surrender."

Her bitterness puzzled him.

"There is something in you that I do not understand."

"I do not think you will ever understand. Be gentle with those poor Neapolitans. They are Italians, too."

His eyes still questioned her.

"Perhaps I am a bit of a fanatic."

"Perhaps."

She did not confess that he had humiliated her, and that her spirit was in revolt.

¶

GARIBALDI and his army launched themselves into the unknown, leaving Rome garrisoned against internal treachery, for the French were quiet at Civita Vecchia while the French Republic puzzled out the problem of what to do in a very awkward political situation. Captain Costello and his *carabinieri* had been left behind in the city, with orders to patrol the Campagna and keep a watch upon the road to the sea.

Now, Captain Costello was one of those bland fellows who contrive to be popular with everybody. He served the new Republic and plotted against it with the Clericals; he pretended to admire Garibaldi, and in the course of his duties so arranged it that he became the familiar gossip of certain French cavalry officers who rode out from Civita Vecchia. Lastly, he chose to be in love with the Contessa Anna; her estate in the Romagna was worthy of any man's attention.

And Anna Venosta encouraged him during that month of May. He was a smooth cynic with an amusing tongue, and he helped her to resist the too dominating memory left by Quentin North. She was in rebellion against the man's masterfulness, and out of sheer perversity she coquetted with Costello.

Yet in her heart of hearts she scorned this sallow little dandy, with his perfect manners and his cynical chatter. She suffered him out of malice, and yet herself suffered for allowing her malice to express itself. Costello served as a contrast, and the more she saw of him the more vivid became her mind picture of Quentin North. The one man was all fire, intensity and brave fun; the other sniggered at life and took great care of his moustache and his hands.

Nor was the news that Costello brought her wholly comforting to her cynical pose.

"This Garibaldi is really an extraordinary fellow. The Neapolitans are on the run. One may have to revise one's opinions."

"Then there may be more in it than wild adventure?"

He held up one hand.

"Let us call the thumb the Roman Republic. Then we have, firstly, the French; secondly, the Austrians; thirdly, the Neapolitans; fourthly, the Spaniards. Finger number one has had a bad bruising; finger number three has doubled up. We have left the Austrians and the Spaniards. Now supposing the French choose to recognise the Roman Republic, what then? Will the Austrians dare to march south out of Tuscany and risk trouble with the French? The whole problem will be solved by the good politicians in Paris, despite our dear Pope. Mr. Mazzini and the rest of them are not such fools as we imagined."

Her eyes gazed into the distance.

"Then a dream may come true."

"What dream, Contessa?"

"The dream of a united Italy."

He chuckled, and spread his hands.

"Oh, yes; they might leave us to quarrel among ourselves."

Sometimes Father Giuseppe joined them. He had quite recovered his good humour and his air of fat benignity, and although Costello served the Republic, they appeared to understand each other very well. Father Giuseppe had adopted a playful, parental attitude.

"Young blood, young blood—that is what it is, my children. The boys must break out of school and do some mischief, and presently they will come back like lambs, and we shall forgive them."

He turned to Anna Venosta.

"Never be led away by fanatics, Contessa; they are vampires who thirst for the blood of other men's souls. The unselfish are, of all people, the most selfish—and the most cruel."

¶

STRANGE rumours spread through Rome. It was said that the French had landed more troops at Civita Vecchia—that the French Government had decided to recognise the new Republic, and had sent a warning note to Austria. Other people were less sanguine. The new troops were to play the part of enemies, not friends. Rome doubted herself, was disturbed, began to cry out for Garibaldi. And Garibaldi himself had been warned of the sinister trend of events; he and his men were making a forced march for Rome, victorious troops who adored their General.

Thus it befell that two men met among the laurels and ilexes above the flight of steps leading from the lane to the terrace of the Villa Venosta.

Costello's teeth showed white in his sallow face. He was ready with his politeness and far too clever to betray surprise.

"Congratulations, man of victory!"

He held out a hand. North took it, and found its fingers cold and flabby in his grasp.

"How are things in Rome?"

"Precarious, sir—very precarious. We may want twenty Garibaldis and twenty Legions."

"So the French are likely to give trouble? Well, one Garibaldi should be enough."

North had the look of a man who wanted to pass on. Costello smiled at him and stepped jauntily aside.

Anna Venosta was sitting in a gilded Renaissance chair under the shade of the trees. The chair suggested a throne, and her poise was the poise of a queen. She had heard North's voice in the shrubbery, and the blood had rushed to her face. For a moment she had struggled with a confused tangle of emotions—anger, fear, and a kind of unbidden exultation. But she was more than mistress of herself when Quentin North appeared.

"So the Neapolitans ran away from you?"

He saluted her.

"They had a bad cause to fight for. Besides, they are Italians; their hearts may have been with us."

"An Englishman explains Italy to an Italian!"

"Why not? You may see your true self in the eyes of a friend."

"But you always forget that we are enemies."

"Then let us be very frank with one another. You have been in my thoughts all through this month, Contessa, for somehow you seem to be Italy to me—proud, doubting Italy, not caring to be saved. And yet Italy may have to be saved against her will, lifted up by strong men and set by force upon her throne."

For the first time he hinted openly at his love for her; nor did his eyes trouble to conceal the light that burnt in them.

She flushed haughtily, for she was an aristocrat, and this man a mere commoner.

"Well, let us be frank. Your arrogance is extraordinary. By what right do you come and preach to me——?"

"Because I cannot help myself."

"What a simple excuse! Am I so flagrantly decadent, so utterly depraved, fit to amuse myself only with men like that little captain of *carabinieri*?"

His eyes held hers.

"Supposing you are what you say you are, shall I agree to it? I see in you another kind of woman."

"A thousand thanks. So you would save me from myself, lift me out of the dust of my beliefs! Mr. North, I am, indeed, grateful to you; you do me too great an honour in condescending to see possibilities in me."

She rose from her chair, very pale, and drawing her breath more rapidly.

"Have I no pride in myself? Am I to go on my knees before you and confess imaginary sins? Who are you to demand such a thing from me?"

She saw a spasm of emotion pass across his face.

"I assure you—you wrong me. We have crossed swords, you and I. Somehow I could not help attacking you."

"A woman! Oh, heroic man! And now you will find me stronger than you thought."

Her eyes looked past him, to discover Father Giuseppe padding ponderously along

the terrace, coughing suggestively behind his hand. Her face cleared. A glitter of malicious amusement leapt into her eyes.

" Father Giuseppe, I have been expecting you all the morning."

Quentin North swung round with the look of a man attacked from behind.

" Mr. North, this is Father Giuseppe, a very old friend of my family. Mr. North, Father, is a merciless enemy of ours ; he will have it that I ought to be wearing a red blouse. But, of course, we forgive the English many things."

" Mr. North, will you bring the Father a chair ? You will find one at the end of the terrace."

North went without a word.

Father Giuseppe was no fool. He had a quick and human grasp of life, and a genial knack of making himself pleasant under the most difficult conditions. Moreover, he knew more than North imagined, and could guess shrewdly at many things that he did not know.

" I am charmed to meet you, Mr. North ; I am always charmed to meet an Englishman, even though he is on the other side of the chessboard. And no doubt you think me a tyrannical, Jesuitical, crafty old man."

He laughed delightfully, enjoying his joke.

" You see in me, Mr. North, a brutal and pitiless reactionary. I help to grind down the peasants, to keep the people ignorant and superstitious."

He beamed at North as though he loved him, but North seemed to have grown mute and inarticulate. He looked steadily at Father Giuseppe, and smiled.

Anna lay back in her chair.

" The old things are always evil, I suppose."

" My dear Contessa—consider—my—antiquity ! "

He glanced at North.

" You will support my grey hairs, sir."

North straightened himself uneasily.

" I have been given food for thought, Father. Have you ever seen a man overrun himself in a race ? "

Father Giuseppe spread his hands.

" Enthusiasm is admirable. At my age, I have to be polite to the hills."

Neither Father Giuseppe nor Anna Venosta spoke till Quentin North had left the terrace.

The old priest gazed at the sky as though he were lost in contemplation.

" Strange people, the English—so very stupid and so full of adventure. Quite a fierce fellow, that. He looks at you with the eyes of a Viking."

Anna was frowning to herself, and Father Giuseppe did not worry her.

" Father Giuseppe."

" My child."

" I want to teach that man a lesson."

" Nothing should be easier—as he appears to be in love with you."

" Love ! "

She smiled bitterly.

" Yes, I suppose he was fated to rouse the devil in me—the devil of pride. I have wondered whether he is just an arrogant fool or a heroic madman. He has hurt my self-love."

" How, my child ? "

" It seems that I am a degenerate daughter of Rome. I cannot rise to a noble inspiration. I belong to the old, cynical, selfish, frivolous order of things. He has been trying to talk the new ideals into my soul."

Father Giuseppe sat with half-closed eyes, stroking his chin.

" So you do not love him, my child ? "

She answered hotly.

" No. I want to show that man that he is not my master."

" It should be easy."

" Oh, he is no ordinary mortal. He carries his head high above mere words."

The priest nodded.

" I have some worldly wisdom, Contessa," he said.

" Well ? "

" Nothing touches a man so sharply as being made a fool of."

She glanced at him quickly.

" You mean—— ? "

" I could tell you how it might be done ; but you must not be angry with me."

" I can promise that."

Father Giuseppe began to speak very slowly.

" It is known in Rome that the French have declared war on Mazzini's Republic. There will be a second attack on the city, for the French are in earnest, and determined to wipe out that previous defeat. Now, it is of the utmost importance, for political reasons, that there should be no second fiasco. We are going to use our wits as well as the bayonets of our friends—besides, a little cunning will save much bloodshed."

He rubbed his hands together.

"A little diplomacy, a little artfulness. At present they are exchanging pourparlers, while General Oudinot is massing his army and Garibaldi preparing his defence. Now, my daughter, can I trust you to remain in earnest?—for the trust is great."

"I am asking to be given a weapon, Father."

"Yes, I think you will use it. Know, then, that there is an armistice, and Oudinot has let it be understood that he will not attack before Monday morning. To-day is Friday. But the French will attack before Monday morning."

She said nothing, and he watched her shrewdly.

"In war, Contessa, it is the duty of a general to take nothing for granted. He should assume that the other fellow has a card up his sleeve. It is Garibaldi's duty to suspect Oudinot."

"So that if he is tricked by a promise, the responsibility is his?"

"Exactly."

Her face had hardened.

"Well, and what next?"

"It would be very useful for General Oudinot to know how Garibaldi has placed his troops. It would be of especial interest if he were informed how the Pamfili and the Corsini are to be held on the night of Saturday."

"I see. And how would the information reach him?"

"I would undertake that."

"And how is the information to be obtained?"

"My daughter, I am offering you your weapon."

She left her chair and walked up and down the terrace. Presently she returned to him.

"The Englishman can tell me this?"

"Of course. He is a favourite of Garibaldi's."

"But will he tell me?"

Father Giuseppe spread his hands.

"My daughter, you are a very beautiful woman, and a very clever one. Let us show this barbarian that we aristocrats are not fools."

Anna Venosta did not succumb without a struggle to the importunities of her pride. There were moments that night when her spirit revolted from the thing that Father Giuseppe had tempted her to do, and when an irrepressible tenderness stirred in her heart. She had varying mind-pictures of Quentin North—at one moment he appeared to her as the adventurous, impulsive lover; at another as a figure of dominant and fanatical arrogance. She hesitated between two impulses, but in the end her perversity won a victory in that battle of unrest.

"I will let him decide it," she said to herself. "If he comes to-morrow I will not spare him. If he does not come—then I may relent."

It was an arbitrary and unreasonable bargaining with her own self-love; but many of the tragic happenings of life arise out of some little poisonous piece of perverse pride.

And North came.

¶

"WE quarrelled rather horribly yesterday. I suppose I ought to ask your pardon."

His eyes looked softer and less intense blue.

"We should always quarrel, you and I."

"Should we?"

She fancied she caught a gleam of masterful humour in his eyes, and she chose to misinterpret it.

"Supposing we call a truce for one day."

"I'm ready to hang up the white flag."

"But you will contradict me within five minutes."

"I'll promise not to."

"Then you had better do the talking, and I the listening. Go and bring a chair from the belvedere."

She watched him walk away, and her smile was the smile of a Circe. He returned with a certain triumphant boyishness, carrying the chair by one leg.

"What am I to talk about?"

"Why not about yourself?"

"Thank you."

"What it feels like to be in a battle."

"Quite simple. Men differ. I begin by being most horribly afraid."

"You are jesting."

"Nothing of the kind. Most of us are cowards, and are too cowardly to confess it."

She smiled with an air of girlish delight.

"That interests me immensely. But do you worry about what is likely to happen? I mean—well, everyone knows that the French are going to attack the city again; and supposing you were up on the Janiculum

—say in the Villa Pamfili—knowing that you would have to bear the brunt——"

He seemed amused.

"I might feel rather more on the alert. But I shall not be on the Janiculum to-night."

"I thought the Legion were there. Someone told me so."

"No; the infantry of the line have that honour—four hundred bayonets or so. There is an armistice till Monday."

"Where are you? Quartered in Rome?"

"Yes."

"That's strange. I should have thought Garibaldi would have had his best troops in the first defences."

"Garibaldi may think differently. In a game such as war you want something in reserve—a bit of iron to hurl at the enemy at some critical moment."

"Ah, I see. You are the Old Guard."

"Thank you; I'll pin that in my hat."

He drifted into talking of himself, despite his vow that he would do nothing of the kind. He had met Garibaldi at Montevideo, and fallen under the man's spell.

"You want to be a man of the wilds," he explained, "to value Garibaldi. He is not a tame creature."

"A tiger."

"Say, rather, a lion."

"And have you always lived what you English call the 'wild life'?"

He laughed.

"There are different varieties of the wild life, Contessa. You have heard of the Puritans — well, I belong to a Puritan family, and dissipated young men are not encouraged. But I know what civilisation is—perhaps you have heard of Eton and Oxford—and when I am at home I am quite the gentleman, the little baron of my village, though I have no title."

"Then you are an aristocrat, a man of family?"

"Oh, I suppose so."

She had begun by being very kind to him, and then her mood changed. Perhaps her own heart accused her of treachery; perhaps she was not happy in persuading him to betray the cause he served. It was as though she craved for self-justification, a rewounding of her pride.

But North did not anger her that morning, and so she was compelled to create her anger in accusing him of trying to disarm her pride. He was seeking to master her with other weapons, using the net instead of the sword.

"Perhaps some day a few heroic Italians will land in England, tell your people they are mere ignorant brutes, try to begin a revolution, and turn out your Queen."

She spoke sneeringly, and he looked at her in surprise.

"England is not Italy."

"And would you take part with a mob of fanatics against your own class, against all your traditions?"

"If the fanatics were in the right, I might be one of them."

"But you prefer these things to happen in other countries."

"It is you who are trying to force a quarrel on me now, Contessa!"

"I? Not in the least. Besides, Father Giuseppe is coming to lunch with me; I thought I heard the gate shut. And Father Giuseppe never quarrels."

"Anna——"

He was leaning forward, looking at her intently with the eyes of a lover. She started, and tried to think that the blood had not rushed to her face.

"I think you had better go, Mr. North."

"But I want to try and tell you——"

"Here is Father Giuseppe. I saw that he bored you yesterday. Need I say more?"

North rose and bowed to her, his eyes still searching her face.

"If I have spoken rudely—at any time—forgive me. And so—good-bye."

He met Father Giuseppe half-way down the terrace. They exchanged smiles and a few commonplaces, and then passed on.

Father Giuseppe took the vacant chair, fanning himself with his hat.

"One wishes oneself on the mountains, especially when there are so many hot-headed people about."

Anna did not seem to hear him.

"I do not wish to appear inquisitive, Contessa."

She turned her head slowly and gazed at him.

"What am I to tell you?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Why, nothing if our English friend is so masterful that——"

She interrupted him almost fiercely.

"Listen. The Janiculum will be held to-night by four hundred men. Garibaldi's Legion will be in Rome. They are expecting nothing."

"Contessa, may I kiss your hand?"

She glanced at him with sudden scorn.

" No. I have done this for my own ends, not to help in treachery. Now—go ! "

Anna Venosta did not attempt to sleep that night. She dismissed her maid, drew an arm-chair to the open window of her room and sat there in the darkness, with Rome spread below her all patterned with yellow lights.

She had crossed the threshold of the great emotional experience of her life, and had entered the silent chamber where love burns like a sacred fire. But as yet the light of it blinded her. She was groping her way towards the flame that would scorch her hands.

She had scorned Father Giuseppe, and in scorning him had come to discover that it was possible for her to doubt herself. Doubt, indeed ! Her headstrong, southern pride had thrust the suggestion aside with a gesture of fierce impatience. This Englishman had persuaded himself that she was a listless, slack-souled aristocrat. Italians can strike with a knife when a phlegmatic northerner would be content with a savage sneer.

Yet when the dusk fell a merciless unrest had seized her. There was yet time to warn Quentin North and to sacrifice her passionate perversity to some nobler impulse, but such an action would imply surrender and a confession that she was not so strong and so reckless as she had thought.

Would anything happen ? Had Father Giuseppe managed to send a message to the French ? Were Oudinot's regiments already gathering silently for a surprise attack ?

The tension slackened a little ; she almost felt that she could sleep.

" Crack ! "

The faint report of a musket shot broke the waiting silence of the night. A second shot followed the first, and then a whole spatter of musketry broke out like the noise of a watchman's rattle. The duller sound of an explosion answered it, and then for a moment silence held.

Anna Venosta stood leaning against the window-frame.

" The Janiculum."

She murmured the words to herself.

Then a vague, confused outcry drifted to her like the sound of a distant sea. Scattered musket shots seemed to tell of disorder, a scrambling mêlée in the dark. She heard men cheering, though the sound was very faint and unreal. But she knew what had happened. The French had attacked ; they were pouring through the pine woods of the Pamfili ; they had caught the garrison asleep.

Day was breaking, and somewhere in the city a big bell began to boom. For a while it tolled on in the silence, and then others joined it, clashing their alarm notes as the sun rose. Then the cannon awoke on the western bastions.

Drums were beating in Rome ; men were running to arms, shouting to each other and to the women who leaned out of the upper windows.

Anna Venosta listened to all these sounds as though fascinated by them. The sun rose over the Campagna, a great ball of gold ; the black trees grew green ; away yonder on the Janiculum men were killing each other in the freshness of that summer dawn. She stood there dazed, wondering.

Her face was very pale, her eyes troubled. She was thinking that Quentin North might be dead before the sun set over the Janiculum.

¶

QUENTIN NORTH was in the first rank of the second company when the Legion marched up the hill to the Porta San Pancrazio. The men were pale, some with fear and some with fury at the thought of the trick that had been played on them. Garibaldi, on his white horse, rode on ahead.

The tall Swiss who marched next to North had a strange far-away look in his eyes.

" So they have taken the Corsini ? " he said.

" Well, we have got to retake it."

" Confound their cleverness. And we had only four hundred men up there. A bad blunder."

He sighed and changed his musket to the other shoulder.

" Well, it does not matter to me."

" Why not to you, Fritz ? "

" I am going to die to-day."

" Nonsense."

The Swiss nodded his head with placid sadness.

" Yes, I am going to die to-day. I feel it in my blood ; but I shall charge with the best."

They reached the open space within the walls, and stood to their arms, waiting.

Other regiments came swinging up, dusty, sweating, fiercely excited, to muster under the shelter of the wall. Garibaldi had ridden through the gateway to see for himself how matters stood.

"Avanti! Avanti!"

A staff officer had clattered back through the Porta San Pancrazio. Garibaldi's Legion was to attack.

Then Quentin North spent the most devilish two hours of his life. Everything was in favour of the French—ground, numbers, arms. The Italians had to charge up an open road, crowd through the gateway of the Corsini, rush up the broad path between box hedges, and then climb the double staircase that led to the house, while the French fired at them from under cover, from the gardens, the woods, and the windows of the house.

The Corsini was taken and lost again three or four times within the first hour, while Garibaldi sat on his white horse outside the Porta San Pancrazio and sent company after company up that fatal road. The Corsini could be taken, but it could not be held. The whole French army was massed on the ground behind it.

Quentin North paid no less than three visits to that house of death, and was driven out of it with the remnant of each attacking party.

"Forward! Forward!"

Once more he found himself in that bloody house. The French had been driven out again, and the Garibaldini were piling up dead bodies in the loggias to make a rampart. North was in the act of seizing a blue-coated figure, when the figure moved and sat up.

"Pardon me, my friend, I am not dead yet."

The Frenchman was an officer, brown-faced, keen-eyed. His arm had been broken by a rifle bullet. He smiled at North in spite of the pain.

"I'm sorry, sir. Look here, perhaps I can make you more comfortable."

He put his arm round the Frenchman, helped him to his feet, and led him into one of the rooms of the villa.

"The place might be cleaner, sir, but there is a corner here."

"A thousand thanks. You are English?"

"Yes."

"We have always fought each other like gentlemen."

"And yet you attacked us this morning."

The Frenchman waved his sound arm.

"It is war, they say; but I do not approve of it. Of course you should have been prepared. And then—it was a priest and a woman who sent us information."

A burst of firing warned North that a counter-attack had begun. He held out a hand to the Frenchman.

"No doubt your friends will be here in a minute."

"Au revoir, sir. I hope that some day I may be able to serve you."

The French came on bravely, a blue mass that glittered with steel. The Garibaldini repulsed the first rush, but the second proved too strong for them. There was fighting in the loggias, in the rooms, on the great double stairway, till the Corsini was lost once more, and a few wild-eyed men found themselves outside the great gateway, where they were sheltered from the French fire. Quentin North was one of them, for his luck still held.

"Damnation! Nine of us left out of sixty-three!"

"Where are the Lombards and the infantry of the line? Are we to batter ourselves to pieces while the others sit still in Rome?"

A man fell, doubled up; he had been shot in the stomach, and had dragged himself as far as the gateway. North carried him down to the Porta San Pancrazio, passing Garibaldi on his white horse.

"So you are still alive, my Englishman?" Garibaldi said.

"We want more men, General. The French are behind there in thousands."

Garibaldi's eyes looked sad. He was King Death on a white horse, sacrificing the men who loved him.

¶

ABOUT three hours before sunset Anna Venosta went dry eyed to her room. She looked like a woman whose blood burned with fever; her hands shook as she opened a cabinet and sat down at her table to write.

If you are alive, come to me. I must see you. ANNA.

She closed and sealed the letter, and when she had written North's name, rank and regiment on the cover, she sat and stared at it awhile with an air of tragic indecision. A silver handbell stood on the table. Presently she stretched out her hand, rang the bell loudly, and sat waiting.

An old manservant entered.

" Hugo ! "

" Yes, signora."

" Take this letter. Can you read what is written on the cover ? "

The man scanned it, pouting out his lips and wrinkling his forehead.

" Yes, signora."

" That letter must be delivered to-night. If the English gentleman is dead, you will bring the letter back to me."

Hugo bowed.

" I will do my best, signora."

" Go—at once."

Night had fallen, and the last cannon-shot had been fired. The men of the Legion, such as were left of them, were bivouacking under shelter of the walls close to the Porta San Pancrazio. Many of them were wounded ; many of them almost too weary to eat ; they lay about among their piled arms, sullen and dispirited, listening to the French bugles and staring at the stars.

A plaintive voice was heard asking questions.

" Is this Garibaldi's Legion, gentlemen ? Will anybody tell me where the Legion is to be found ? "

" Under your nose, old jackass ! " said someone who was too tired to be polite.

" I want an English gentleman, Quentin North. I have a letter for him. Is he alive ? Does anybody know of him ? "

A man sat up.

" Here you are. I am Quentin North."

Hugo picked his way among the sprawling men and delivered his mistress's letter.

" Thanks ; and how the devil am I to read it ? "

" I have a little lantern, signore, under my cloak. I will light it."

He did so, and the light flashed on North's haggard, unshaven face, with its stern eyes and powder-blackened mouth. His uniform was torn and dirty, his hair hanging over his forehead.

" Pass the lantern."

North fixed it between his knees, broke the seal of the letter, and bent his head to read. There were only a dozen words in the letter, but he sat staring at it for quite a long while.

" Very well. Take the lantern ; I am coming with you."

North got to his feet and signed to Hugo to show the way.

" Don't tread on anyone, my friend, for we are not in a good temper to-night."

Old Hugo appeared to have received very definite instructions, for he took North to the main gate on the north side of the villa, and so through the gardens to the house. A lamp was burning in one of the open loggias that faced the garden, and the old servant looked curiously at North and pointed to the loggia.

" The Contessa is there. I have obeyed my orders."

North's eyes were no longer dull and sunken in his head, for he could see a woman standing there beside one of the carved stone pillars. An unshaded lamp hung from the roof.

" Anna ! "

She drew back.

" No ; do not come too near me."

The light showed him to her, a haggard and rather wild-eyed man in a torn and bloody uniform.

" Dear God ! "

Her eyes looked shocked.

" You are wounded ? "

" No, nothing but a scratch. I know I must look a fairly filthy object. But you sent for me, and I came."

She stared at him as though dazed. She seemed to be struggling to control herself, for the man's eyes were hungry, and his pale face made her afraid.

" Yes, I sent for you."

She pressed her hands to her breasts as though to force herself to speak.

" No, I have nothing good to say to you. I wanted to prove to you that my pride was dangerous when challenged. Your masterfulness maddened me."

He looked up at her, astonished.

" What am I to understand ? "

" It was I who helped to give the Corsini to the French."

" What ! "

" Now will you call me weak—a child to be lectured ? "

" Good God ! "

He recoiled, and then took three quick strides towards her, his face as pale as her dress.

She spread her arms.

" Yes, kill me if it pleases you."

" Kill you ! Can't you understand what you have done ? Was it my fault, you Roman tigress ? "

Her eyes flashed with a kind of exultation.

" You call me tigress now. I am not the tame creature that you thought."

" God forgive me if I piqued you into betraying me and the cause I serve."

He had recovered his self-control, and stood looking at her with an air of inexpressible sadness.

" So our friend the priest was a spy ? "

She made herself meet his eyes.

" Father Giuseppe believes in the things that you hate."

" Oh, I know that. But that you—— What was my arrogance but enthusiasm, the froth on the surface ? Besides, I thought—"

His face had grown haggard again, his weariness returned.

" Well, it is all over. I suppose I misunderstood you utterly. I must have done. I believed in you even when we quarrelled. It was beyond my wildest imaginings that a woman could go about to stab a man's honour because he had tried to open her eyes."

She stretched out a hand with dramatic passion.

" Enough ! We shall never understand each other. I ask you to leave me."

He turned, hesitated a moment, and then walked away into the darkness.

Anna Venosta leant against one of the stone pillars, her bosom moving as though she were about to weep. But her eyes remained full of a dry and sullen anguish. She knew now that she loved the man, that she had never understood the great mystery of life until that moment.

¶

SO the French laid deliberate siege to Rome, and those June days echoed with the thunder of guns, battery blazing against battery in an artillery duel that could have but one ending. More than twenty thousand French troops lay outside the city.

Quentin North was one of the best shots in the Legion, and he was one of the picked men chosen to reply to the fire of the French sharpshooters who tried to pick off the gunners on the bastions. On June 10th he was lying between two gabions at the Casa Merluzzo with a big flaxen-haired Pole who had become his comrade in arms. They were firing at the French, and the Pole was talking.

" Have you seen the White Lady, comrade ? "

" No. Who is she ? "

" Everyone is talking of her. She wears a white dress, and she seems to know no fear. She goes everywhere, caring for the wounded."

" Look out ! That little fellow over there is a devil of a shot. He hit the gabion that time."

The Pole was a reckless gentleman.

" I fear no French bullet. Let me look round."

" Don't be a fool, man."

But the Pole was on his knees, leaning on his musket, his fair hair blowing. And next moment he was lying in North's arms with a bullet through his chest.

North managed to carry him behind a pile of sandbags on the rampart.

" I have it, comrade. It is under the heart."

" You brave madman. I'd change with you if I could."

He was kneeling by the wounded man when someone came forward softly and knelt down on the other side. It was the White Lady. She carried a haversack filled with bandages, dressings, and a flask of wine.

North stared at her in astonishment.

" You ! "

For the White Lady was Anna Venosta.

She smiled at him, a strange, sad smile, and then bent over the Pole. His eyes were growing dim, but he looked at Anna Venosta with the solemn air of a child.

His lips moved.

" The White Lady ! "

His blue, child's eyes seemed to ask for something, and the woman in Anna Venosta understood. She bent and kissed his forehead.

" Exquisite," he murmured, and died.

North knelt there speechless, gazing at the woman in white. Presently he spoke.

" Anna ! "

She kept her eyes lowered.

" I do what I can," she said simply. " You see, after all, I was in the wrong."

North's mouth was twitching.

" God forgive me," he said, " and God bless you."

She rose from her knees, and North's eyes grew suddenly anxious.

" It is most infernally dangerous for you here."

She smiled at him.

" Is it ? And for you ? "

" It is my business."

" And mine, also."

" Still, there is no need for you to come up here where the guns are firing. I will see you to a safer place."

She looked at him very earnestly.

" Must you always manage people and

give orders ? Cannot you suffer me to be brave, to take my share ? You scolded me because I was selfish, and now——"

But North had caught her hand, and his eyes looked into hers.

" Forgive me. Yes, I understand. You are a Roman woman ; your pride must be suffered to be noble. I——"

He staggered suddenly, recovered himself, and put his hand to his side.

" Confound those Frenchmen."

" You are hit ! "

He smiled at her, but there was blood on his hand and his face had gone grey.

" Thank Heaven it took me and not you. I think I'll——"

She caught him as he tottered, and let him slip gently to the ground. His blood had stained the bodice of her white dress just over her heart.

" Quick ! Is it serious ? "

He was smiling.

" It has smashed one of my ribs, I think. No, I'm not a dead man yet ; but I feel I'm bleeding——"

She unslung her haversack and set to work with swift, soft hands that did not fumble or hesitate, despite their haste. And North lay and watched her face with a kind of wondering joy. He did not ask himself whether he was going to die. Even the pain did not matter. He was conscious of her nearness ; he felt the soft movements of her hands.

Someone's shadow fell across them.

" Hallo ! Work for me ? Why, it's our Englishman."

" Hallo, Fabrizi ! A bullet in the side, that's all."

" Contessa, I think you are braver than any of us."

She made way for the surgeon.

" I am very glad that you have come," she said.

Half-an-hour later Quentin North was being carried on a litter through the narrow streets of the Trastavere quarter towards the Tiber. Anna Venosta walked at his side.

" Where are you taking me ? " he asked her for the third time.

She looked down and smiled.

" No, it is not to one of the hospitals. They are so crowded with the poor fellows ; and you would be such an obstinate patient."

He smiled back at her, and lay and watched the blue sky between the high houses. It was as though he were drifting along a canal. A pleasant languor possessed him, in spite of his wound. The men carried him across the Tiber. They were sturdy fellows, and made light of his weight, and the people gave way when they saw that they carried a wounded man.

North knew Rome pretty thoroughly, and he was able to tell in which direction they were going. The truth dawned on him at last. They were bound for the Villa Venosta.

He spoke to her.

" Contessa ! "

" Yes."

Her hand rested close to his on the litter.

" I know where you are taking me."

" Does it grieve you ? "

" But in Italy——"

" This is the new Italy," she said, " where people are not afraid of being brave."

¶

THE windows of North's room looked out on a green mass of trees, rolling ilexes and pines, out of which tall cypresses rose like obelisks. His bed stood close to the window, so that he had a sensation of being cradled on the tops of the trees. It was very peaceful here, in spite of the noise of the guns ; and to lie in a bed is an event in itself to a man who has been carrying a knapsack for two months. Moreover, though the bullet had broken a rib and bruised the lung, it had not penetrated. Fabrizi had been able to extract it and to stop the bleeding, which had threatened danger for a while.

" You will have to lie in bed for a fortnight," he told North, " even if you have no fever. I would not trust that bruised lung of yours very far."

And North obeyed like a child. He had lost much blood and was very weak.

Anna Venosta's old nurse had charge of him, a big, broad-bosomed Italian, with great soft eyes and the arms of a man.

Then Anna would come into the room and sit beside his bed. At first a mysterious shyness possessed them both, but it gave place to a tranquil and exquisite sympathy. They did not seek to explain things to each other ; they uttered no confessions, but each understood what was passing in the heart of the other. For the moment the tragedy of the siege of Rome had ceased to be a tragedy. The noise of the guns seemed very far away.

Then an awakening came to Anna Venosta.

"Father Giuseppe is in the garden, Contessa."

She went out to him with a quickening of the heart. He was all smiles, a benignant creature, with eyes that hid his cunning.

"So the wounded hero is being rewarded?"

Her mouth hardened. Father Giuseppe had a way of knowing everything.

"I had Mr. North brought to the house," she said calmly. "The hospitals are so crowded."

"Exquisite magnanimity! And he has converted you to his views?"

"I found that I preferred courage to the philosophy of a spy."

He blinked at the words.

"Contessa, I forgive the taunt. But let us be frank. Rome will be taken before the end of the month."

"It is possible."

"And has it not struck you that it may be inconvenient for the Contessa Venosta to be found sheltering a revolutionary? Many of these gentlemen will be put against a wall and shot."

She held her breath.

¶

THE Republic was doomed. Even North, lying abed in his upper room, gathered enough news to know what must happen. The French had taken the outer wall, and their guns dominated the situation; it was only a question of time.

He grew restless, troubled, and importuned Fabrizi to let him get up.

The doctor refused.

"You are not fit yet. What is worrying you?"

"I suppose the crash is coming?"

Fabrizi shrugged his shoulders.

"Any day."

"Well, can't you see that I must get out of this house? I am a marked man. I can't hide behind a woman's petticoats, and compromise her in the eyes of those confounded Clericals."

Fabrizi humoured him.

"Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes; send me a tailor. Yes, I have plenty of money."

Fabrizi took his departure, and the same day a very urbane Roman came up to take North's orders.

"The signore shall have everything in two days."

Anna knew of these commonplace happenings, of the arrival of new clothes, a new hat, new underlinen. They were mere straws showing which way the wind was blowing; she had guessed what was passing in North's heart.

"He is a Quixote," she said to herself; "he would get himself killed to save the reputation even of a dog."

But she pretended to see nothing.

By noon on June 30th the French had taken the last western defences of Rome by assault. The Constituent Assembly was preparing to surrender, and Garibaldi was on the eve of that famous retreat of his in which he lost an army and a wife. Fabrizi had rushed in to see North and tell him the news.

An hour after Fabrizi's visit old Giovanna hurried to her mistress in a state of great excitement.

"Signora, the English gentleman is mad! He will not listen to my orders; he has dressed himself, and is trying to walk."

In fact North was already on the stairs, steadying himself by holding to the handrail, his face nearly as white as the marble of the steps.

Anna met him on the last flight.

"This is very wicked of you."

He smiled weakly.

"Dressing and shaving are the devil when you have been in bed for three weeks. I thought I was stronger."

She passed an arm under his shoulders and steadied him down the last steps, and so into a little salon that opened on a loggia and the garden. There was a couch by the window; she made him lie down.

"Why did you not tell me?"

"I did not want to advertise the fact. Besides, I could not stay here."

"And why not?"

He lay back and looked up at her.

"You know as well as I do what has happened and what may happen in Rome. I have got to get out of your house. Do you imagine that I am going to hide here and expose you to persecution—and other things?"

Her eyes glimmered at him.

"Of course, I knew that you would try to do this; but supposing I refuse to let you go?"

"If I have to crawl on my hands and knees——"

"And that is gratitude?"

He sprang up, inspired above mere physical weakness.

"Gratitude? Isn't it the only honourable gratitude I can show you? I can't tell you everything here—in your own house—under your protection. What I feel is too deep and fine for that."

"Why not forget these imaginary obligations?"

He shook his head.

"No."

"You make it very hard for me."

"Anna—I—— No—I will not say it. You see—I want to——"

She saw that his strength was going.

"Lie down, Quentin; be at peace with yourself and your honour. If I do not question it, what do other people matter? You must trust me."

He sank back on the couch, and sat with his head between his hands.

"Curse this wretched body of mine!"

"Oh, come! It has been a very brave body. Think what it has suffered these months. And you are still afraid of me!"

He did not answer her.

"I think you love me a little—or am I dreaming? I want you to love me, Quentin."

He caught her hands almost fiercely.

"Love you! Oh, my God! Of course I love you. Yes—I think I have been fighting for you all this time——"

She was on her knees beside him.

"Then—what matters?"

He looked into her eyes for several seconds, and then kissed her.

"I couldn't help that, dear. Now help me to get down into Rome. I don't mind surrendering to the French; they are gentlemen. And some day soon I shall come back."

She was smiling.

"What need is there for you to surrender? And do you think that I thirst to stay in Rome?"

"Well?"

"Supposing—supposing we escaped? Haven't you any imagination, Quentin? Must I explain everything?"

He drew her closer.

"Anna—you mean——? Why, of course. Why shouldn't we? Oh, dear heart! But there would be danger for you."

"Surely love is blind! Would you be afraid to face danger for my sake?"

"You're splendid! But how——?"

"Remember that I am not a fool—and that I am a woman of the world. And I am going to see the English consul."

"Freeborn?"

"Of course. I know him. I think he will be kind to me."

Freeborn's rooms were crowded. He himself was being scolded by a couple of strident American women when Anna's name was brought to him. He beheld a vision of beauty and an excuse for ejecting the Americans."

"Well, Contessa, how can I serve you?"

She smiled, and in few words told him the truth. Her charming audacity and her courage delighted him.

"North! Of course, I met him once. One of Drake's Englishmen. But this is rather bold, Contessa, and not quite veracious, though the little piece of mendacity could be eliminated in an hour or two."

"Then you will be kind enough to give me the pass?"

He laughed.

"I cannot refuse to lose my place in such a romance, Contessa. I will give it you."

¶

AN order went to the stables: "The Contessa's travelling carriage to be ready in an hour." As for Quentin North, he was fast asleep on the couch in the little blue salon.

Anna found him there, and bending over him, touched his forehead with her fingers. He awoke and looked straight up into her eyes.

"Hallo! Back again!"

He sat up, and seemed fascinated by her smiling and half-mischievous tenderness.

"I have seen Mr. Freeborn."

"And was he sympathetic?"

She gave him a sheet of paper. It was a pass for Quentin North, Esq., and his wife—the Contessa Venosta.

North's astonished solemnity changed suddenly to exultant appreciation of her romantic sense of humour.

"Well, I'm——"

He stood up, lifted her hand and kissed it.

"Signora, this is the greatest honour that has ever fallen to me. I most devoutly pray you to suffer me to correct the slight error in this document."

"It will always be a puzzle," she said,

" whether I asked you to marry me or whether you asked me——"

" Well, I think I fell in love with you the first time I saw you. That should be decisive."

The Contessa's travelling carriage was quite a stately affair, with its black horses and its servants in their liveries of black and silver. North and Anna stood in one of the loggias and watched the luggage being loaded.

" Quentin ! "

" Yes."

" Have you any money, or shall I lend you some ? "

" I have about fifty pounds English on me in notes."

" And I have four thousand francs."

He laughed boyishly.

" Then we are not beggars. Besides, there are bankers at Genoa and Turin who know me. I can draw on them up to a thousand pounds."

The travelling carriage was ready, old Giovanna came to tell them.

" And a hat has come for milord."

" A hat ! In the very nick of time ; a genuine English chimney-pot ! I shall have to wear it while we are in the public eye, Contessa."

" Ah, those English hats ! I will try to forgive you."

They started on their journey, looking like aristocrats who were seizing their chance to leave Rome now that the mob Republic was at an end. North sat for the picture of the typical Englishman, stiff and a little bored, and wearing his hard hat as though he had been born in it. The thoroughness of his pose made Anna smile.

" Tell me that you are not like that in England, Quentin."

" Not quite so complete. Do not be afraid of the English. I shall not let you see very much of them."

" And are they not charming people ? "

" At a distance, perhaps. Hallo, we are approaching the critical occasion."

The carriage was rolling across the Piazza del Popolo towards the city gate. The French had a guard posted there ; blue-coated infantrymen went to and fro with fixed bayonets.

The carriage was stopped just inside the gate, and a French officer came to the window. He had his arm in a sling. A corporal and three privates stood at his service.

He stared hard at North, and North returned it. A slow smile spread over the Frenchman's face. He glanced at Anna and saluted her, and then read the pass that North had handed him.

" Good ! We have met before, sir."

North remembered him. It was the French officer whom he had helped in the Corsini.

" I remember the occasion, Captain. I am glad to see that you are well."

The Frenchman beamed at North.

" My friend, this is very fortunate. It gives me great pleasure, this coincidence. We shall always think of each other as gentlemen. Therefore I wish you and madame *bon voyage*. Open the gate there, and let the carriage pass."

The carriage rumbled out through the Porta del Popolo, and North caught a glimpse of the noble trees of the Borghese green against the sky. A few urchins ran shouting beside the carriage, and he threw them a scattering of coppers. Anna was leaning back in her corner. A sudden silence had fallen on her, her eyes looking into the distance.

" It is not exile, *cara mia*."

He touched her hand, and her eyes lit up.

" No, I am not sad."

" You looked like a Cassandra."

" But I do not foretell misfortune."

They held hands for a while, and then Anna leant forward and looked out of the window.

" Tell Luigi to stop for a moment. I want to look at Rome."

North called to the coachman, and the carriage drew up at the side of the road. Anna Venosta's eyes were fixed on the city, bathed in the late sunlight, its brown walls the colour of old gold. A great tenderness softened her eyes. She drew back suddenly.

" Luigi can drive on."

North bent over her with the devotion of a strong man who loved.

" Your heart does not fail you, *cara mia* ? "

" No, no."

" We shall return. I could make Italy my own country."

Her eyes had suddenly filled with tears.

" We can work for the new Italy," she said, " you and I together. And Rome shall be no more a dead city."

" No, but the noble heart of a noble land."

The Tug-of-War

There is always a day of reckoning

By PHYLLIS BOTTOME

NEITHER of them had a single illusion left.

General Eustace St. Clair Montrose was over fifty, and had spent his full, single-minded and battered life in getting his own way.

On the whole, he had succeeded in getting it, but he had not got anything else.

Madame Léonie Nibaud had left forty markedly behind her, and her accumulations (she had been occupied in laying up treasure for herself) had not been arranged principally with a view to Heaven.

They measured the attraction which drew them together with the infallibility of repeated experience.

Sex had no secrets from them, and no continuities; but it was for both of them their principal diversion.

General Montrose was a tall, handsome man, with thick grey hair and eyebrows, dancing blue eyes, and a mouth like a steel trap.

He had a massive chin, which he thrust out a little in argument.

From his earliest youth he had fought and enjoyed fighting. All concessions that came to him without struggle he regarded in the light of grievances.

Conquest was his goal, but he always despised those who let him get there.

His character was of the same consistency as a perfectly made cricket ball, hard, light, and capable of rebounding. It was not capable of any other flexibility.

He had a great many hearty tastes, but those for women, food, and flowers were predominant.

General Montrose had married young and alienated both his children. His wife died after a few subdued years of unequal and, on the General's part, of unobservant companionship.

He had been strictly faithful to his marriage tie, and nourished an obscure resentment against it in consequence of this privation. He had, however, made up for it since.

Léonie Nibaud was less simple a spirit. There was the strain of the artist in her, but of the artist suppressed and supplanted.

She had had a voice which was a small fortune and beauty which was a greater one, and, being a strictly practical woman, she had given up the less for the greater.

Her experiences comprised a husband whom she had without difficulty or hostility divorced; a fortune which permitted her a seclusion which took the form of the Ritz; and a daughter of twenty whom she had brought up in the purity ascribed to lilies.

She was herself, if not respectable, quite sufficiently respected.

Léonie's masseuse, her coiffeur and her dressmaker were more intimate with her, and more necessary to her existence, than any other persons. The General's eyes as they travelled unceasingly over her presented appearance told of their combined success, without being aware of the extent of their influence.

Léonie was not slim, and it would have been better for her to have eaten fewer chocolates. But if her complexion was an art and her figure an increasing problem, her features were a gift of Nature, and her great provocative brown eyes, with their deep fringe of lashes, might have been thrust upon her direct from the hand of the least conscientious of the goddesses.

She used these organs without haste and without rest. They shut off from the General all the distractions of the great light room, full of flowered tables and the delicate April sunshine of Paris—the room, through which, during those black and crumbling years, all that France knew of pleasure ran uninterruptedly and clear, with no apparent regret for the abbreviated careers of its seekers.

Léonie noticed that during the third spring the class of men had deteriorated.

There were fewer young and handsome specimens. The men, in that unending procession, which passed and passed, but never came again, were either as the man before her—of high rank and mature years—or they were weedy and belated types, and they were all more dissolute.

Leaves had ceased to be joyous and hopeful interludes in a soon to be triumphant business. The interludes had become feverish reactions of panic against the oncoming certainty of horror and death.

Those whom the gods loved had already received their final favour.

Léonie did not allow herself to dwell upon these disagreeable and vicarious sacrifices; but she noticed, because she was there to notice, the thinning down of quality.

¶

LÉONIE was the first Frenchwoman the General had met who did not say the war was terrible, or ask him when it was going to end. Nor did she put the responsibility of the next great push upon his shoulders. She refrained from any mention of the war, and when the General complimented her upon this conversational omission, Léonie shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"I am like that," she agreed, "to what does not concern me. I cannot alter the conditions of war, and, as they do not involve me, they are (for me) the mountains in the moon."

"It is an admirable philosophy," admitted the General. "But I wish to belong to the things that do concern you—may I ask what is your attitude towards them?"

Léonie glanced across the table at him speculatively, then her curved lips bent into a slow, delicious smile.

"Rest assured, Monsieur," she murmured, "you do concern me, and you will in time find out my attitude towards you."

"I have not yet received much proof of it," ventured the General, daring her with his sparkling eyes; "I don't fail to appreciate the remarkably good luck, or the more remarkable pleasure of your company, but, if you will allow me to say so, the additional company of the world that surrounds us takes off a little from the value of these benefits. I should have preferred to lunch with you alone."

"Monsieur is very direct," said Léonie, dropping the fringe of her long lashes. "He wishes to go fast—and far."

"Very fast and very far," agreed the General. "You see, my leave is up to-morrow, and the pleasure of having met you is as yet incomplete."

Léonie slowly raised her lashes, and their eyes met and lingered in each other's. Léonie's were all tenderness, and the General's all ardour, but the element of calculation ran beneath both these appearances, as surely as after the repast set before them they would have to meet their inconspicuously presented, but relentless, bill.

Léonie made no direct response to the General's appeal. She rose slowly, and said over her shoulder, "We will take coffee in my room."

The General followed her progress across the dining-room with discreet admiration.

This lovely French woman knew many things, and among them, how to walk.

She had no diffidence and no aggression. She moved as one who knows that her place in the world will never be disputed.

Madame Nibaud's private sitting-room was a bower of flowers.

She had not replaced the hotel furniture; she had simply drowned it.

Huge bowls of sweet and purple violets covered the tables. On the mantelpiece, and hanging above the violets, were single pink roses in tall, thin glasses, and tossed high against the pale grey walls were branches of almond blossom.

The General glanced appreciatively at the flowers; but he wasted no time. As the door closed behind them, Léonie felt his iron hands touch her waist and her shoulders, and with a single quick movement she was pressed against his heart.

She neither yielded to nor resisted his close embrace. She suffered it, in a silence that was without restraint.

When he had released her for a moment, she slipped out of his hands with instant self-possession, and opened the door between her sitting-room and the room adjoining it.

"Jeanne," she said, "have the kindness to make us some coffee, and leave the door open—I like the aroma."

Then she sat down with her back to the light under a branch of almond blossom, and smiled at the General.

"I have my maid make my coffee," she explained quietly, "because downstairs they make—something else. My friend," she added in a lower key, "you use too much audacity."

" Forgive me," said the General, " if I feel that it was not my audacity which was too great, but the opportunity that was too small. When do you intend to enlarge it ? "

" And if I do not so intend ? " she asked, with delicately lifted brows.

" Then you waste my time," said the General coldly, " and no woman, however charming, wastes my time for very long."

Léonie sighed. " You are a man of iron," she murmured, " so fierce, so irresistible, like your nation ! "

" That is an advantage for you," urged the General ; " I shall be the stronger friend."

" Pardon me, Monsieur," said Léonie, " a lover is not a friend."

" An ally, then, if you prefer it," said the General. " You are safe with me at any rate—as long as our interests are the same."

She was silent for a moment, as if she were considering the quality of this security.

" Ah ! " she said at last, " but how many other women have trusted you—how many, perhaps, trust you even now—in vain ?

" I will be perfectly frank with you, my General.

" I have been, as you know, unhappily married—in fact, for many years I have been without either protection or companionship. I lived very strictly. I brought up my daughter. At length I married her, very successfully, very perfectly. She has had nothing to regret, and happiness is between her and knowledge.

" Now I am alone again, and I am more free. When I have a fancy I follow it. I have a fancy for you—but I am not in so great a hurry as you are. I count, a little, my costs."

" Yes," said the General, " that is very natural. What are they, your costs ? I am willing to meet anything in reason."

Léonie drew back a little and laughed with an amused exasperation.

" Ah ! " she said, " I do not mean what you mean ! I am not expensive ! You mistake your ' genre.' My costs are perhaps not quite so simple.

" I want an intimacy of the heart. I want, as it were, to be sure of you first—I will not say ' for ever,' but possibly for the day after to-morrow ! "

The General pondered for a moment, then he said slowly, " You are everything I like. I adore you. Until you let me make love to you, I cannot show you how much. I have to go now, whatever happens, but you may take it from me that I shall come back."

Jeanne came in with the coffee. She carried on the small lacquered tray two gold glasses of liqueur. Jeanne was a pretty girl, and the General liked liqueur with his coffee, but he noticed neither of these additions to his comfort ; his attention was wholly fixed upon Léonie.

" *Tiens*," she said tranquilly, " but I leave Paris. I have for the spring and summer a little villa near the sea. You could come there, perhaps—you and what you call your A.D.C.?

" But is it too far from your portion of the line ? *Non ?*

" My little villa is a few miles from Dieppe. I hope it is not too out of the way for you ? "

The General's eyes did not flicker, but they hardened curiously for a moment. He was not at liberty to mention where his portion of the line was likely to be. Nor did he do so. He said after a moment's pause, " I run about a good deal in my car. I might blow in your way. Let me take down your address."

It was a coincidence that the address Léonie mentioned to him was precisely sixteen miles from where the General's division would be stationed for the next two months. They were to be pulled out of the line, rested, and thrown in again for the battle of the Somme, and the General was one of perhaps ten others who knew the exact details of when and where this famous battle was going to take place.

" You might tell your maid," suggested the General, pocketing his address book with decision, " that as we now have both the coffee and the aroma, she is at liberty to shut the door."

¶

MADAME NIBAUD'S villa stood high above a sea of blossoming orchards. A rampart of softly rising far blue hills was between it and the gash across the face of France. It was a space of peace and golden fields ; only occasionally between the clear and piercing songs of the spring birds sounded the distant, steady booming of the guns.

" Mon Plaisir " was an achievement both of beauty and luxury.

Nothing was irregular in it. Everything ministered punctually and without visible

effort to the comfort and pleasure of its inhabitants.

The cooking was exactly what the General liked; he always averred that he had a simple taste in cooking, but it was a simplicity which had baffled thirteen cooks in nine months. His hours were his own. In the evenings he could listen, sitting at his ease on a sweet-scented terrace, to one of the best-trained voices in Europe.

During the day he had a most accomplished and perfectly attired companion always at his disposal and never in his way.

Madame Nibaud possessed an even temper and quick wits. Her tastes were almost identical with the General's. She did not care greatly for young men. She treated Captain Pollock, the General's handsome A.D.C., with a good-natured tolerance. Only when they were alone did this delicate indifference yield to the admiration which Captain Pollock sometimes felt was his due.

"What it must be," she said on one of these occasions, "to know the General's mind, to share his counsels, and perhaps even assist him (for I know how much he admires your intelligence) to arrive at his great decisions!

"I am sure there is nothing you do not know. For instance, sometimes as I look at you, I say to myself, '*Mon Dieu!* This young man controls destiny! He knows where the arm of the English is to be stretched out, in revenge for Verdun'—the very date is, I believe, behind your eyes!"

Captain Pollock very wisely dropped these signals of the future. "I assure you," he murmured in some confusion, "the General tells me nothing, except what concerns me, and that has more to do with where I had better buy fish than destiny."

"Ah, the uncontrollable modesty of the Englishman!" Madame Nibaud replied. "But I am so ignorant of war, I may easily be indiscreet. Frankly, I do not understand even the communiqués in the newspapers.

"One thing alone I care to know. Is the General in danger? That is the only little satisfaction of a woman which I would like sometimes to demand of you, Captain Pollock. Can you not let me know when I may feel safe about him, and for how long?"

Captain Pollock referred her to the General himself; he knew rather more, after all, than where to buy fish.

Jeanne had more success with the General's chauffeur, this simple young man chosen for the solidity of his nerves and his ability (he had had the advantage of having been reared in Billingsgate) to stand the General's language—told her precisely where the Division was. She learned, from his flattered responses to her interest in him, where they drove daily, and even on one occasion (when they went to an important Conference) that the Commander-in-Chief was present; he had been pointed out to Pounce, who described him, a little to Jeanne's linguistic confusion, as "a bunch of red tape."

Pounce had been particularly cautioned against mentioning any of these facts, but Jeanne's questions were always indirect; nor was he aware of the quantity of facts an indirect question can elicit from a flattered recipient whose mind is concentrated upon the possibility of favours to come.

The General himself was less awake than usual. He was very much in love; he was almost involved. Hitherto his heart had been a caravanserai. Objects of his affection came and went, they even inhabited it simultaneously, but they never stayed for very long, and none of them had ever seriously interfered with his control of it. But Madame Nibaud reigned alone, she completely satisfied him; and she was the only woman he had known since his wife's death who was absolutely disinterested.

She was more than disinterested, she was recklessly and passionately generous.

The General drank priceless wines daily, mysteriously overlooked and left in her cellars by her late husband, who had owned some of the best wines in France.

Léonie told the General plainly that she would give up her villa to-morrow and follow him at whatever distance the military exigencies permitted.

It was an expensive time, and she squandered money like water on his entertainment.

"What does it matter?" she said, indifferently, when he urged her to be more careful. "You take your life in your hand for France, and I, whose life is of no value, take my money, so that I may make your life, while it lasts, more bearable!

"Besides, never forget your life is mine!"

Sometimes the General nearly believed her, and it made him feel a little uncomfortable. His life was not Léonie's, it was England's; and sometimes it occurred to him that even as a necessary recreation

Léonie took up rather too much of his attention.

She didn't interfere with his work, but the quality of the power he had for it lacked its old intensity.

Léonie was an extremely intelligent woman about everything but war; for that she had a blank and most incurious mind.

The only information she ever wanted from the General was when he was likely to be in danger. She could not be content with his assurance that as a Divisional General he practically never was.

"Nonsense," she would say, with the only approach to sharpness he ever heard from her, "Those dreadful shells: they fall everywhere! When I say danger, I mean anywhere—wherever it is where the men—poor brutes—fight?

"I want to know always when you go near what you call the line! Then I may feel safer when I know you are not there."

"When I am not with you," said the General, "I am not necessarily near any line. I am simply on duty. You must be content with that."

"How am I to know that it is not other women you go to?" she demanded one evening, after dinner on the terrace. "Duty, that is a fine broad word to use, it may cover many things."

'I don't know how you are to know," replied the General coldly, "if you won't take my word for it."

"I take your word for everything, my friend," Léonie murmured softly. "Over and over in my heart I say it—the word of an Englishman." She spread out her beautiful, bare, ringless hand. "It is all I have, that word," she said consideringly, "and, do you know, it is enough for me—I ask no more?"

The General kissed her hand in silence; he was very glad she was going to ask no more.

She rose slowly and went through the open French windows towards the piano.

"You have never heard me sing the *Marseillaise*, have you?" she asked. "Well, I will sing it to you to-night. It used to be considered something."

It was a quiet night, early in June; the orchards slumbered below them, the white blossoms still as fallen snow under a high full moon.

Below the terrace on which the General sat a row of white and purple stocks sent up a perpetual sweetness out of the dark.

Far away there was a low, monotonous chorus of frogs, mysterious, on one note, making a mournful background to the silence.

Léonie touched the piano very lightly, and then the music of that most tragic, most brave and most magnetic tune seized the evening and shook it stark awake.

There was no silence left and no peace in the garden. It was suddenly thronged with battles and with ghosts. Even the General was moved. There was nothing banal to him in those familiar tones; they smote upon him afresh with dignity and severe intent.

His eyes lost their hardness and became reflective. In a few weeks' time the sons of England would go forward in their thousands, in their tens of thousands, and would die.

There was no help for it; and on how well they died, and how hard they fought before they died, lay the issue of the profound and senseless tragedy which was impoverishing the world.

¶

THE General straightened himself and stood up; he looked over the moonlit garden and ceased to see the flowers.

The white fields of the orchards below him changed to darker sodden fields, torn up and broken, where no blossoms lay, only the flower of all the youth of France.

Léonie came to him and laid her hand softly upon his shoulder.

"Now," she said, "I am a French woman. I am ignorant of war, but I have been very patient. When will England strike? My friends tell me she is letting us stand and bleed ourselves white to save herself. For your sake, and for the sake of your honour, I want to free myself of doubt."

"We shall strike soon," said the General, and his lips closed over the words with ominous finality.

"Tell me," she urged, "the moment. I wish to pray for it."

"If you want to pray," replied the General, "pray all the time. It will not be too much."

"No! No!" she said urgently. "Give me your faith! You trust me—you are a generous man! I have given you all I have—give me, then, this in return? Do you not see what it is for me to share the future with you? On my soul, I ask it of you!"

"But you must not ask it," said the General firmly. "It is the secret of England."

"And to whom," asked Léonie grandly, "should England tell her secret but to France?"

It did not sound absurd, even to the General, who disliked rhetoric. The last note of the *Marseillaise* still held the listening air. The General looked at her gravely. "No," he said, "I can't do that."

Her lips quivered, and with the sudden abandon of a child she flung herself into his arms in a storm of tears.

"Ah!" she sobbed, "tell me! Tell me! Don't you see I am exhausted—broken with the strain. I have not the *fermeté* of the English—I can bear no more—always my mind is on that moment of terror—I want—I fear it! I want it for France. And for you—how can I bear it? Give me a reprieve—a few days' rest—help my divided heart!"

"Do not let it be divided," said the General, with unaccustomed gentleness. "When we strike it will be for the good of all of us, and I have told you before, I shall be in no great personal danger."

"Ah," she said, dragging herself suddenly from his arms. "You speak so calmly, so dispassionately! It is, after all, only I who suffer. Show me that you love me, not as you love—all those light women! Do you not remember what I asked of you—an intimacy of the heart? If I was a man and your friend you would not hide this from me—why, even Captain Pollock knows—what I may not be told!"

"Did he tell you that he knows?" asked the General grimly.

Léonie sobbed incoherently—something in the grimness of the General's voice warned her that though she could easily destroy Captain Pollock by her answer her cause might not be advanced by his destruction.

"No," she murmured at length, "he has not told me; but I know he knows—I feel it in him—as I feel it in you, Beloved. Oh, for the sake of our love together, for the sake of this little hour—tell me, and I ask no more questions. I am then like a wife, a soldier's wife—brave and content with a shared peril!"

"I should not tell my wife that," said the General, "and I should expect her to be brave without being told."

"Ah," said Léonie, "but I am not a wife. I can only be brave if I am trusted—infinitely trusted!"

The General bit his iron-grey moustache and thought deeply.

He was genuinely moved, and he had none of the obstinacy of a weak man against the appeals of a woman. He did trust Léonie: it had never for a moment occurred to him to doubt her. But he was, before everything else, a soldier, in possession of a military secret, and it was inconceivable to him that he should part with it; and yet many men do what is inconceivable. Even the General wavered for an instant.

Léonie's head was once more on his heart, her uplifted, beseeching eyes were full of a torment of love and supplication. She had never looked as beautiful as she looked now, and passion was the only power that ever shook the General's caution; but, even when he was reckless, he was not reckless for himself.

He bent his head and kissed her lips.

"Good!" he said; "I'll trust you. The date is the 28th of July." Then he gave a sigh of relief. He had appeased her, he could feel the tension of her whole figure relax in his arms, and he had told her a lie. The date he had given her was a fortnight after the actual one.

¶

THE General was to go to a Conference at Headquarters on the following day, but that he did not tell Léonie. He merely gave his order to be called at five o'clock.

He did not even say good-bye to her; he left a note to say that he would return at the first possible moment.

He was in excellent spirits as the magnificent Rolls-Royce swung easily over the white roads. Léonie was all the dearer to him for her moment of weakness.

It was the first time that she had ever appeared to him weak, and he believed in, and secretly approved of, the instability of women.

He spoke to Captain Pollock about this feminine attribute, but Captain Pollock was not so responsive as usual. He looked uncomfortable. This annoyed the General, who greatly disliked anyone about him looking uncomfortable, unless he had made them so.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked sharply. "You seem to have a flea in your ear this morning?"

"Well, I have rather, sir," Captain Pollock admitted. "You know Curtis, the I.O. I mean? I ran across him yesterday, and he told me the French people have sent him Madame Nibaud's name."

"Madame Nibaud's name?" demanded the General. "Well, of all the—— However, that's just like them—set of loose-witted old hens!"

"There was something else, sir," Captain Pollock murmured, crimsoning and turning his unhappy eyes away from the General's blazing ones.

"Out with it," snapped the General, "I'm not a gun-shy retriever, am I? I ought to be used to departmental idiocy by this time."

"They are censoring all her letters to you, Sir."

"What the Hell?" thundered the outraged General.

"And I gather they advise," finished the now desperate Pollock, "our people taking the same steps with regard to yours."

"My letters?" gasped the General. Then his mouth shut. He had gone beyond the mere forms of speech, however decorated. Nor did he open his mouth again till they had pulled up at Army H.Q.

The General dismissed Captain Pollock after giving him a few curt orders, and strode into the dining room of an old French château, where the conference was to be held.

He eyed a collection of gilded mirrors on each side of the long narrow table with secret discomfort; but he had after all taken his precautions against anything sharper than discomfort. He greeted his colleagues briefly and took his place.

Everything went smoothly, and a little interminably, until the Army Commander said he had an announcement to make. He gathered their eyes in his, and leaning over the table, spoke slowly and distinctly.

He had, he explained, to submit to them an alteration in the date of the offensive. It was thought better in certain quarters to postpone it for a fortnight, the attack would therefore now take place upon the twenty-eighth of July.

General Montrose felt as if first his body and then his heart were turning to stone.

The perspiration that stood out on his forehead was icy cold, and the heat of the room was powerless to reach him.

He had never known fear in his life, but the anger that shook him now was one of the forms of fear.

Nobody noticed his frozen stillness. In the excitement of the moment, a hundred sharp objections poured out upon the subject nearest all their hearts. His voice alone was unheard. He accepted the decision of his chief as final, as involuntarily and beyond all protest as if he had received a mortal wound.

As soon as the formal conference ended the General excused himself. Captain Pollock had done what he was told and was therefore not immediately recoverable, but he had to pay for his obedience when he was found. The General's language tore through all his reasonable excuses like a prairie fire through dead leaves. Captain Pollock got hold of the chauffeur with an expedition beyond the powers of any other A.D.C. in the Force, only to be told that he was slower than a specified snail.

Several times in their wild scrimmage through the landscape of France, they edged calamity by the thinness of a hair, but the General only urged them to drive faster.

They arrived at Mon Plaisir before the first western shadows covered the green terrace.

Madame Nibaud was not at home. She had gone, suddenly it appeared, to Paris, nor was she expected to return. Nobody knew quite where she could be found; she was to meet, it appeared, Monsieur Nibaud, at one of the amicable interviews which still occasionally took place between them to their mutual advantage. Monsieur Nibaud was a Swiss, and he ran a paper which was not very well thought of by the French police.

The General walked to and fro on the terrace for half-an-hour without speaking a word.

Captain Pollock watched him unhappily from the drawing-room window. It seemed to him that every time the General turned and passed him, he looked a year older.

At the end of the half-hour the General gave him a signal.

"Send for the car again," he said sternly. "We must return to Headquarters."

The General had been making up his mind whether to save himself or to save England, and he had decided that he could not save himself.

This was the cost which Madame Nibaud had prepared for him.

The Yellow Boots

A grim narrative of an astounding chase

By HENRY WILLIAMSON

(Winner of the Hawthornden Prize for 1928)

UNLIKE many Hunts, the Inclefell Harriers—who also hunted fox—held a meet on the day before their annual Hunt Ball, and not the day after. The meet on the morning of the last Hunt Ball will be remembered long. The mounted followers and those on foot waited till midday, but no pack was led to the cross-roads. The meet had been advertised in the local papers to be held at eleven o'clock. At a quarter to twelve about one-third of the field, including every farmer, had gone homewards. A few minutes after noon Jim Huggins rode up. He was the huntsman, an old and fog-seasoned man. In his high voice he said that he had been sent to say, with the Master's compliments, that the meet was cancelled. That was all. In answer to questions, he made but one reply—" I don't know, s'm." It was his habit to address both ladies and gentlemen as " s'm." He never said " sir " or " ma'm."

" But what's happened, Jim ? Anything the matter with hounds ? "

He sat upright and still on his stocky bay cob.

" I don't know, s'm."

" But how extraordinary ! Are they sick ? "

A week ago they had been fed on donkey flesh, and had fought in the kennels, all the way to the meet, and even when drawing covert. The unusual diet had been the cause of many jokes.

" I don't know, s'm."

" Is General Inclefell all right ? "

They walked their hunters nearer to him. They were made curious by his rigid reticence.

" I don't know, s'm."

He shifted slightly on his right thigh the angle of his whip.

" You don't know ! Haven't you seen the Master this morning, Jim ? "

The kennels, and the huntsman's cottage, were in a wood two hundred yards behind the Manor.

" Not this morning, s'm. Second footman came with the General's message, s'm."

" Have you seen Miss Mollie ? "

She was the honorary whipper-in to her father's hounds.

" Not this morning, s'm."

Jim, in his green cap and green coat, sat his bay cob, looking straight ahead, avoiding every eye. He was like a gnarled and mossy limb of one of the dwarf oaks of Wistman's Wood—trees rooted on Dartmoor, thick as they are tall, which were ancient before Doomsday.

The voice of a boy said timidly :

" Plaize, sur, us didden hear no dogs zinging this morning."

" Hold your rattle, young tacker ! " commanded Jim Huggins in the sharp, hound-rating voice he had not used since whiphood days. Only his jaw moved ; the mist of breath vanished in the cold air. He looked at his horse's ears. People exchanged glances. The tacker was abashed. His father was a cowman on the Home Farm of the Manor. He lived near the kennels, whence had come no singing of hounds that morning.

" Good day, s'm," said Jim, raising his cap, laying the near reins on the horse's neck and pressing its off flank with his calf. The cob turned with smart obedience, and trotted home. The word " extraordinary " was ejaculated by nearly everyone present in the saddle.

That night, while people were arriving at the Bedford Hotel in Tavistock for the Hunt Ball, the Secretary—" Pops " Russell. who often said that Life would be a bore without hunting, billiards and Bass's beer—was surrounded in the lounge by many black and pink and green-coated friends, to whom he told the astounding news that neither Bimbo nor Moll was coming that evening.

" But, Pops, old man, what's the matter with Bimbo ? What's all the mystery about ? "

Bimbo was the name by which the Master was known to his friends.

" Asked me to tell you he was awful sorry, but he isn't feeling very fit."

" And Moll ? "

" Same, 'parently."

Everyone was discussing the peculiar happening. Somehow by supper-time it was known that the entire pack had been destroyed. It was incomprehensible, for the Master was known everywhere for his fatherly tenderness to the hounds.

However, the dance went merrily on. The band was voted a good one.

At two o'clock in the morning, " Pops " Russell and three of his pals were drinking in the bar. The middle-aged Secretary was drinking his thirteenth bottle of Bass.

" What's the mystery, Pops ? " asked " Naps " Spreycombe, M.F.H. in another county.

" Rioted," replied Captain Russell, staring at the lethargic bubbles rising to the flattened froth half-way down his glass. He was an honest man who disliked subterfuge, but he had to lie. " I suppose it's bound to get known, anyhow. Won't do hunting any good."

With a sudden movement he emptied his glass. " Don't tell anyone—told you. Sheep ! Bimbo's poisoned 'em, every dog and every little bitch. Cyanide of potassium."

" 'Strewth ! " drawled Spreycombe. " What about the Committee ? And subscribers ? "

" That's the very devil of it," muttered the secretary, " I shall have the dirty work of explaining to subscribers. Bimbo's got enemies, and they're not his own hounds—or weren't, I should say. There'll be the very devil if anyone gets nasty."

" Was it that run on Monday, when they got lost in the mist ? " inquired a young man wearing the uniform of the Lamerton Hunt.

Captain Russell nodded.

" Put up hare, changed to a screaming scent up by Links Tor—must have been fox, I think—disappeared into the mist. Jim couldn't find 'm. Stragglers began to come into kennels about eight hours after. Moll heard 'm in Tavy Cleave, and saw 'm eating sheep. Everyone of 'm eating. Once get the flavour of hot mutton, and it's all up with your chance of catching fox or hare. Myself I believe it was that dem donkey flesh."

The next day the *West Country Morning News* published a statement, displayed prominently, that Major-General T. F. M. Inclefell, C.M.G., D.S.O., the Master of the Inclefell Harriers, had destroyed the entire pack for sheep-worrying. It was followed, in the issues of succeeding days, by an extended correspondence. General Inclefell was accused of acting hastily ; he was held blameworthy for the faulty and irregular feeding of hounds in kennels. The incident was amplified into a general attack upon fox and hare and stag-hunting. A letter signed W. H. Starcross, Lt.-Col., R.E., complained of the expense the writer " had undergone in bringing hunters to the district and the enforced dismissal of his two temporary grooms in the worst part of the winter consequent upon the folly of General Inclefell shown by the needless and callous annihilation of the innocent hounds with the guilty."

The Secretary replied, stating that he had searched the Army List, and his Subscribers' List, and had been unable to find the name of W. H. Starcross in either.

This surprised everyone, except the writer of the letter, an eighteen-year-old youth named Cocks, a mechanic to an unqualified dentist, whose hunting experiences were confined to (1) stalking lovers in summer-evening fields, and (2) stamping mice to death during the threshing of a corn-rick in his uncle's farmyard. The smart youth told me this himself.

There were letters from *Not a Nut-Eater*, who wrote about the " Appalling danger of Rabies via the butcher's shop " ; from *Dog-Lover*, who wrote " on behalf of poor little dogs who cannot defend themselves " ; from *Only a Schoolgirl*—" We of the Upper Fifth have had a debate, and we have decided to let it be known that it was a jolly rotten thing to kill hounds. *Two blacks never yet made a white*, was our unanimous conclusion " ; and from indignant butchers in Plymouth, answering the allegations of *Not a Nut-Eater*. And various others. Some funny, some silly ; but all based upon ignorance.

Every letter was read in the West Country Club with great interest and often amusement, except by the humourless Captain Russell, the Secretary of the packless Hunt. His ruddy face appeared every day for its morning Basses, which were drunk, as usual, under the stuffed badger in the case

above the fireplace. Often he declared that he wasn't interested in what was said, and as often he spent the morning morosely interested in what was said. He knew the main facts about the run in moorland fog, as told by a pale Mollie Inclefell to her father in the evening of the disastrous Monday; and they were quite different from the explanation given at the Extraordinary General Meeting a few days later. It was remarked by a lady immediately after this meeting that the Master had looked "positively uneasy, when that objectionable little bouncy Potstacker person got up on his hind legs" and demanded the name of the farmer to whom compensation would be paid for the loss of sheep by worrying. The Master said that he would personally investigate and settle all claims. Mr. Potstacker, a lawyer employed by a clique of subscribers, repeated that he would very much like the meeting to know the name of the farmer who had lost sheep by worrying. The Master replied in a voice weary but courteous that the Scotch sheep on the moors roamed at large; that some time must elapse before any loss would be discovered. Mr. Potstacker would suggest that all claims that were to be made, had been notified already. The Secretary then got up and said that surely everybody except the only non-subscriber present had been able to grasp what the Master had just told the meeting: that the Committee would be called upon to examine no claims whatsoever in respect of sheep worried by the pack. And further, he himself, as Secretary, would announce that the Master, whom he understood to be about to offer his resignation to the Committee, which, in passing, he would say he hoped would not be accepted; he meant to say, the Master, one of the best of sportsmen, had told him that he would, furthermore, guarantee the cost of a new pack. He sat down, feeling hot. Mr. Potstacker said he would suggest that the price of new hounds would be the only expense to be borne by the Master, and that he would further suggest that the Master might possibly have had another reason than the one given for the slaughtering of the hounds. . . . Voices said: "Oh, shut up!" "Put a curb in his mouth, someone!" and "Sit down, sit down!" Captain Russell jumped on his feet and said: "Mean to say I'm a liar?" Mr. Potstacker said: "Certainly not, Mr. Secretary. I am seeking information. Now, I see many farmers present, men who call a spade a spade. . . ." (A quiet voice: "Us calls 'n shovels, maister," and laughter.) . . . "Well, shovels. Now farmers are exact in what they say; they insist on a shovel being called a shovel." And when the loud laughter of only the farmers had ceased, Mr. Potstacker said distinctly: "Who among you lost sheep by worrying, last Monday?" He looked round. "No one claims a loss! Well, then—who among you has counted your sheep?" Many gave an immediate "Aiy, aiy!" At this point Mr. Potstacker was called to order, and told curtly to address his questions to the chair. "Dem swine!" Captain Russell was heard to mutter.

Mr. Potstacker knew that no sheep had been killed. He had been making inquiries; but he had learned only negative information. And after the meeting, although he tried to pump old Jimmy Huggins, he got nothing from him. "Warn't 'ee to the meeting, s'm?" Jimmy murmured plainly. "Aw, 'ee missed a rare lot o' rattling; but I be dalled if I knaws what 'twas all about." Yet even Jimmy, close and firm as a Wistman oak, didn't know everything.

This is what had occurred.

¶

THE cracked tenor bell of the church had ceased its franging hum when a man crawled furtively through the garderobe hole at the base of the wall of Lydford Castle. The four walls of this Norman ruin were open to the stars; the ivy pushing its roots into the yellow mortar between the hewn granite blocks and inner rubble shook with the exploring winds. The crumbling hollow square stood upon a motte, or raised mound of earth. For centuries it had been used as a stannary prison, but now its dungeon was fallen in; brambles grew where men had lain in chains. Owls and jackdaws cried around the walls by night and day.

In the north-eastern wall of the keep was a mural chamber, built for hiding in an age of violence; it was dilapidated, the home of grasses and nettles. Stalks and blades were broken and bent; some blades were raising themselves, for the man who had been hiding in the wall all that Sunday, shivering and sometimes groaning, had just climbed along the ledge and jumped down. He was peering through the garderobe hole.

The Yellow Boots

Once he had had a name; he still bore the name, but it was never spoken on any lips except his own. To have heard other men speaking the names bestowed upon him with pride and tenderness at his christening would have been to him warning of a calamity more terrible to anticipate than death. For he was one of the most wretched of breathing things, a convict escaped from Princetown.

The number of his cell had been 76. He was known to the warders as Seventy-Six —the warders to whom it was forbidden to speak, unless he were asked a question. He was Seventy-Six, a corrupted animal that for years had quarried stone for other men's buildings, dug turf for other men's fires, sewn bags for other men's letters; had his hair cropped, his chin shaved, worn khaki clothes marked with the possessive broad-arrow of His Majesty's Government. An animal, not wild and pure, but with rot in its mind, that had done with life, but with which life had not yet done. He was godless.

The castle ruin was remembered from a happy visit from Plymouth, just before the Great War, when he had been on his honeymoon. From August, 1914—when he had jacked up his job and stood for hours before a recruiting office, hoping with his pals to be sent off to fight before the fun was ended—until his escape the day before, he had had practically no sense of time. He had exchanged one number of military servitude for another of penal servitude with only one period of tentative freedom—when he had murdered a man and a woman. Now he had another interval of freedom. The day before, Seventy-Six, who was serving a commuted death sentence, had dropped, from the scaffolding where he had been working, a block of stone on a warder's head, and escaped by running through the fog. He had scooped in his hands the icy waters of the moor, drinking on his knees. He had eaten grass. Repeatedly he had touched the hem of his jacket, fearful lest he might have lost his only companion.

Seventy-Six crept through the hole and listened. A row of larches grew between the castle and the church. The fog was gone, and moisture dripped from the branches. Organ music came with a dim light through the windows of the holy building. People were singing the evening psalms. Seventy-Six sneered mentally.

After listening, he slunk down the slope of the motte to the larches, jumped softly down a bank, and walked to a gate. Once again he listened, but hearing no footfalls he climbed the gate and crossed the road. He entered the Rectory garden, startling from a laurel bush a bird that flew away with shrill squealing cries of alarm. Seventy-Six cursed and touched his jacket again. Reassured by the contact of his index finger-tip with the head of what he sought, he crept towards the house, stooping, with silent steps on the grass border of the main path.

A cautious inspection of the lightless building told him that all the lower windows were secured. He felt along one pane, wondering if he dare risk the noise of putting his elbow through it. While he was hesitating, he heard above the thudding of his heart the voices of men in the village street. He hurried away, going down a steep slope among spruce and larch trees where it was very dark, but safe. The river roared below in the gorge. He turned to the left, and walked on, often blundering into ants'-nests as tall as himself, and mossy-wet trunks of trees. He bruised his head, and a sudden mood of happiness came upon him.

The wood thinned by a viaduct with arches that spanned the gorge. A thought came to him that it would be easy to climb the embankment and lay his head on the rail, and end it all. But while he waited, a train thundered above him. Sparks rained into the dark gorge. He was still free; but so hungry. Seventy-Six choked back a desire to cry, and walked on. The path was rough with shillets, and led down to a cottage before which were scattered bits of paper and empty tins. Washed underwear, some of it ragged, was thrown on the hedge in front. He scrounged two shirts, and a pair of trousers hanging with the lining inside-out. He chucked one shirt back on the hedge, thinking that the bloke as owned it was a poor man.

An abandoned water-mill stood near the footbridge, with broken roof and walls, and he was about to explore when he heard a man's voice above the rushing sounds of the river. Thinking that the owner of the clothes had discovered the loss, Seventy-Six crossed by the footbridge. He had stepped down to the path on the other side when he saw the glow of a cigarette in the darkness above him. Someone was coming down the path through the wood. He

crouched on the earth, hiding his face, and felt about for a stone or stick. The voice spoke again, high and eager, and of the quality that Seventy-Six had often laughed at when coming from the lips of music-hall comedians before the war. The red point came near, and now a girl was speaking. Seventy-Six listened to the first feminine voice he had heard since his trial at the Old Bailey.

" What fun, I say ! But Denis, you mustn't ever let Daddy know we did it."

" Rather not ! I feel rather an outsider to have done it, really, without his knowing. Of course, he doesn't hunt ; but, after all, I'm his guest. He's on the Committee, too."

They stopped by the bridge.

" Shall we do it, Bid ? Or shall we go up to the village and make a present of it to old Atters ? It's dashed heavy to carry."

" Oh, let's do it ! Daddy will laugh when he hears," persuaded the girl. " He doesn't like Captain Russell for killing all the badgers, but he didn't like to say anything, as the farmer wanted them killed."

" The farmer was probably thinking of the free drinks next month, at the Badger Club supper," said the man scornfully. " And he probably believes they do harm, as Russell says they do, the fat liar ! The other day I heard him telling someone in the West Country Club that he had ' dug out a hundred and thirty pounds of badger flesh from one holt ! ' His very words. Whereas two labourers did the digging, three terriers got bitten, one a broken jaw, and all the work he did was to sometimes kneel at the hole, thrusting down an ear like a fungus to hear what was happening, and then to tootle-too on a copper horn with what little beery breath he possessed after his athletic feat of kneeling. Pah ! And, of course, he stabbed the poor brocks when someone had banged them on the nose with a shovel."

" Pah ! " said the young girl delightedly. " He calls that *sport !* " The man's eager voice spoke as they were moving away. " You know, Bid, it will be a great scene when hounds leave the hare's line and crash off down to the marsh ! And when Russell and the rest of them arrive at the old holt—and find hounds at dinner ! "

The conversation was meaningless for Seventy-Six, except for the word dinner. He allowed them to get a safe distance ahead of him before following along a footpath under trees beside the river. He climbed a wooden fence, dropped down to a single plank over a ditch, and followed away from the river and up a path which lay on the rock, past a waterfall that thundered white in the darkness, and on to grass again.

¶

HALF-AN-HOUR later, he was trying to find what they had been hiding on the side of a hillock above the marshy ground by the river. The word dinner had so filled his mind while he had been staring in the direction of the voices, that he was convinced they had been hiding food. Reasons for the concealment of food did not occur to him. He stooped among the furze and bracken, to get the dinner that was waiting for him if only he could find the right place. His forehead knocked a thorny branch, and he was rubbing the pain away when he fell into a hole, where immediately he smelled a strong smell. Wondering if it led to a cave where he might hide by day, he felt with his hands. Chopped roots stuck out of its sides and roof. It led about six feet into the gravelly earth. At its end the tunnel narrowed, and was blocked by something soft. He pulled out a heavy bundle and unwrapped the cloth around it, to feel a cold smooth object, with a rough covering. It was a pie.

Seventy-Six pushed his thumb through the crust, and tasted. He tore off the pastry and pulled out a handful of meat. He crammed it into his mouth, swallowing without chewing, gulping with dry wheezings in his throat. He muttered and thought phrases like " Gorblime, mate, you're in luck ! " and " Stuff to give 'm ! " The food gave him sharp pains, and he went to the river to drink. When he returned, he ate less quickly. It was a steak-and-kidney pie, flavoured with onions and hard-boiled eggs. The gravy was rich, tasty with salt and pepper. The dish was big, holding enough for a dozen men.

When he had eaten his fill, he again felt about the place. It ended in a tunnel too small for him to crawl into. He found a pair of light walking-boots, with rubber pads fixed on the soles. With them were the skin of an animal, stuffed with straw, a coat, and a bowler hat. The smell he had noticed when he found the hole was thick on the skin. It dimly recalled the pain of caned hands in boyhood.

Some hours later, wandering on the lower

heather slope of the moor, he found a hiding-place under an oblong slab of granite. It was sealed on all sides save one, by which he entered. Low-growing furze and heather and whortleberry formed a springy door. He crawled out again, and tore, with difficulty, handfuls of heather from the sodden ground, while a herd of small wild grazing cattle stared and sniffed near him. A wan white moon gleamed above low clouds moving over from the south-west. Seventy-Six made his bed, and placed in a far corner the dish with its life-making food. He wore the khaki, arrow-marked clothes no longer. At first he had hidden them in the pillaged badger-holt, but cunning had made him pull out the bundle and, going back the way he had come, drop it, boots and all, in a waterfall of the gorge under the viaduct. But before discarding his prison clothes, he had withdrawn something from the jacket and placed it in the hem of the new coat.

To Seventy-Six, warm and happy, came the old thoughts he had had just before his marriage, when one Sunday night he had listened idly, his girl on his arm, to a street preacher, and believed what he had heard. He recalled another preacher, before whom the battalion had been marched, and formed into a hollow square, and ordered to lie down, while the chaplain stood up and preached. The old sweats 'ad said afterwards that they were for it again, because the padre 'ad talked about Gawd being on their side, which 'e always did just before a show.

The words were realised now by Seventy-Six for the first time since that September church parade before Loos in 1915. Gawd saved sinners ! Gawd had arranged for the pie to be hid there ! He sat on the granite slab and said : " Gorblime ! " which was the vocal accompaniment of his poor darkened spirit's aspiration. He did not really pray to be blinded.

A rising wind stirred the heather, and curlew cries were blown across the sky. Seventy-Six thought : " Gawd, please go hon 'elping me." Then he drew out from the hem of his coat the thing he cared for more than anything on the earth, and played with it. It had been with him through his trial. He tossed it a few inches into the air, and caught it lightly between finger and thumb. He had played like this in his cell for hours, often watched by warders. It had shared his hopes for a better life—for Seventy-Six was still young enough to hope for a happier future. So acquainted was he with the ways of his companion that Seventy-Six could jerk it up and catch it again in the dark. He caught it by his front teeth and, biting on to its head, nicked it with a forefinger. It made the least musical note, which was as a loved voice comforting him. It fell, and he trembled ; his throat was dry until he found it. How glad he was when it pricked his finger, and he picked it up and put it in its place. It was an ordinary pin, made of brass, the bright plating of which had long since worn off.

Seventy-Six crawled into the refuge and fell into a deep sleep before he had tucked in his legs. All night the rain was driven slantingly upon his boots. An old dog-fox trotted down to where he lay, made curious by the strange scent carried upwind to Links Tor, where it had been seeking beetles. Three stoats visited the boots during the night ; and when the rain ceased at daylight a pair of ravens, flying to the moor from their rocky fastness in the gorge, dipped from a height of two hundred yards to inspect the yellow things in the heather. After much flapping of wings and dipping of beaks over the granite slab, one dared to alight. With sidling walk and glances of little eyes, and uneasy hops into the air, it made a swift lunge with its beak, ripping a toe-cap. A grunt came from under the stone, and the ravens departed, fearing a trap. They were puzzled, as the fox and the stoats had been, at the unfamiliar taint in the air.

¶

A FEW hours later, the Inclefell Harriers met at the Dartmoor Inn. A small field was present, about two dozen in the saddle, including farmers. Miss Mollie Inclefell stood talking to Jim Huggins, the huntsman. She was a slight, fair girl, wearing black coat and breeches for riding astride. Six motor-cars had brought people. The Squire was there, on foot, with his sons and daughters. With them was a young man who hid a nervous restlessness under an assumed lack of interest in the meet.

When the huntsman took the hounds to a certain brake of bracken, where a hare was usually to be found, the youngest daughter of the Squire set off with her companion, at a tangent from the curve made by the mounted and foot followers.

When over the brow of the slope, they started to run. Unseen, they crossed the River Lyd by leaping on boulders. Quickly they climbed up the other slope. The two friends were making for high ground whence the old badger-holt might be seen. For a quarter of a mile they climbed in sunlight, and then they sat down on an oblong block of granite embedded in heather.

They had been sitting down less than a minute when hounds far away and below gave tongue. A hare had been started from its form. The high voice of Jim Huggins sang faintly in the wind. They watched the hare making a right-handed turn towards the field of flat-poll cabbages behind the Dartmoor Inn. The hare sped away from the leading hounds. They watched it crossing the place where, the previous afternoon, the young man had taken off his brogues and pulled from a haversack a pair of yellow boots. . . . There hounds checked, they clamoured, they pushed their muzzles together so that they looked like a great fungus suddenly grown on the moor, only to break up into fragments that streamed along a new line. They overran the place where the hare had branched, and raced along the crest of the hill above the stream. The extended field cantered behind.

When the young man turned to say something to the girl standing a few yards away, he was startled by her white cheeks. She was staring at something near. Following her gaze, he saw the pair of boots which he had imagined to be with the other things in the badger holt. The boots were covering the sockless feet of a hidden man.

The girl whispered: "Denis, it may be the escaped convict!"

Denis stared at the boots again, and said: "Oh, good heavens!" Then he leapt through the heather and clutched one of the heels. His hand was kicked away.

"Come out, I say," he said quickly. "There isn't a moment to be lost."

"'Oo are yer?" snarled a voice.

"On my honour I won't hurt you," begged Denis, who was certain that the man was the escaped convict. "You are wearing the boots I hid in the badger-holt. It was meant for a joke. I really should advise you to clear off as soon as possible."

He was deeply alarmed, and had tried to talk in an ordinary voice to reassure his companion. She was a nervous and imaginative girl, but recently recovered from scarlet fever.

"Why can't a bloke 'ave a bit of a kip if 'e wants to?" threatened the voice. And then: "If yer tries any monkey tricks, I'll bash yer, straight I will!"

"Denis, please come away, please," implored the trembling girl.

The baying of the pack grew fainter as hounds sank the hill to the holt two miles away. After more persuasion, the man came out, clutching a piece of granite in his left hand. He wore a pair of labourer's trousers with the lining on the outside, a grey shirt, and a grey bowler hat. The wan blue eyes of his ruined face looked at Denis with such an ailing wildness in them that the young man moved nearer to the girl.

"Don't be alarmed, I say," he said, aghast and smiling. "Look here, you ought really to clear off as quickly as possible. In about ten minutes or less, hounds may be running your line. I laid a drag yesterday with those boots you've got on now. Wherever you've been walking they may follow. Now if you'll only run to Links Tor over there on the skyline, you'll find a narrow crack in the granite, up which you can climb to the top. It's hard to get up the Chimney, but once there you'll be safe until they can whip hounds off. Look here, I'll follow you and give you a pound for the trouble you've had through my damned foolishness. And I'll give you my word I won't breathe a word to anyone that I've seen you. After all, I haven't the least idea who you are, and it's none of my business—I mean, not my affair who you are. Now go, as quick as you can."

Seventy-Six, having been born and bred in a Bermondsey slum, had never seen a live hound in his life. He looked at the summit of Links Tor.

"Climb up on the skyline to be sniped at, eh? Not a hope. See any green in my eye?"

Denis said earnestly: "Well, look here, change boots. I've got you in this mess, and I can run. But—all right, Bid, don't worry. But it wouldn't be any good, unless you hide your coat. Clear off, there's a good fellow. Oh, my God, do hurry! Look, they're running to the badger-holt!"

The girl never forgot the look in the convict's eyes. She was unable to cry; she was fixed as though in a nightmare. The face became set in her mind, as a symbol, not of human spoliation and

despair, but of cruelty and evil. She knew nothing of war. She heard him mutter something as he flung the granite lump at Denis's face, who groaned and dropped into the heather. She could not breathe. She heard hounds in the distance, and thought: "Come soon, come soon." She watched the blood beginning to run from the purple mark on Denis's forehead. She was dizzy and sick, and vaguely realised that the man was ramming her father's old otter-hunting hat on his head as he ran. The hillside seemed to slide up the sky.

¶

LONG before he reached the tor, Seventy-Six had to use his hands to aid him. After splashing and slipping through soggy ground he came to a clitter of rocks overgrown with turf and mosses. A holly had its roots in a granite crevice, a tree twisted and hoary with lichen and without a red berry among its spineless leaves. The holly grew near a mountain ash. Both had been planted by birds.

Looking down, while holding a branch of holly, Seventy-Six could see the toff kneeling by the girl and, below them, the river at the base of the hill. He neither saw nor heard hounds, for they were running down the unseen slope which led from the marshy ground. Beyond the marsh, on the opposite hillock, was the badger-holt.

He climbed the clitter, and went at a steady pace onwards. Here was dryer ground that dipped gradually to a saucer-like depression rising to Links Tor about a mile away against the sky. Being under the everlasting wind the heather was knee-deep and springy. There were no rocks to hinder. The flagpole on Hare Tor to the south—erected to give the signal when gunners were firing on the artillery ranges—lost its dark outline in a drift of cloud as he began to ascend again.

Seventy-Six began to hear the wind as he climbed towards Links Tor. From a sighing in the stalks of heather it swelled to a chilly whistling, and his clothes were blown against his form. About fifty yards from the summit, where was lodged a squat roundish mass of black granite grooved and scalloped and smoothed by wind and rain of a thousand centuries, he sat down and rested. Turning in a northerly direction, he saw a great brown and grey ball of a hill, at whose base ran the leaden vein of the Lyd. He looked across the Great Nodden to fields in sunlight and shadow, and away to a blue infinity of land and sky. The south was dim and grey. Rain. Seventy-Six was glad, for it would hide him. He thought that he would strike inland to the moor behind him and hide till dusk, when he would return and make for the sea. As he became hopeful again, he felt sorry that he had slung the brick at that young toff. It had been done in fear.

A sudden deep croaking over his shoulder made him turn his head. He was in time to see black cartwheeling wings as a bird swerved and dropped out of sight behind the tor again. The raven had meant to alight there, but something had disturbed it. As Seventy-Six stared, he saw a thin object, like a stick, thrust up from the centre of the granite. It thickened towards its end, and then it disappeared. In its place was an arm, followed by a head and shoulders. The man levered himself upon the platform, picked up his rifle, and staggered to his feet, his legs crooked as he braced himself against the icy blast of the wind.

Seventy-Six tried to force his head back to its normal position, but it was held there as though by a spring fixed to his spine. He continued to stare at the crooked figure on Links Tor. He had to stiffen the muscles of throat and neck before he could force his head away. He sat rigidly, wondering when he would be shot in the back. He waited, until the feeling in his spine compelled him to twist his head again. The warder had dropped on one knee and was covering the convict with his rifle.

Seventy-Six pretended not to have seen him. The curiosity of dread made him turn round once more, just as a shout enfeebled by wind came from the warder. He was beckoning Seventy-Six, standing as upright as the wind would permit, and holding the rifle in his right hand at the position of trail. Seventy-Six got on his feet, and while he was walking towards the tor the warder pulled a whistle from his breast pocket and blew a long blast. As though in answer, a ragged edge of mist trailed in cold silence past the convict and washed around the monolith of granite. Links Tor faded out, but the whistle continued its double note—*fran-n-n-n-n-n* in the fog.

Seventy-Six stood irresolute. He felt for the head of the pin. The touch of its head was like a double dose of rum before going

over the bags. He laughed, and was turning it in finger and thumb when a hound spoke below. It was the leader, a dog named Lamplighter. The pack was less than a mile away, running the line of the yellow boots, whose scent was pungent in the mist. Again Seventy-Six thought of being caned on his hands, before the boys and girls of the fifth standard of the Council School. He remembered the bag of aniseed balls, which he had been made to throw in the master's waste-paper basket—his mother's birthday gift, bought with two of her scanty spare pennies. And afterwards the master had made him face the class, and had used the little boy's tearful gulping for a crudely sarcastic lecture on the subject of Heroism. He had not known that a son felt that his mother's heart was thrown in the basket.

Seventy-Six thought: "This fog is a bit of all right! Stuff to give the troops!" He set off at a run, on his toes. He had been the champion runner of the right-wing company of the battalion. The moor was a chaos of whitey-grey, cold and dim. Soon his eyelashes were damp. The ground was firm, and he leapt over the ling. The rubber pads gave a good grip. After a quarter of an hour his breath came quickly, and he felt a relief when the ground began to slope down. The noise of water was before him. Lower and lower he descended until he came to the Rattle Brook fretting its stony bed. He crossed without wetting his feet, and listened. In front of him the ground rose again, and a remote baying seemed to float down through the mist. He pushed on up the hill, but was forced to rest at the top. He imagined that as he was invisible, he was safe, because he did not know that hounds followed by nose alone. As he lay on a couch of ling, he heard them giving tongue—not an echo this time. They had reached the unseen crest of the coombe. He jumped up and hastened onwards, cursing them because he thought they would betray him to the warders. The clamour suddenly increased—where Seventy-Six had rested—and he ran on again.

¶

HIS next rest was half-an-hour later, when he flung himself by the thread of a stream which had cut for itself a channel in the peaty soil. He dipped his hat in the brown water, flinging it over his face and washing out his mouth. In the old running days, when the Guards Division had been out of the line, he had been trained never to drink during a long-distance run. He lay on his back, wishing he had a pal with him; one minute, two minutes, three minutes, and then the baying of hounds.

Patches of ling and grass tufts became scantier. Everywhere was water. The rubber soles of his boots often slid. He ran flat-footed, over a maze of water-threads. An idea came to him that he must jump them all, that he would have bad luck if he slipped into one. To ease himself he carried the hat in his left hand. It began to impede him, but he dared not throw it away, as he would need it until his hair grew. It hindered more when carried under an arm, so he rammed it on his head again. During the next half-hour, toiling up a long hill, he changed its position more than fifty times.

Eventually the hat was thrown away beside a layer of turves that had been cut and laid in wide arrow-shaped lines to drain and dry, where it was found long afterwards. Disturbed in their feeding, three golden plover rose in the mist before the runner with swift anchor-winged flight, and with gentle cries of alarm. Snipe, thrusting long bills into the soft ground, were driven up from their feeding. Sometimes a raven croaked over his head.

He was so fatigued when he reached the Great Kneeset that he had to walk. His feet, with blistered toes and heels, felt as hot and heavy as they had felt when he had had trench-feet, swelled and red as tomatoes. He flung away the stolen shirt, soggy with sweat, on the morass where the River Tavy rises. His trousers to the knees were wet and black with peat. He had blundered into many shallow bogs. The deep sucking quakers, which shook and rippled at his passing, were bright green, and easily seen.

He staggered across the plash in the peaty hollow of an old tarn, hid by swirls of fog. A broken spade was stuck into a heap of turves in the hollow, and in the turves was an iron box holding a metal stamp, a bottle of violet ink, and a book wherein many names were signed. Its flyleaf was ringed and smudged by intersecting violet circles holding the letters "CRANMERE." Seventy-Six remembered. Past and present were mingled as reality in his confused brain. In the early summer of 1914 a

London-born youth and his wife, on their honeymoon, had scrawled their names across a page, with the remark : " It's all rite." And now, nearly ten years later, the mortal remains of the woman mouldered in a South London graveyard, and neither age nor name mattered further for the husband. Seventy-Six, grey-haired, was resting the weight of his head and shoulders on forehead and knees ; but a younger man, in khaki, was writing a letter to a wife still living : " Dear Dol,—i write hoping you are quite all rite, as it leaves me at present, in the pink. Are you gettin the speration allowence all rite. i hope so. We are not alowed to say where we are, but it isn't so bad, althogh a bit of mud about. I hope to get Blighty leaf soon it is my turn soon and i hops the Sarjint Major don't forgit. No more now from your lovin husband Bob. P.S.—This war is ——."

He blacked out the last word, remembering that his officer would read the letter.

And " SWAK " on the envelope flap—Sealed With A Kiss. The pencil-stump, paper, and sandbagged traverse, sun shining, plank he sat on, all dropped into darkness. He heard the whining of ricochets, saw the greenish flares quivering in the water-filled shell-holes, as the relieved right-wing company fled down the wooden track to the Menin Road. Jerry's machine-guns were clacking from many points. Going out at last ! Rest billets reached, and rum-in-tea dished out. The S.M. was calling out names for Blighty leaf. Christ, 'ow 'is 'eart thumped ! 'Is own number, 'is name ! He saw again the lorry in which he had hopped to railhead, after fourteen months in the mud of Artois and the shallow watery trenches of the Salient. During the slow journey in the train, clanking and stopping and jerking on again past sandhills and pines to Boulogne, the young Coalie was singing and shouting, happy at the thought of seeing again the wife he had constantly thought of, but infrequently written to, during so many evenings in smoky estaminets, candle-dim billets, and lousy cubbie-holes. A stay of two days in the rest camp owing to submarines in the Channel, and again he was singing with his chums as they marched down to the quay. Horse-nosed officer bloke with A.M.L.O. on his brassard, at the gangway with red-cap sergeant and two policemen scrutinising the yellow pass. Then the pitch and roll of the boat, the nausea and prostration, the grey cliffs of England, the pulling-himself-together and the tottering off at Folkestone, the train with the black-painted lamps and drawn blinds, the faces in smoke and the crush of equipment, the glide into Victoria Station, so vast and dark and subdued, yet noisy with feet and engine steam. Outside, the women he didn't want to talk to saying : " Hullo, dearie ! " and then—the first drink of good old English beer, a pint of mild-and-bitter. . . . How strange civvy suits looked !

¶

ONE reality faded; nausea remained. Seventy-Six lifted his head and harkened to hounds following him in the mist. Two hours before, they had streamed over the ragged grass below Links Tor. They were unfatigued, but had veered off the line, following the aniseed straying in the mist. Seventy-Six thought that the warders would see his name in the book, and know that he had been past Cranmere. He carried the book away with him, and trod it into a bog, where it was never found. . . . Afterwards it was indignantly stated that someone had taken it because it contained the autograph of the Prince of Wales.

Seventy-Six loped on for another half-hour, descending to a coombe where the mist was thinner. He fell over a rock beside a stream, and choked as he tried to suck up the water which turned his teeth to icicles. When he tried to rise again he had to draw his feet from off the rock ; he felt as though he were dragging the rock with them. He prayed with broken shouts, as he had prayed under the barrage at Festubert. His ribs were hugging him to death, the prison shirt was smothering him. He tore it off and left it on the rock, and pulled himself onwards, as a child in a nightmare. Now he was clad only in trousers and boots, and the Union Jack tattooed on his back. The flag was one of the patriotic relics of 1914, done in an Aldershot shop after cheers and beers with pals, following flaring mental hatred of the sergeant-instructor drilling the squad to breaking point on the parade-ground.

Over rocks and rushy tufts, while thirty-four hounds followed less than three hundred yards behind. His line of running had been in a loop, and he was approaching the Rattle Brook again, where it merged into the yellow winter waters of the Tavy. He plunged into the river foaming and

swirling among black and pink-blotched boulders and rocky tables which for centuries the floods had slowly carved. It sucked him under and spun him in its twist. A spur of rock held him by the trousers, until they ripped, and wrapped round his legs. Hauling himself out, Seventy-Six waded back into the river again when the leading hounds viewed him and gave tongue.

He was carried a hundred yards down the water in less than a minute, to where a tree-grown islet divided the current. All the air was knocked from his chest. On hands and knees he crawled to the right bank. The strings of his thigh and calf muscles were drawn tight, and each lung was bayoneted. A spike of rock had torn his back, and the Union Jack was fouled by the blood of the ruined patriot.

A mist strayed through Tavy Cleave, and the broken screes towering hundreds of feet above were revealed and hidden by clouds. An old hill-fox deep in a clitter sniffed as he passed below and listened contentedly to the hounds which had crossed the river. The raven that had followed Seventy-Six for nearly three hours croaked a treble croak to its mate from a scaur of rock four hundred feet above the toiling figure.

It was now between half-past two and three o'clock in the afternoon. Feeling for the pin, Seventy-Six realised that he had thrown it away with the clothes.

Ever since he had been blown by a high-explosive shell out of a communication trench in the Hohenzollern Redoubt, with burst sandbags and pieces of a shattered Coalie, his chum, a spectre had fretted his life. Always—and especially in drink—since his fourteen days in the hospital at Hazebrouck, " recovering " from the shock of the bright shell-blast, he had been liable to moods both morose and violent. At Hazebrouck an inspecting Surgeon-General, a regular officer with two rows of ribbons and honours, suspected him of malingering, and ordered him immediately to be sent back to duty in the line.

The thought of his wife had kept the spectre away; and, afterwards, the companionship of the pin in his cell had been a barrier against the dark fears which came into his disrupted mind. When he knew that the pin was lost, Seventy-Six threw up his arms and wailed. He saw what other men would not have seen, had they been with him. The new consciousness was accompanied by a sense of ease and lightness. All pain and fatigue left him. He seemed to be floating along, with the least touch of his toes on rocks and water.

¶

THE body of Seventy-Six was walking in the shallow bed of the leat which, serpentining through the moor, eventually serves the arsenic mines of Mary Tavy; but a Coldstream Guardsman also was walking on the platform of the Tube Railway at the Elephant and Castle Station. The platform was thick with the smell of many women and children sitting and lying against the wall. He was relieved that the journey was finished, and hitching-up rifle on right shoulder he shoved a way into the lift. Outside the dear old boozer, where he had first met his wife. Now there was a war on, and a bloke couldn't get a pint after nine o'clock. The street was dark. A tramcar passed him, bumping and clattering, all its lights blacked over, except for the least glimmers. He lit a cigarette, and the voice of a special constable riding past on a lampless bicycle cried out in agitated sternness: " Put that light out! Second warning's been given! " He answered with a laugh: " Don't get the —— wind up, mate! " As he strode along the Old Kent Road, gunfire broke out, and a hundred white beams swept the sky. The yelling civvies might cut and run, but not a Coalie! He whistled as he walked. *Z-z-z-zim-zzz-zop* fell the splinters of anti-aircraft shells. *Wh-oo-sh! Crack!* That was a nosecap that had split the paving stone just behind him. He walked on to his street, erect and with cap-peak pulled low over his eyes. Near his house he stopped, and looked upwards. A groaning had opened in the sky above him. It filled the street; it increased and snored through the darkness. *Whoo-ursh, whoourish!*—an immense slow corkscrewing of sound, that grew as though the earth were falling out of its orbit. The soldier crouched under a window ledge, while a starving cat miaowed to him and rubbed itself against his cheek. Poor moggy, he 'adn't no milk to give. He stroked the cat, whose purring was drowned in the tremendous rushing noise descending. It was like a thousand minnies coming down. (The minnenwerfers in the Salient had made a lesser noise.) He waited, and sweated, for it was coming straight at him. He pressed himself against the wall, against the bricks made greasy by children's hands,

holding the cat protected in his arms, his eyes closed, his breath stopped. A red glare showed through the lids, and immediately a stunning detonation flung him with the cat into the gutter. Houses swayed and tumbled, and roared down in clouds of bricks and dust. He ran up the street, for the Zeppelin torpedo had fallen just about where he lived. The bomb had flattened sixteen houses, but his house was safe, except for a splintered door. " Won't Old Dol be surprised to see me," he thought. He pushed the door down, crashing in upon the landlady, an old widow woman who was wearing a crimson flannel nightgown. Her bluish-white face was beyond speech. She moaned something, and pointed at a broken methylated-spirit bottle on the floor. " Where's Dol ? " he asked. " Upstairs ? " She stood and moaned in the crude fumes of her own breath. " You're boozed, Ma ! " he said. She let out a shriek when he pointed upstairs. " I to'd her not to do it. I to'd 'er not to ! " she moaned. Her candle wobbled, and fell. He ran up the stairs, pulling himself up with his hands, and stones out of the wall fell away with his clutch. (Seventy-Six had reached the ruin of Redford Farm.) He turned the handle of the bed-sitting-room. The door was locked. A man's voice said : " What the hell——" With the butt of his rifle he broke in the panels, and burst the lock. A gas-jet burned with a small blue flame. The soldier turned the tap, and it flittered like a yellow bat. He snarled, and drew his bayonet out of the scabbard and fixed it. The man whined : " 'Ere, I say, maite, what's the gaime ? " Then he shrieked, and hid his face under the bedclothes, with the soldier's wife. The soldier stabbed them under the patched counterpane. He saw the spirit of his wife fly up on white wings. But the bloke she had picked up wouldn't die. After each lunge of the bayonet he came alive again with more and more faces, which tried to bite him with their fangs. The soldier thrust and pointed and parried, groin—belly—right nipple—left nipple—throat—just as the sergeant-instructor had yelled at him during bayonet practice on the stuffed sacks at Aldershot. He smashed with the butt-stroke at their jaws and eyes, but the faces pulled him down. He did not care—they did not hurt him ; and with a laugh he walked away from them, into darkness.

Redford Farm, near the leat which leads to the arsenic mines, had been a ruin many years before the last run of the Inclefell Harriers. One chimney-stack was still standing at the eastern end of the farmhouse on the Saturday before, for on that day, wandering over the moor, I drove out a white owl that was dozing away the daylight up the flue, among the fire-marked stones. But on the Monday, when Miss Mollie Inclefell, lost in the mist for some hours, and leading her mare lame in the near fore, arrived at Redford Farm about three o'clock, it had collapsed, as though someone had tried to climb up it. A raven flew over the heap of stones and damp mortar-dust lying on the ground. Several red-muzzled hounds came to her and leapt up affectionately. They remained by her, two of them licking her face, while she lay pale and still in a fainting fit caused by the sight of two shinbones sticking out of a pair of yellow boots.

The Cornet-Player

Concerning a musician whose skill suddenly deserted him

By P. A. de ALARCÓN

(*Specially translated for* THE ARGOSY *by Robert Spofforth*)

"DON BASILIO, please play the cornet for us while we dance. It's not too hot under these trees."

"Yes, give Don Basilio the cornet that Joaquin's learning."

"No, I won't play," said Don Basilio.

"Why not?"

"Because I don't know how."

"Was there ever such an untruth! Why—we know that you were once regimental bandmaster."

"And that you've played in the Palace itself."

"Come, Don Basilio, take pity on us."

"No," replied Don Basilio; "what I said is true. I have played the cornet in my time, and was rather an expert on it, as you young people say. But two years ago I gave my instrument to a poor, out-of-work musician and I've never played a note since."

"Oh, grandfather, please remember that it's my birthday."

"Hurrah! Yes, and here's the cornet. Play us a waltz."

"No, a polka."

"No, a fandango."

"I'm very sorry, children, but I've told you that I cannot play the cornet."

"Oh, you're so good and kind, and your grandson and your niece beg you to play for them."

"For goodness' sake, leave me alone. I can't play the cornet."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't remember how to. And besides . . . I swore I would never learn again."

"To whom did you swear?"

"To myself, to a man who is now dead, and to my dear wife."

Everybody showed concern at these words, and the old man added, "If you knew at what cost I learned to play the cornet!"

"Oh, do tell us the story," cried the children.

"Yes," said Don Basilio, "there is a story to it. Listen and judge for yourselves whether or not I can play the cornet."

And the old man sat under a tree and told the story of his music lesson to a circle of eager listeners.

Just as Mazeppa, Byron's hero, recounted to Charles XII under another tree the terrible story of his ride.

Here is the story that Don Basilio told.

Seventeen years ago civil war was raging in Spain. Charles and Isabel were quarrelling over the crown, and the country, divided into two factions, was spending its blood in fratricidal strife.

I had a friend, Ramón Gámez, who was a lieutenant in the same battalion of chasseurs in which I was—the most splendid man I ever knew. We had been educated together, left school together, had fought side by side a thousand times, and wanted nothing better than to die together for freedom.

One day our colonel was unjust to Ramón—it was just that kind of abuse of authority which is best calculated to disgust an honourable man—a mere arbitrary whim. And it made the lieutenant of chasseurs desert the ranks of his comrades; the friend left his friend, the liberal went over to the rebels, the subordinate killed his colonel. Neither my prayers nor my threats could dissuade him from his plan. His mind was made up. He would change his helmet for the flat cap of the rebels, though he hated them like poison.

We were in the Principality at the time, ten or twelve miles from the enemy. It was the night on which Ramón was to desert—a cold, rainy night, sad and gloomy, and we knew there was to be a battle next day.

At midnight Ramón came to my quarters. I was asleep. When I woke up he said to me, "Look here—if there's a battle to-morrow, as we think there will be, and if we meet in it——"

" Yes, I know ; we'll remember we're friends."

" Yes, that certainly. But when we've embraced one another, we'll fight. I'm certain to die to-morrow, because I'll go through anything to kill that colonel. But don't you expose yourself to danger, Basilio ; glory is nothing but smoke. Get yourself made colonel. Pay isn't smoke, at any rate not until one had spent it. But all that is over for me."

" You're in an unhappy mood to-day," I said, with some surprise. " We shall both survive to-morrow's battle."

" Then let us arrange to meet after it is over."

" Where ? "

" At the hermitage of St. Nicholas, at one o'clock in the morning. If either of us is not there, it will mean that he is dead. Is that agreed ? "

" Yes."

" Then . . . Good-bye ! "

" Good-bye."

And after we had embraced each other tenderly Ramón disappeared into the night.

As we had expected, the rebels attacked us on the following day. It was a very bloody battle, and it lasted from three in the afternoon until nightfall.

At five o'clock my battalion was violently attacked by a rebel force commanded by Ramón, who was already wearing major's uniform and the flat, white cap of the Carlists. I gave the command to fire on Ramón's force, and I saw him give the command to fire on mine, and in a few minutes we were fighting desperately hand to hand. Finally we won, and Ramón was obliged to take to flight with the diminished remnants of his force, but not before he had shot with his own hand the man who had been his colonel.

But an hour later the action took an unfavourable turn for us, and I, with a portion of my company, found myself cut off and obliged to surrender.

They led us off to a small town which had been occupied by the Carlists since the beginning of the campaign, and I made sure that they would shoot us at once, for at that time no quarter was given on either side.

I heard it strike one o'clock, the hour of my rendezvous with Ramón, and here I was shut up in a dungeon in the public prison !

I asked somebody about my friend, and was told, " He's a brave fellow—he killed a colonel. But I think he was killed towards the end of the action."

" Why do you say that ? "

" Because he hasn't come back from the battlefield, and men in the detachment under his orders can give no account of him."

Ah ! what I went through that night ! I had only one hope, that Ramón had not come back from the battlefield because he had waited for me at the hermitage of St. Nicholas. I thought how sad he would be that I did not keep the rendezvous, and would imagine that I was dead. And, as a matter of fact, was I so far from being dead, seeing that the rebels invariably shot their prisoners, just as we did ?

And so the next day dawned. A chaplain entered my dungeon. Everyone but me was asleep. " That means death," I cried when I saw the priest.

" Yes," he answered gently.

" Now ? "

" No, in three hours' time."

Next minute my companions were awake, and the prison was filled with the sound of cries, sobs and blasphemies.

A man who knows he is about to die will usually cling to a single idea, and never let go of it for an instant. And whether it was fever, nightmare or madness, this happened to me. The idea of Ramón, of Ramón alive, of Ramón dead, of Ramón in heaven, of Ramón at the hermitage, possessed my brain to such an extent that no other thought came into my mind during those hours of agony.

They took off my captain's uniform and gave me a soldier's cap and old cloak ; and so clad I walked to my death with nineteen unfortunate comrades. Only one had been pardoned, and that because he was a musician, and there was a great shortage of bandsmen in the rebel armies.

A square was formed, with us in the middle. I was number eleven, which meant that I should be the eleventh to die. I thought of my wife and my daughter, and then the firing began.

My eyes were bandaged, so that I could not see my comrades fall. I tried to count the volleys so that I should know an instant before I died. However, I lost count at the third or fourth.

Those volleys will sound eternally in my heart and brain as they sounded that day !

At one moment they seemed a thousand miles away, the next moment they were inside my head.

And still they went on. "Now!" I thought. But the volley crashed out and I was still alive.

"It must be this time," I said to myself.

Then I felt hands grasp my shoulders and shake me, and voices sounded in my ear. I fell and was unconscious. Then I passed into a deep sleep and dreamed that I had been shot.

Soon I dreamed that I was on a pallet-bed in my prison. I could see nothing. I put my hand up to my eyes as though to remove a bandage, and my hand touched my open eyes. Then I had gone blind? No, I was in a pitch-dark prison.

I heard a clock strike nine, but I did not know what day it was. A shadow that was darker than the darkness of the prison bent over me. It was a man.

"And what about the others, the other nineteen?" I asked.

"They have all been shot," was the reply.

Then was I alive, or was I raving in my grave? And my lips murmured mechanically the same name as ever, the name of my delirium, "Ramón."

"Do you want anything?" said the shadow at my side.

I shuddered and cried, "My God, am I in the other world?"

"No," came the reply in the same voice.

"Ramón, are you alive?"

"Yes."

"Am I alive?"

"Yes, you too."

"Then where am I? Is this the hermitage of St. Nicholas, and have I dreamed that I was to be shot?"

"No, Basilio, it wasn't a dream. Listen to me:

"As they told you, I killed the colonel yesterday, and got my revenge. And afterwards I went on killing in mad fury, and killed until nightfall, when I couldn't see anyone else to kill.

"When the moon rose I remembered you and went to the hermitage of St. Nicholas with the idea of waiting for you.

"It was about ten o'clock and, as I didn't expect you till one and I hadn't closed my eyes the previous night, I fell asleep, and slept soundly.

"At one o'clock I woke up with a scream. I had been dreaming that you were dead. I looked for you everywhere, but you were not to be found. What had happened to you?

"Two o'clock, three, four, and still you didn't come. I gave you up for lost.

"Then dawn came and I went back to the rebel camp, which I reached at sunrise. Everyone thought I had been killed the day before, so they were all glad to see me and the General congratulated me warmly.

"Someone told me that twenty-one prisoners were about to be shot. I had a sudden presentiment that you were among them. So I ran as hard as I could to the scene of the execution. The square was already formed and I heard some volleys. The shootings had begun. I strained my eyes, but at first didn't see you. I was blind with grief, dizzy with fear.

"At last I saw you. There were two to die before you. What was I to do? I gave a shout like a madman, put my arms round you and cried in a hoarse, breaking, trembling voice, 'Not this one, not this one, General!'

The General in command of the firing-party knew me only by what I had done in the battle the day before. He said, 'Why not? Is he a musician?'

"The word 'musician' was for me what it would be to a man born blind suddenly to see the sun shining in all his glory. The light of hope was so unexpected that it blinded me.

"'Musician?' I said. 'Yes, sir, er . . . musician . . . er . . . er . . . he's a great musician, sir.'

"'What instrument does he play?' asked the General.

"'The—er . . . instrument he—er . . . plays is—yes, exactly . . . he—er . . . he plays the cornet.'

"'Do we need a cornet?' said the General, turning to the regimental bandmaster. For five seconds, five centuries, I waited the answer.

"'Yes, sir, we do,' said the bandmaster.

"'Well then, remove this man and let the executions proceed.'

"So then I carried you in my arms to this dungeon."

When Ramón had finished his story I got up and said, between laughter and tears, embracing him, trembling, "I owe you my life."

"Not yet," he replied.

"How so?"

" Can you play the cornet ? '

" No."

" Well then, I haven't saved your life, but have rather endangered my own without saving yours."

I went cold as a stone.

" Do you know anything about music ? " Ramón asked next.

" A very little. Only what we learned at school. You remember ? "

" Yes, that's as good as nothing. They'll shoot you after all, without fail, and me too, as a traitor. Do you realise that within fifteen days the band is to be made up and that you are to be a member of it ! And as you won't be able to play the cornet—for God will not do a miracle—they will shoot us both without fail."

" Shoot you ! " I said, " on account of me, who owe you my life. Oh no ! God will not allow that. Within fifteen days I shall know music and be able to play the cornet."

Ramón burst into laughter.

Well, children, there is not much left to tell you. In fifteen days—such is the power of the human will—with their fifteen nights (for I hardly rested or slept in that time) I learned to play the cornet.

What days those were. Ramón and I used to go into the country and spend hours and hours with a musician who came every day from a village near by to give me lessons.

I see from your faces that you are wondering why I did not escape. But when I was not with Ramón I was closely guarded, and my escape would have involved him.

During this time I did not speak nor think nor eat. I was mad and my monomania was music, the cornet, which was possessed by devils.

I wanted to learn, and learn I did. If I had been dumb I should have spoken ; or paralysed and I should have walked ; or blind and I should have seen.

And so I saved Ramón's life and my own. But I paid for it with my reason, and the cornet became my mania.

For three years the cornet did not leave my hand.

Do Re Mi Fa Sol La Si Do !—that was the world I lived in for three years.

Ramon did not leave me and, when the war was over, we went to France together.

My cornet and I were one ! I sang with the cornet in my mouth !

Great men and famous artists came in crowds to hear me.

It was amazing, a marvel. The cornet bent between my fingers, made itself elastic, groaned, wept, cried, roared, imitated birds, beasts, the sobs of a man. My lungs were iron.

I lived like this for two years more, and then my friend died. Looking on his dead face, I got back my reason.

And when, in my right mind, I picked up my cornet one day I was astonished to find that I could no longer play.

Will you still ask me to play for you, children, so that you can dance ?

Fame—

ONE desires to be unknown, but only when it is too late. As soon as the trumpets of fame have sounded the name of an unfortunate man, farewell for ever to his repose. VOLTAIRE.

THE desire for fame is the last desire that is laid aside even by the wise. TACITUS.

DEATH opens the gate of Fame, and shuts the gate of Envy after it. STERNE.

PASSION for fame ; a passion which is the instinct of all great souls. BURKE.

Conclusion

The Woman In White

By WILKIE COLLINS

Walter Hartright is exposing the plot whereby Sir Percival Glyde, aided by Count Fosco, hopes to prevent a revelation which would ruin him financially. By a ruse Laura Glyde is inveigled to London where she apparently dies; but it is really Anne Catherick, who so strikingly resembles her, who lies in the grave. Walter Hartright discovers that Sir Percival Glyde had no right to his baronetcy, and in his attempt to conceal his falsification of the marriage register, the former is burned to death. The secret is out, but Laura's identity is not yet proved.

THE agent had kept at the door the cab in which he had returned. He and the maid-servant now busied themselves in removing the luggage. Madame Fosco came downstairs, thickly veiled. She neither spoke to me nor looked towards me. Her husband escorted her to the cab. "Follow me as far as the passage," he whispered in my ear; "I may want to speak to you at the last moment."

I went out to the door, the agent standing below me in the front garden. The Count came back alone, and drew me a few steps inside the passage.

"Remember the Third condition!" he whispered. "You shall hear from me, Mr. Hartright—I may claim from you the satisfaction of a gentleman sooner than you think." He caught my hand before I was aware of him, and wrung it hard; then turned to the door, stopped, and came back to me again.

"One word more," he said confidentially. "When I last saw Miss Halcombe she looked thin and ill. I am anxious about that admirable woman. Take care of her, sir! With my hand on my heart, I solemnly implore you, take care of Miss Halcombe!"

"You wait here with me, sir, for half-an-hour more!" said Monsieur Rubelle.

"I do."

We returned to the sitting-room. I was in no humour to speak to the agent, or to allow him to speak to me. I took out the papers which the Count had placed in my hands, and read the terrible story of the conspiracy told by the man who had planned and perpetrated it.

The Story continued by ISIDOR OTTAVIO BALDASSARE FOSCO, *Count of the Holy Roman Empire, Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Brazen Crown, Perpetual Arch-Master of the Rosicrucian Masons of Mesopotamia; Attached (in Honorary Capacities) to Societies Musical, Societies Medical, Societies Philosophical, and Societies General Benevolent, throughout Europe; &c., &c., &c.*

The COUNT'S *Narrative.*

IN the summer of eighteen hundred and fifty I arrived in England, charged with a delicate political mission from abroad. Confidential persons were semi-officially connected with me, whose exertions I was authorized to direct, Monsieur and Madame Rubelle being among the number. Some weeks of spare time were at my disposal before I entered on my functions by establishing myself in the suburbs of London.

I arranged to pass the preliminary period of repose, to which I have just referred, in the superb mansion of my late lamented friend, Sir Percival Glyde. *He* arrived from the Continent with *his* wife. *I* arrived from the Continent with *mine*.

The bond of friendship which united Percival and myself was strengthened, on this occasion, by a touching similarity in the pecuniary position on his side and on mine. We both wanted money. Immense necessity! Universal want!

I enter into no sordid particulars, in discussing this part of the subject. My mind recoils from them.

We were received at the mansion by the magnificent creature who is inscribed on my heart as "Marian," who is known in the colder atmosphere of society as "Miss Halcombe."

Just Heaven! with what inconceivable rapidity I learnt to adore that woman. At sixty I worshipped her with the volcanic ardour of eighteen. All the gold of my rich nature was poured hopelessly at her feet. My wife—poor angel!—my wife, who adores me, got nothing but the shillings and the pennies. Such is the World, such Man, such Love.

The domestic position at the commencement of our residence at Blackwater Park has been drawn with amazing accuracy, by the hand of Marian herself. Accurate knowledge of the contents of her journal—to which I obtained access by clandestine means, unspeakably precious to me in the remembrance—warns my eager pen from topics which this essentially exhaustive woman has already made her own.

The interests—interests, breathless and immense!—with which I am here concerned begin with the deplorable calamity of Marian's illness.

The situation at this period was emphatically a serious one. Large sums of money, due at a certain time, were wanted by Percival (I say nothing of the modicum equally necessary to myself), and the one source to look to for supplying them was the fortune of his wife, of

which not one farthing was at his disposal until her death. Bad so far, and worse still further on. My lamented friend had private troubles of his own, into which the delicacy of my disinterested attachment to him forbade me from inquiring too curiously. I knew nothing but that a woman, named Anne Catherick, was hidden in the neighbourhood, that she was in communication with Lady Glyde, and that the disclosure of a secret, which would be the certain ruin of Percival, might be the result. He had told me himself that he was a lost man, unless his wife was silenced, and unless Anne Catherick was found. If he was a lost man, what would become of our pecuniary interests ?

The whole force of my intelligence was now directed to the finding of Anne Catherick. Our money affairs, important as they were, admitted of delay ; but the necessity of discovering the woman admitted of none. I only knew her by description, as presenting an extraordinary personal resemblance to Lady Glyde. The statement of this curious fact—intended merely to assist me in identifying the person of whom we were in search—when coupled with the additional information that Anne Catherick had escaped from a madhouse, started the first immense conception in my mind, which subsequently led to such amazing results. That conception involved nothing less than the complete transformation of two separate identities. Lady Glyde and Anne Catherick were to change names, places, and destinies, the one with the other—the prodigious consequences contemplated by the change being the gain of thirty thousand pounds, and the eternal preservation of Sir Percival's secret.

My instincts (which seldom err) suggested to me, on reviewing the circumstances, that our invisible Anne would, sooner or later, return to the boat-house at the Blackwater Lake. There I posted myself, previously mentioning to Mrs. Michelson, the housekeeper, that I might be found when wanted, immersed in study, in that solitary place.

I was rewarded for posting myself sentinel at the lake by the appearance, not of Anne Catherick herself, but of the person in charge of her. I leave her to describe the circumstances (if she has not done so already) under which she introduced me to the object of her maternal care. When I first saw Anne Catherick she was asleep. I was electrified by the likeness between this unhappy woman and Lady Glyde. The details of the grand scheme which had suggested themselves in outline only, up to that period, occurred to me, in all their masterly combination, at the sight of the sleeping face. At the same time, my heart, always accessible to tender influences, dissolved in tears at the spectacle of suffering before me. I instantly set myself to impart relief. In other words, I provided the necessary stimulant for strengthening Anne Catherick to perform the journey to London.

Having suggested to Mrs. Clement (or Clements, I am not sure which) that the best method of keeping Anne out of Percival's reach was to remove her to London, having found that my proposal was eagerly received, and having appointed a day to meet the travellers at the station and to see them leave it, I was at liberty to return to the house and to confront the difficulties which still remained to be met.

My first proceeding was to avail myself of the sublime devotion of my wife. I had arranged with Mrs. Clements that she should communicate her London address, in Anne's interests, to Lady Glyde. But this was not enough. Designing persons in my absence might shake the simple confidence of Mrs. Clements, and she might not write after all. Who could I find capable of travelling to London by the train she travelled by, and of privately seeing her home ? I asked myself this question. The conjugal part of me immediately answered—Madame Fosco.

After deciding on my wife's mission to London, I arranged that the journey should serve a double purpose. A nurse for the suffering Marian, equally devoted to the patient and to myself, was a necessity of my position. One of the most eminently confidential and capable women in existence was by good fortune at my disposal. I refer to that respectable matron Madame Rubelle, to whom I addressed a letter, at her residence in London, by the hands of my wife.

On the appointed day Mrs. Clements and Anne Catherick met me at the station. I politely saw them off. I politely saw Madame Fosco off by the same train. The last thing at night my wife returned to Blackwater, having followed her instructions with the most unimpeachable accuracy. She was accompanied by Madame Rubelle, and she brought me the London address of Mrs. Clements. After-events proved this last precaution to have been unnecessary. Mrs. Clements punctually informed Lady Glyde of her place of abode. With a wary eye on future emergencies, I kept the letter.

My next proceeding was to leave Blackwater myself. I had my London residence to take in anticipation of coming events. I had also a little business of the domestic sort to transact with Mr. Frederick Fairlie. I found the house I wanted in St. John's Wood. I found Mr. Fairlie at Limmeridge, Cumberland.

My own private familiarity with the nature of Marian's correspondence had previously informed me that she had written to Mr. Fairlie, proposing, as a relief to Lady Glyde's matrimonial embarrassments, to take her on a visit to her uncle in Cumberland. This letter I had wisely allowed to reach its destination, feeling at the time that it could do no harm, and might do good. I now presented myself before Mr. Fairlie to support Marian's own proposal—with certain modifications which, happily for the success of my plans, were rendered really inevitable by her illness. It was necessary that Lady Glyde should

leave Blackwater alone, by her uncle's invitation, and that she should rest a night on the journey at her aunt's house (the house I had in St. John's Wood), by her uncle's express advice. To achieve these results, and to secure a note of invitation which could be shown to Lady Glyde, were the objects of my visit to Mr. Fairlie. When I have mentioned that this gentleman was equally feeble in mind and body, and that I let loose the whole force of my character on him, I have said enough. I came, saw, and conquered Fairlie.

On my return to Blackwater Park (with the letter of invitation) I found that the doctor's imbecile treatment of Marian's case had led to the most alarming results. The fever had turned to typhus.

I had myself previously recommended sending for advice to London. This course had been now taken. The physician, on his arrival, confirmed my view of the case. The crisis was serious. But we had hope of our charming patient on the fifth day from the appearance of the typhus. Five days afterwards the physician pronounced our interesting Marian to be out of all danger, and to be in need of nothing but careful nursing. This was the time I had waited for. Now that medical attendance was no longer indispensable, I played the first move in the game by asserting myself against the doctor. He was one among many witnesses in my way whom it was necessary to remove. A lively altercation between us (in which Percival, previously instructed by me, refused to interfere) served the purpose in view. I descended on the miserable man in an irresistible avalanche of indignation, and swept him from the house.

The servants were the next encumbrances to get rid of. Again I instructed Percival (whose moral courage required perpetual stimulants), and Mrs. Michelson was amazed, one day, by hearing from her master that the establishment was to be broken up. We cleared the house of all the servants but one, who was kept for domestic purposes, and whose lumpish stupidity we could trust to make no embarrassing discoveries. When they were gone, nothing remained but to relieve ourselves of Mrs. Michelson—a result which was easily achieved by sending this amiable lady to find lodgings for her mistress at the seaside.

The circumstances were now exactly what they were required to be. Lady Glyde was confined to her room by nervous illness, and the lumpish housemaid (I forget her name) was shut up there at night in attendance on her mistress. Marian, though fast recovering, still kept her bed, with Mrs. Rubelle for nurse. No other living creature but my wife, myself, and Percival were in the house. With all the chances thus in our favour I confronted the next emergency, and played the second move in the game.

The object of the second move was to induce Lady Glyde to leave Blackwater unaccompanied by her sister. Unless we could persuade her that Marian had gone on to Cumberland first, there was no chance of removing her, of her own free will, from the house. To produce this necessary operation in her mind, we concealed our interesting invalid in one of the uninhabited bedrooms at Blackwater.

The next morning my wife and I started for London, leaving Marian secluded, in the uninhabited middle of the house, under care of Madame Rubelle, who kindly consented to imprison herself with her patient for two or three days. Before taking our departure I gave Percival Mr. Fairlie's letter of invitation to his niece (instructing her to sleep on the journey to Cumberland at her aunt's house), with directions to show it to Lady Glyde on hearing from me. I also obtained from him the address of the Asylum in which Anne Catherick had been confined, and a letter to the proprietor, announcing to that gentleman the return of his runaway patient to medical care.

I had arranged, at my last visit to the metropolis, to have our modest domestic establishment ready to receive us when we arrived in London by the early train. In consequence of this wise precaution, we were enabled that same day to play the third move in the game—the getting possession of Anne Catherick.

Dates are of importance here.

On Wednesday, the 24th of July, 1850, I sent my wife in a cab to clear Mrs. Clements out of the way, in the first place. A supposed message from Lady Glyde in London was sufficient to obtain this result. Mrs. Clements was taken away in the cab, and was left in the cab, while my wife (on pretence of purchasing something at a shop) gave her the slip, and returned to receive her expected visitor at our house in St. John's Wood. It is hardly necessary to add that the visitor had been described to the servants as "Lady Glyde."

In the meanwhile I had followed in another cab, with a note for Anne Catherick, merely mentioning that Lady Glyde intended to keep Mrs. Clements to spend the day with her, and that she was to join them under care of the good gentleman waiting outside, who had already saved her from discovery in Hampshire by Sir Percival. The "good gentleman" sent in this note by a street boy, and paused for results a door or two farther on. At the moment when Anne appeared at the house door and closed it this excellent man had the cab door open ready for her, absorbed her into the vehicle, and drove off.

On the way to Forest Road my companion showed no fear. I can be paternal—no man more so—when I please, and I was intensely paternal on this occasion. What titles I had to her confidence! I had compounded the medicine which had done her good—I had warned her of her danger from Sir Perci[val]

too implicitly to these titles—perhaps I underrated the keenness of the lower instincts in persons of weak intellect—it is certain that I neglected to prepare her sufficiently for a disappointment on entering my house. When I took her into the drawing-room—when she saw no one present but Madame Fosco, who was a stranger to her—she exhibited the most violent agitation; if she had scented danger in the air as a dog scents the presence of some creature unseen, her alarm could not have displayed itself more suddenly and more causelessly. I interposed in vain. The fear from which she was suffering I might have soothed, but the serious heart-disease, under which she laboured, was beyond the reach of all moral palliatives. To my unspeakable horror she was seized with convulsions—a shock to the system, in her condition, which might have laid her dead at any moment at our feet.

The nearest doctor was sent for, and was told that "Lady Glyde" required his immediate services. To my infinite relief, he was a capable man. I represented my visitor to him as a person of weak intellect, and subject to delusions, and I arranged that no nurse but my wife should watch in the sick-room. The unhappy woman was too ill, however, to cause any anxiety about what she might say. The one dread which now oppressed me was the dread that the false Lady Glyde might die before the true Lady Glyde arrived in London.

I had written a note in the morning to Madame Rubelle, telling her to join me at her husband's house on the evening of Friday the 26th, with another note to Percival, warning him to show his wife her uncle's letter of invitation, to assert that Marian had gone on before her, and to dispatch her to town by the midday train, on the 26th, also. On reflection I had felt the necessity, in Anne Catherick's state of health, of precipitating events, and of having Lady Glyde at my disposal earlier than I had originally contemplated. What fresh directions, in the terrible uncertainty of my position, could I now issue? I could do nothing but trust to chance and the doctor.

She passed a bad night, she awoke worn out, but later in the day she revived amazingly. My elastic spirits revived with her. I could receive no answers from Percival and Madame Rubelle till the morning of the next day, the 26th. In anticipation of their following my directions, which, accident apart, I knew they would do, I went to secure a fly to fetch Lady Glyde from the railway, directing it to be at my house on the 26th, at two o'clock. After seeing the order entered in the book, I went on to arrange matters with Monsieur Rubelle. I also procured the services of two gentlemen who could furnish me with the necessary certificates of lunacy. One of them I knew personally—the other was known

Rubelle.

'clock in the afternoon before I returned from the performance of these duties. When I got back Anne Catherick was dead—dead on the 25th, and Lady Glyde was not to arrive in London till the 26th!

I was stunned. Meditate on that. Fosco stunned!

It was too late to retrace our steps. Before my return the doctor had officiously undertaken to save me all trouble by registering the death, on the date when it happened, with his own hand. My grand scheme, unassailable hitherto, had its weak place now—no efforts on my part could alter the fatal event of the 25th. I turned manfully to the future. Percival's interests and mine being still at stake, nothing was left but to play the game through to the end. I recalled my impenetrable calm—and played it.

On the morning of the 26th Percival's letter reached me, announcing his wife's arrival by the midday train. Madame Rubelle also wrote to say she would follow in the evening. I started in the fly, leaving the false Lady Glyde dead in the house, to receive the true Lady Glyde, on her arrival by the railway at three o'clock. Hidden under the seat of the carriage, I carried with me all the clothes Anne Catherick had worn on coming into my house—they were destined to assist the resurrection of the woman who was dead in the person of the woman who was living.

Lady Glyde was at the station. There was great crowding and confusion, and more delay than I liked (in case any of her friends had happened to be on the spot), in reclaiming her luggage. Her first questions, as we drove off, implored me to tell her news of her sister. I invented news of the most pacifying kind, assuring her that she was about to see her sister at my house. My house, on this occasion only, was in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, and was in the occupation of Monsieur Rubelle.

I took my visitor upstairs into a back room, the two medical gentlemen being there in waiting on the floor beneath to see the patient, and to give me their certificates. After quieting Lady Glyde by the necessary assurances about her sister, I introduced my friends separately to her presence. They performed the formalities of the occasion briefly, intelligently, conscientiously. I entered the room again as soon as they had left it, and at once precipitated events by a reference of the alarming kind to "Miss Halcombe's" state of health.

Results followed as I had anticipated. Lady Glyde became frightened, and turned faint. For the second time, and the last, I called Science to my assistance. A medicated glass of water and a medicated bottle of smelling-salts relieved her of all further embarrassment and alarm. Additional applications later in the evening procured her the inestimable blessing of a good night's rest. Madame Rubelle arrived in time to preside at Lady Glyde's toilet. Her own clothes were taken away from her at night, and

(Continued on page 146.)

68 feels 30

In 1925 this man had been ill for 5 years; suffered from lassitude, could not sleep, thought he was going to die. He then tried Kruschen. Now read what he says:—

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25th June, 1928. *A. P. BEAUCHEMIN, Court's Official Stenographer, Montreal.*

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Anne Catherick's were put on her in the morning, with the strictest regard to propriety, by the matronly hands of the good Rubelle. Throughout the day I kept our patient in a state of partially-suspended consciousness, until the dexterous assistance of my medical friends enabled me to procure the necessary order rather earlier than I had ventured to hope. That evening (the evening of the 27th) Madame Rubelle and I took our revived " Anne Catherick " to the Asylum. She was received with great surprise, but without suspicion, thanks to the order and certificates, to Percival's letter, to the likeness, to the clothes, and to the patient's own confused mental condition at the time. I returned at once to assist Madame Fosco in the preparations for the burial of the false " Lady Glyde," having the clothes and luggage of the true " Lady Glyde " in my possession. They were afterwards sent to Cumberland by the conveyance which was used for the funeral. I attended the funeral, with becoming dignity, attired in the deepest mourning.

* * * * *

My narrative of these remarkable events, written under equally remarkable circumstances, closes here. The minor precautions which I observed in communicating with Limmeridge House are already known, so is the magnificent success of my enterprise, so are the solid pecuniary results which followed it. I have to assert, with the whole force of my conviction, that the one weak place in my scheme would never have been found out if the one weak place in my heart had not been discovered first. Nothing but my fatal admiration for Marian restrained me from stepping into my own rescue when she effected her sister's escape. I ran the risk, and trusted in the complete destruction of Lady Glyde's identity. If either Marian or Mr. Hartright attempted to assert that identity, they would publicly expose themselves to the imputation of sustaining a rank deception, they would be distrusted and discredited accordingly, and they would therefore be powerless to place my interests or Percival's secret in jeopardy. I committed one error in trusting myself to such a blindfold calculation of chances as this. I committed another when Percival had paid the penalty of his own obstinacy and violence, by granting Lady Glyde a second reprieve from the madhouse, and allowing Mr. Hartright a second chance of escaping me. In brief, Fosco, at this serious crisis, was untrue to himself. Deplorable and uncharacteristic fault ! Behold the cause, in my heart ; behold, in the image of Marian Halcombe, the first and last weakness of Fosco's life !

A word more, and the attention of the reader (concentrated breathlessly on myself) shall be released.

On a calm revision of all the circumstances—Is my conduct worthy of any serious blame ? Most emphatically, No ! Have I not carefully avoided exposing myself to the odium of committing unnecessary crime ? With my vast resources in chemistry, I might have taken Lady Glyde's life. At immense personal sacrifice I followed the dictates of my own ingenuity, my own humanity, my own caution, and took her identity instead. Judge me by what I might have done. How comparatively innocent, how indirectly virtuous I appear in what I really did !

I announced on beginning it that this narrative would be a remarkable document. It has entirely answered my expectations. Receive these fervid lines—my last legacy to the country I leave for ever. They are worthy of the occasion, and worthy of Fosco.

The Story concluded by WALTER HARTRIGHT.

IN a quarter of an hour after leaving Forest Road I was at home again. But few words sufficed to tell Laura and Marian how my desperate venture had ended, and what the next event in our lives was likely to be. I left all details to be described later in the day, and hastened back to St. John's Wood, to see the person of whom Count Fosco had ordered the fly, when he went to meet Laura at the station.

The address in my possession led me to some " livery stables," about a quarter of a mile distant from Forest Road. The proprietor proved to be a civil and respectable man. When I explained that an important family matter obliged me to ask him to refer to his books for the purpose of ascertaining a date with which the record of his business transactions might supply me, he offered no objection to granting my request. The book was produced, and there, under the date of " July 26th, 1850," the order was entered in these words :

" Brougham to Count Fosco, 5, Forest Road. Two o'clock. (John Owen.)

I found on inquiry that the name of " John Owen," attached to the entry, referred to the man who had been employed to drive the fly. He was then at work in the stable-yard, and was sent for to see me at my request.

" Do you remember driving a gentleman, in the month of July last, from Number Five Forest Road to the Waterloo Bridge station ? "

" Well, sir," said the man, " I can't exactly say I do."

" Perhaps you remember the gentleman himself ? Can you call to mind driving a foreigner last summer—a tall gentleman and remarkably fat ? " The man's face brightened directly.

" I remember him, sir ! The fattest gentleman as ever I see, and the heaviest customer as ever I drove. Yes, yes—I call him to mind, sir ! We *did* go to the station, and it *was* from Forest Road. There was a parrot, or summat like it, screeching in the window. The gentleman was in a mortal hurry about the lady's luggage, and he gave me a handsome present for looking sharp and getting the boxes."

(Continued on page 148.)

SPOTS GONE

—*Thanks to Wex*

This lady's letter tells you how easy it is to get rid of spots and pimples and to improve your health at the same time. Read what she says:

"I think Wex is wonderful, and what's more, I shall never be without it now. What a delicious drink, and what surprising results! No more pimply and spotty faces as before. I can eat almost anything now, and every part of the day too. I enjoy a good night's sleep and get up early in the morning feeling fit to tackle any work, and plenty of it. I never feel tired or depressed now, my friends all want to know 'Why?' It is all thanks to Wex. I feel a different girl now. No more heartburn, indigestion or bilious headaches, not even attacks of violent cramp that used to terrify me. I have advised all my friends to try Wex and would like to advise others who I know will find it most beneficial.

"15*th June*, 1928. (*Miss*) *N.A*"

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Getting the boxes! I recollected immediately that Laura's own account of herself on her arrival in London, described her luggage as being collected for her by some person whom Count Fosco brought with him to the station. This was the man.

"Did you see the lady?" I asked. "What did she look like? Was she young or old?"

"Well, sir, what with the hurry and the crowd of people pushing about, I can't rightly say what the lady looked like. I can't call nothing to mind about her that I know of—excepting her name."

"You remember her name!"

"Yes, sir. Her name was Lady Glyde."

An arrangement to compensate him for the temporary loss of the man's services was easily made, and a copy of the entry in the book was taken by myself, and certified as true by the master's own signature. I left the livery stables, having settled that John Owen was to hold himself at my disposal for the next three days, or for a longer period if necessity required it.

I now had in my possession all the papers that I wanted—the district registrar's own copy of the certificate of death, and Sir Percival's dated letter to the Count, being safe in my pocket-book.

With this written evidence about me, and with the coachman's answers fresh in my memory, I next turned my steps, for the first time since the beginning of all my inquiries, in the direction of Mr. Kyrle's office. One of my objects in paying him this second visit was, necessarily, to tell him what I had done. The other was to warn him of my resolution to take my wife to Limmeridge the next morning, and to have her publicly received and recognized in her uncle's house. I left it to Mr. Kyrle to decide under these circumstances, and in Mr. Gilmore's absence, whether he was or was not bound, as the family solicitor, to be present on that occasion in the family interests.

I will say nothing of Mr. Kyrle's amazement, or of the terms in which he expressed his opinion of my conduct from the first stage of the investigation to the last. It is only necessary to mention that he at once decided on accompanying us to Cumberland.

We started the next morning by the early train—Laura, Marian, Mr. Kyrle, and myself in one carriage, and John Owen, with a clerk from Mr. Kyrle's office, occupying places in another. On reaching the Limmeridge station we went first to the farmhouse at Todd's Corner. It was my firm determination that Laura should not enter her uncle's house till she appeared there publicly recognized as his niece. I left Marian to settle the question of accommodation with Mrs. Todd, as soon as the good woman had recovered from the bewilderment of hearing what our errand was in Cumberland, and I arranged with her husband that John Owen was to be committed to the ready hospitality of the farm-servants. These preliminaries completed, Mr. Kyrle and I set forth together for Limmeridge House.

Mr. Fairlie attempted to treat us on his customary plan. We passed without notice his polite insolence at the outset of the interview. We heard without sympathy the protestations with which he tried next to persuade us that the disclosure of the conspiracy had overwhelmed him. He absolutely whined and whimpered at last like a fretful child. "How was he to know that his niece was alive when he was told that she was dead? He would welcome dear Laura with pleasure, if we would only allow him time to recover. Did we think he looked as if he wanted hurrying into his grave. No. Then why hurry him?" He reiterated these remonstrances at every available opportunity, until I checked them once for all, by placing him firmly between two inevitable alternatives. I gave him his choice between doing his niece justice on my terms, or facing the consequence of a public assertion of her existence in a court of law. Mr. Kyrle, to whom he turned for help, told him plainly that he must decide the question then and there. Characteristically choosing the alternative which promised soonest to release him from all personal anxiety, he announced, with a sudden outburst of energy, that he was not strong enough to bear any more bullying, and that we might do as we pleased.

Mr. Kyrle and I at once went downstairs, and agreed upon a form of letter which was to be sent round to the tenants who had attended the false funeral, summoning them, in Mr. Fairlie's name, to assemble in Limmeridge House on the next day but one. An order referring to the same date was also written, directing a statuary in Carlisle to send a man to Limmeridge churchyard for the purpose of erasing an inscription—Mr. Kyrle, who had arranged to sleep in the house, undertaking that Mr. Fairlie should hear these letters read to him, and should sign them with his own hand.

My last labour, as the evening approached, was to obtain "The Narrative of the Tombstone," by taking a copy of the false inscription on the grave before it was erased.

¶

TWO more events remain to be added to the chain before it reaches fairly from the outset of the story to the close.

While our new sense of freedom from the long oppression of the past was still strange to us, I was sent for by the friend who had given me my first employment in wood engraving, to receive from him a fresh testimony of his regard for my welfare. He had been commissioned by his employers to go to Paris, and to examine for them a fresh discovery in the practical application of his Art, the merits of which they were anxious

(Continued on page 150.)

Remove Corns
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Have so-called corn "cures" made you sceptical of real relief from corns? If so, read the letter of this user. He could not believe that Radox would remove corns—until he put his feet in a Radox foot-bath. Then out came a very bad corn, root and all, at the very first attempt. Here is his letter:—

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6th August, 1928. *E.W., Hull.*

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to ascertain. His own engagements had not allowed him leisure time to undertake the errand, and he had most kindly suggested that it should be transferred to me.

My journey to Paris was not undertaken alone. At the eleventh hour Pesca decided that he would accompany me. He had not recovered his customary cheerfulness since the night at the Opera, and he determined to try what a week's holiday would do to raise his spirits.

I performed the errand entrusted to me, and drew out the necessary report, on the fourth day from our arrival in Paris. The fifth day I arranged to devote to sight-seeing and amusements in Pesca's company.

Our hotel had been too full to accommodate us both on the same floor. My room was on the second story, and Pesca's was above me, on the third. On the morning of the fifth day I went upstairs to see if the Professor was ready to go out. Just before I reached the landing I saw his door opened from the inside; a long, delicate, nervous hand (not my friend's hand certainly) held it ajar. At the same time I heard Pesca's voice saying eagerly, in low tones, and in his own language, "I remember the name, but I don't know the man. You saw at the Opera he was so changed that I could not recognize him. I will forward the report—I can do no more." "No more need be done," answered a second voice. The door opened wide, and the light-haired man with the scar on his cheek—the man I had seen following Count Fosco's cab a week before—came out. He bowed as I drew aside to let him pass—his face was fearfully pale—and he held fast by the banisters as he descended the stairs.

I pushed open the door and entered Pesca's room. He was crouched up, in the strangest manner, in a corner of the sofa. He seemed to shrink from me when I approached him.

"Am I disturbing you?" I asked. "I did not know you had a friend with you till I saw him come out."

"No friend," said Pesca eagerly. "I see him to-day for the first time and the last."

"I am afraid he has brought you bad news?"

"Horrible news, Walter! Let us go back to London—I don't want to stop here—I am sorry I ever came. The misfortunes of my youth are very hard upon me," he said, turning his face to the wall, "very hard upon me in my later time. I try to forget them—and they will not forget *me!*"

"We can't return, I am afraid, before the afternoon," I replied. "Would you like to come out with me in the meantime?"

"No, my friend, I will wait here. But let us go back to-day—pray let us go back."

I left him with the assurance that he should leave Paris that afternoon. We had arranged the evening before to ascend the Cathedral of Notre Dame, with Victor Hugo's noble romance for our guide. There was nothing in the French capital that I was more anxious to see, and I departed by myself for the church.

Approaching Notre Dame by the riverside, I passed on my way the terrible deadhouse of Paris—the Morgue. A great crowd clamoured and heaved round the door. There was evidently something inside which excited the popular curiosity, and fed the popular appetite for horror.

I should have walked on to the church if the conversation of two men and a woman on the outskirts of the crowd had not caught my ear. They had just come out from seeing the sight in the Morgue, and the account they were giving of the dead body to their neighbours described it as the corpse of a man—a man of immense size, with a strange mark on his left arm.

The moment those words reached me I stopped and took my place with the crowd going in. Some dim foreshadowing of the truth had crossed my mind when I heard Pesca's voice through the open door, and when I saw the stranger's face as he passed me on the stairs of the hotel. Now the truth itself was revealed to me—revealed in the chance words that had just reached my ears. Other vengeance than mine had followed that fated man from the theatre to his own door—from his own door to his refuge in Paris. Other vengeance than mine had called him to the day of reckoning, and had exacted from him the penalty of his life. The moment when I had pointed him out to Pesca at the theatre in the hearing of that stranger by our side, who was looking for him too, was the moment that sealed his doom. I remembered the struggle in my own heart, when he and I stood face to face—the struggle before I could let him escape me—and shuddered as I recalled it.

Slowly, inch by inch, I pressed in with the crowd, moving nearer and nearer to the great glass screen that parts the dead from the living at the Morgue—nearer and nearer, till I was close behind the front row of spectators, and could look in.

There he lay, unowned, unknown, exposed to the flippant curiosity of a French mob! There was the dreadful end of that long life of degraded ability and heartless crime! Hushed in the sublime repose of death, the broad, firm, massive face and head fronted us so grandly that the chattering Frenchwomen about me lifted their hands in admiration, and cried in shrill chorus, "Ah, what a handsome man!" The wound that had killed him had been struck with a knife or dagger exactly over his heart. No other traces of violence appeared about the body except on the left arm, and there, exactly in the place where I had seen the brand on Pesca's arm, were two deep cuts in the shape of the letter T, which entirely obliterated the mark of the Brotherhood. His clothes, hung above him, showed that he had been himself conscious of his danger—they were clothes that had disguised him as a French

(*Continued on page 152.*)

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artisan. For a few moments, but not for longer, I forced myself to see these things through the glass screen. I can write of them at no greater length, for I saw no more.

The few facts in connection with his death which I subsequently ascertained (partly from Pesca and partly from other sources) may be stated here before the subject is dismissed from these pages.

His body was taken out of the Seine in the disguise which I have described, nothing being found on him which revealed his name, his rank, or his place of abode. The hand that struck him was never traced, and the circumstances under which he was killed were never discovered. I leave others to draw their own conclusions in reference to the secret of the assassination as I have drawn mine. When I have intimated that the foreigner with the scar was a member of the Brotherhood (admitted in Italy after Pesca's departure from his native country), and when I have further added that the two cuts, in the form of a T, on the left arm of the dead man, signified the Italian word "Traditore," and showed that justice had been done by the Brotherhood on a traitor, I have contributed all that I know towards elucidating the mystery of Count Fosco's death.

¶

IN the February of the new year our first child was born—a son. My mother and sister and Mrs. Vesey were our guests at the little christening party, and Mrs. Clements was present to assist my wife on the same occasion. Marian was our boy's godmother, and Pesca and Mr. Gilmore (the latter acting by proxy) were his godfathers.

The only event in our lives which now remains to be recorded occurred when our little Walter was six months old.

At that time I was sent to Ireland to make sketches for certain forthcoming illustrations in the newspaper to which I was attached. I was away for nearly a fortnight, corresponding regularly with my wife and Marian, except during the last three days of my absence, when my movements were too uncertain to enable me to receive letters. I performed the latter part of my journey back at night, and when I reached home in the morning, to my utter astonishment there was no one to receive me. Laura and Marian and the child had left the house on the day before my return.

A note from my wife, which was given to me by the servant, only increased my surprise, by informing me that they had gone to Limmeridge House. Marian had prohibited any attempt at written explanations—I was entreated to follow them the moment I came back—complete enlightenment awaited me on my arrival in Cumberland—and I was forbidden to feel the slightest anxiety in the meantime. There the note ended. It was still early enough to catch the morning train. I reached Limmeridge House the same afternoon.

My wife and Marian were both upstairs. They had established themselves (by way of completing my amazement) in the little room which had been once assigned to me for a studio, when I was employed on Mr. Fairlie's drawings. On the very chair which I used to occupy when I was at work Marian was sitting now, with the child industriously sucking his coral upon her lap; while Laura was standing by the well-remembered drawing-table which I had so often used, with the little album that I had filled for her in past times open under her hand.

"What in the name of heaven has brought you here?" I asked. "Does Mr. Fairlie know——?"

Marian suspended the question on my lips by telling me that Mr. Fairlie was dead. He had been struck by paralysis, and had never rallied after the shock. Mr. Kyrle had informed them of his death, and had advised them to proceed immediately to Limmeridge House.

Some dim perception of a great change dawned on my mind. Laura spoke before I had quite realized it. She stole close to me to enjoy the surprise which was still expressed in my face.

"My darling Walter," she said, "must we really account for our boldness in coming here? I am afraid, love, I can only explain it by breaking through our rule, and referring to the past."

"There is not the least necessity for doing anything of the kind," said Marian. "We can be just as explicit, and much more interesting, by referring to the future." She rose and held up the child kicking and crowing in her arms. "Do you know who this is, Walter?" she asked, with bright tears of happiness gathering in her eyes.

"Even *my* bewilderment has its limits," I replied. "I think I can still answer for knowing my own child."

"Child!" she exclaimed, with all her easy gaiety of old times. "Do you talk in that familiar manner of one of the landed gentry of England? Are you aware, when I present this illustrious baby to your notice, in whose presence you stand? Evidently not! Let me make two eminent personages known to one another: Mr. Walter Hartright—*the Heir of Limmeridge*."

* * * * *

So she spoke. In writing those last words I have written all. The pen falters in my hand. The long, happy labour of many months is over. Marian was the good angel of our lives; let Marian end our Story.

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