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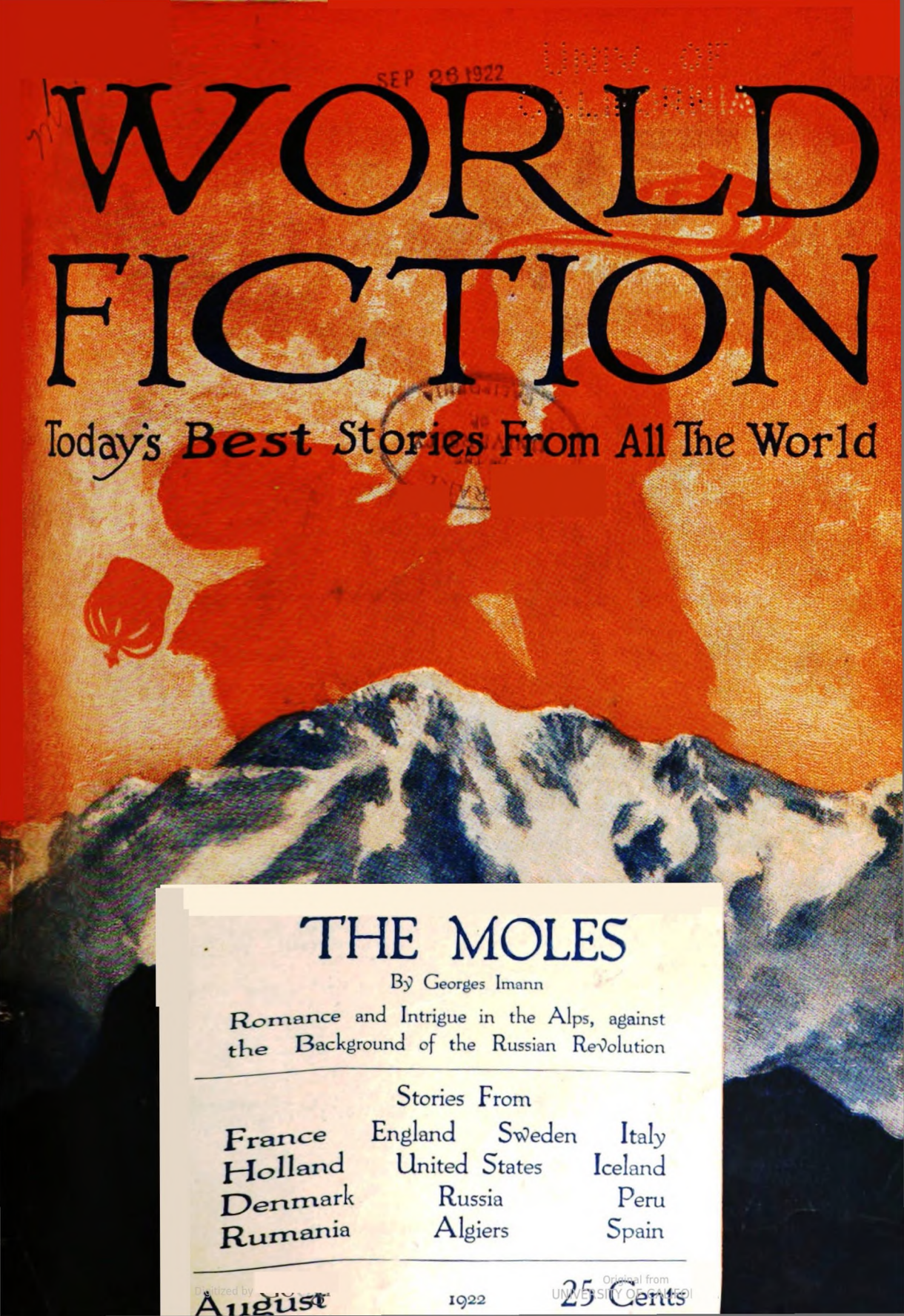

THE MOLES

By Georges Imann

Romance and Intrigue in the Alps, against the Background of the Russian Revolution

Stories From

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WORLD FICTION

Today's Best Stories from All the World

HERBERT S. HOUSTON, *Publisher*

HARRIET V. WISHNIEFF, *Editor* HARALD TOKSVIG, *Associate Editor*

CONTENTS *for* AUGUST, 1922

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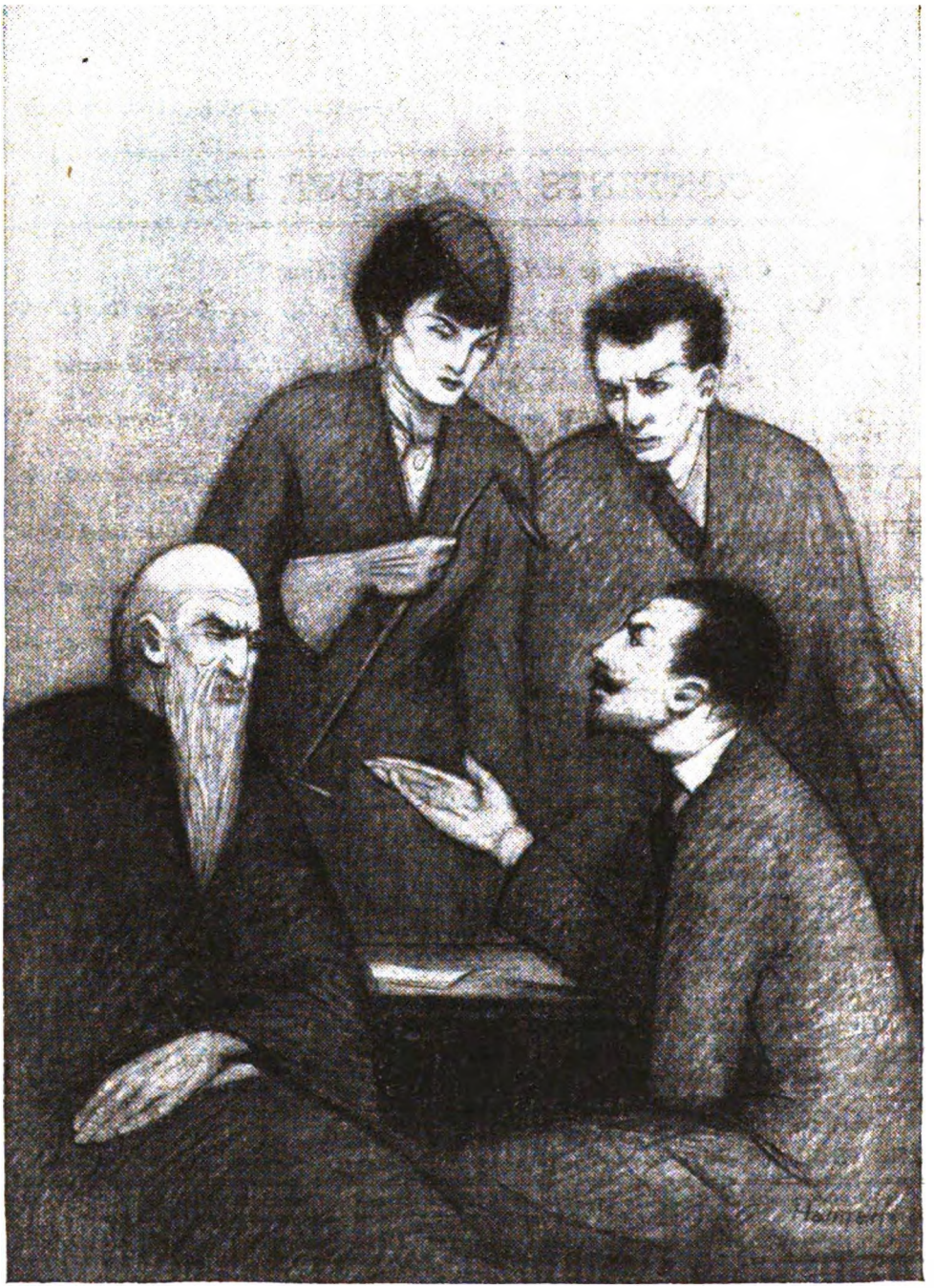


" . . . we shall have the gendarmes here within an hour"
—"The Moles", page 15

WORLD FICTION

Today's Best Stories From All The World

VOL. I AUGUST, 1922 NO. 1

The Moles

By

GEORGES IMANN

From the French by W. L. McPherson

The interesting young author of our first serial, "The Moles" (published under the title "Les Nocturnes"), was born in 1889 in Marseilles. He studied for the bar, but very soon his literary inclinations took precedence over his profession.

A unique opportunity for learning the Slav character, which he has so admirably depicted in "The Moles," was afforded him in the three years he spent in a German prison camp where the majority of the other prisoners were Russians. During his subsequent convalescence in Geneva he had a chance to observe there the machinations of international intrigue, and the development of the plans for the Bolshevist Revolution.

"The Moles" (Les Nocturnes) lacked only one vote to receive the 1921 Goncourt prize for the best novel of the year in France.

FOREWORD

TO leave one's house, to return to it, to follow one street in preference to another, to accept or refuse an invitation may be acts as pregnant in consequences as the Battle of Pharsalia, the discovery of America or the invention of gunpowder.

I firmly believe that the greatest effects flow from the slightest causes, and Pascal was ten times right in giving to Cleopatra's nose its due historical significance. The fatalists teach us a subtle resignation. I agree with them and am, in my way, a fatalist. Nevertheless, I do not think that everything was written from all eternity. I prefer to consider events as the logical consequences of our acts. This opinion, in the first place, flatters our vanity, in that it makes us resemble divine Pandoras, carrying with us human good and evil. In the second place, however paradoxical such a statement may appear, this redoubtable possession does not imply responsibility on our part. We act in accordance with the law of perpetual ricochet.

For example. The Supreme Being might be perfectly oblivious of the fact that on August 2, 1914, Bethmann-Hollweg fired a powder magazine by tearing up a "scrap of paper." That act, however, was the logical consequence of a very similar act a half century earlier, when Bismarck signed another scrap of paper at the Swan Hotel in Frankfort. Many people will agree with me on this point, who would

not accord any determinative value to some other anterior cause, although equally significant. Nevertheless, may one not affirm that the day the future Iron Chancellor, then three years old, almost choked on a fishbone and owed his life to the prompt intervention of his nurse, who thrust her two fingers down his throat, the future status of Europe was virtually settled?

For my part I owe to this malign nurse the active rôle I played in the destiny of the Empire of the Czars and the lesson of love I received, a certain night in October, under the lindens of the Ariana, which, more than all the German intrigues, awakened me to a profound realization of the great sadness of our time.

PART FIRST

CHAPTER I

THAT morning, a Saturday and the first day of the Jewish year, Ouritzky, the Russian grocer of the Rue de Carouge, put on his sabbatical cloak with its velvet collar, and his ceremonial high hat, and took his way to the synagogue.

The grocery shop, swept, scrubbed, cleaned, according to terms of the Law, to the last speck, was as neat and shining as a Dutch interior. A reddish autumn sun, filtering in through the shutter cracks, illuminated the paunch-bellied stone jars, gave an added polish to the enamelled bottles, lingered lazily on the beam of the scales and on the cylindrical brass weights, ranged, two by two, in a box on the counter. Whether it was the charm of this restful vision or the joy of being able once more, in spite of his seventy-two years, to don the soiled cloak and the ceremonial silk hat—never had the old man started in a more cheerful mood to the much-loved synagogue.

He walked, his feet well apart, like a good Jew, chewing olive pits to relieve his hunger (it was the period of the great fast), occupied especially in not deviating for an instant from his path, for it is written that the servant of Israel shall take on these days no superfluous step, shall abstain from all vain words, from all discussion and all business —rigorous precepts which the most devout marvels that he always observes.

The synagogue lifted its walls, on the margin of the plain of Plainpalais, in the midst of a modest little square, planted with trees.

Seeing it, the old Ouritzky felt a spontaneous thrill of tenderness, as when one greets a friend from afar. He straightened up proudly, almost authoritatively, as he entered its sacred shadow.

Had he, moreover, not a right to be proud? Men might be slaughtering one another for the last two years. Yet the Temple of the Lord still opened its doors, the Theba sheltered the sacred writings, the candle of the Exodus stood beside the Veil, and when, in a few minutes, Samuel Eli Kahn, rabbi of Geneva, should cry out with tragic fervor: "O Lord God Almighty, God of Jacob and of Moses, suffer us not to perish!" all Israel would join him, but with the joyful certitude that Israel would not perish.

The door of the synagogue opened, revealing to the old man the bee-hive activities within. A beautiful day of Tisri, indeed—the most beautiful, perhaps, that he had ever seen.

He glanced over the assemblage.

All the Jews were there. It even seemed that they had come in greater numbers this year, as if to affirm more strongly at a moment when the

fate of the world was at stake, their unshakeable attachment to the unique nation, the universal Zion, which they represented. In this light it was necessary to look at them.

Congregated elbow to elbow, shoulder to shoulder, fraternally united and mingled, were wanderers from the four quarters of the globe, whom the war had driven to the same oasis, this neutral and hospitable Switzerland, where their shabby mass contrasted strangely with the sleek tourists of other days.

The prayer began at a sign from the master of ceremonies. It was first a plaintive chant, modulated to a low scale, which gradually became stronger and fuller, and broke presently into a wail of anguish, punctuated by sobs and imprecations.

On the threshold of the new year Israel laid its tribulations before the Lord. For twenty centuries the synagogues had echoed to these groanings, but never had the complaints been formulated with such insistence—never, as in these days of the war, had the Jews realized so intensely with what terrifying truths the voice of the Psalmist was weighted.

Had they not, in fact, wandered like lost sheep—these Galicians, whom the Russian hordes drove before them; these Poles, fleeing the German soldiery; these merchants of Bessarabia, still affrighted by the terrors of the last pogrom, escaping only by exile the massacres with which a crumbling Czardom masked the failures of its armies and distracted a people disheartened by too many defeats and betrayals?

For a moment the synagogue was nothing but a nave of distress, a Gehenna of desolation. But the master of ceremonies made a new sign and started another verse. A miracle! The lamentations ceased, the tears dried up, the voices became firmer. As the branches of a tree, bent by a storm, straighten up when the tempest passes, the notes became more vibrant, clearer, warmer, and in the assurance of future glory, the certainty of triumph, the joyous hosanna burst forth.

'Blessed be the Lord, who has not delivered us to the fangs of the enemy. Like a sparrow our soul has been snatched from the snare of the fowler.'

'Yea, be ye joyful, exult, O Israel, praise the Eternal with lyre and zither! Even in exile ye remain the object of His favor!'

His eyes straying over the throng, the old Ouritzky observed and remembered.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In order to avoid all misunderstanding I wish to state that this is not a key novel. It would be perfectly useless to try to unmask its characters or to determine what personages in the cosmopolitan world of Geneva come closest to the types which I have drawn.

I do not deny that the work is based largely on facts, nor even say that it is not an exact as possible picture of life abroad during the war. But the setting which I have chosen, for reasons which interest no one but myself, must be considered purely accidental and imaginary.

Moreover, the members of the French and Allied diplomatic service who were stationed in Geneva from 1914 to 1918 are honorably enough known not to take umbrage at what might seem malevolent allusions.

In short, let us say that "The Moles" has for its theatre an imaginary city in a neutral country, on the border of some lake in the twenty cantons.

This ubiquity does not in any way weaken the story's authenticity. Quite the contrary.

G. I.

What an astonishing people, what an admirable people, this people of his! They were but a handful twenty years ago, this same day of Tisri, 1896, when he had arrived in Geneva, leading by the hand his children, Rachel and Ephraim, snatched from the pogrom in Odessa. They were three hundred the following year. Then they grew to a thousand, to two thousand, to three thousand. To-day they numbered ten thousand.

They already occupied Carouge and Plainpalais. Their shops, with picturesque signs, were huddled there in a promiscuity much like that of a ghetto. The fathers had begun as modest traders. The sons had branched out more boldly. The slow work of infiltration had told and the Jewish population now extended to the borders of the Corraterie, and to the edges of the lake, and encroached on the more pretentious commerce of the Rues Basses.

Oh! how superbly the chant of triumph echoed, how joyously it shook the vaulted roof, accompanied, as it was, by frenzied stampings, by crackling bravos, by all the uproar of an impatient mob, the irresistible excitement of a close-packed crowd.

"People, clap your hands, manifest your joy before God with shouts of gladness. He has brought the peoples beneath our sway! He has put the nations under our feet."

"No," thought the old Ouritzky and the others, "not yet! But though the world shake on its foundations, He will put them there. Blessed be His Name!"

As he left the synagogue a voice hailed him:

"Afanassi Nikiphorovitch!"

Ouritzky turned. It was Bel Patek.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Ouritzky was overjoyed to see Bel Patek. He had an instinctive hatred of free mannered people who accost you in the street, trouble your thoughts with vain words and make you off-hand business propositions. The big Hungarian was one of these. A talker, full of facile phrases, proud of counting among his ancestors a considerable number of rabbis, he always displayed the feigned bonhomie of the rich man, taking advantage of his frankness to ask a thousand impertinent questions, punctuating each of his perfidious insinuations with a guffaw, which made his heavy gold chain beat against his stomach like a ship's cable.

In the first place, why did he wear a chain of twenty-four carats? Even if one were a rich man like Bel Patek, the value of that gold chain, if put out at interest, would long since have doubled. And the thought of this capital lying idle was as painful to the old man as it would have been to some other man, for example, to see a masterpiece of art going to ruin through its owner's neglect.

"*Besitchem,* Afanassi Nikiphorovitch!"

"*Besitchem!*"

They bowed to each other.

"I am glad to see you," declared Bel Patek.

He took Ouritzky's arm familiarly.

"I am really very glad, I am more than glad, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch."

"It is too much honor for a poor man."

"Ta! Ta! Afanassi Nikiphorovitch. You call yourself a poor man!"

"What do you mean?"

"Ha! Ha!" laughed the Hungarian, and his gold chain began to

swing. "But let that pass. First, are you well? Are you sure that you are well? You look thin and pale."

He drew off a little to get a better view of the old man.

"Ah, of course! Afanassi, my good friend, can it be that you have been observing the great fast?"

Ouritzky smiled. This crafty fellow had touched his weakest spot. Express surprise to a Jew that he observes to the letter the precepts of his religion, or at the assiduity with which he attends the synagogue, tell him that you have seen him weep or heard him laugh distinctly at such or such a moment of the prayer—these are so many flattering remarks for which he will always be grateful to you.

The old man answered more cordially:

"Yes, I observe the fast, Bel Patek."

"At your age!"

"Yes, at my age."

Bel Patek took the old man's arm again.

"You are a saint, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch."

"Compared with you, Bel Patek, I am only an humble sinner."

They took a few steps.

"You are sure that I am not taking you out of your way?"

"I was going to ask you the same question."

"Our paths are the same," said the Hungarian sententiously.

"Moreover," he added, "is it not sweet to see two brethren walking side by side, on this beloved day of Tisri?"

"It is. May the Eternal bless you, Bel Patek."

"Praised be His name! May He protect you, Afanassi."

They cut across the plain, covered with thin grass which the romping children had trodden down. A rosy cloud floated above the Salève, the abrupt design of whose fortress could be made out beyond Champel.

"A beautiful time—Tisri," said Bel Patek.

Ouritzky did not answer. He found it unbecoming to pursue a vain conversation. Moreover, he might become involved in a discussion—whether, for example, to praise the clearness of the skies on a day of Tisri is a futile remark, or whether the admiration of a Divine work justifies such a comment.

On this subject there is no doubt that he could have talked for hours. But he preferred to hold his tongue, suspecting advances on the fat Bel Patek's part under which some business trickery might be concealed.

"At what do you figure the number of the faithful that gathered this morning? Would it not be a good thing to enlarge the synagogue? What would you say to the creation of an asylum for our refugee brethren?"

The Hungarian, as was his habit, bombarded Ouritzky with a thousand questions.

"What is he driving at?" thought the latter.

Bel Patek finally grew bolder. He scratched his nose, and plucked out two hairs which he stuck in his pocket, after carefully examining them.

"Afanassi Nikiphorovitch," he began, "I want to discuss a little matter with you."

The old Ouritzky's only answer was to pluck two hairs from a similar part of his anatomy, examine them and bury them in his cloak pocket.

"A little matter, you say? Do you think that I can listen to-day to this little matter?"

"Yes," replied Bel Patek.

"So be it!"

"Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, would you, in consideration of my old and sincere friendship, permit me to give you some advice?"

"One moment! You assure me that it has nothing to do with business?"

"As I tell you, it is a piece of advice."

"Then it is neither a question of money, nor a question of marriage."

"Would you believe that an old man like me. . . ?"

"You have a son, Bel Patek."

"And you a daughter. No, Afanassi, my dear friend, it concerns neither money nor marriage. It concerns. . ."

Bel Patek raised his arms to heaven as if to bear witness to the truth and honesty of his words.

"It concerns your safety, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch; it concerns your reputation."

If snow had fallen at that moment on Afanassi Nikiphorovitch's head, if Bel Patek had put in his hand the twenty-four karat chain, the old man could not have had a greater shock. He stammered:

"My reputation, my safety. . ."

"Alas! my poor Afanassi. And now listen and above all things don't interrupt me. You know—it is a public secret—that your compatriot—I speak now from the merely human point of view—that your compatriot, Prince Olebine, is ruined."

"Wait! Who told you that Prince Olebine is ruined?"

"Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, please don't interrupt me. I *know* that Olebine is ruined. Moreover, is it that one can throw money out of the windows, that he can entertain—at his age, old, ill and repulsive as he is—all the dancers in the city without slicing into his fortune in the end? I repeat to you, my good Afanassi, his roll is not only eaten into. It is practically gone. You follow me. . . ?"

Bel Patek made a telling pause.

"It is a secret to nobody—you will not contradict me—that you have advanced in two years. . ."

"What's that? What have I advanced?"

"That you have advanced 18,250 francs to his mistress."

"To Andrea Gonelle? You know nothing about it."

"Possibly. But you have just told me her name."

Ouritzky bit his lips.

"Let us see! Let us see!" Bel Patek went on with a protecting air, "since you have promised me to avoid all mystery."

He continued:

"How, in the Devil's name, could a man withdrawn from the world, a saintly man, a man like my dear Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, know the name of a girl like that, if not through having advanced her money? Ah! Ha! Ha!! Did I guess right?"

And Bel Patek burst into a loud laugh which made the heavy chain swing tempestuously.

"Let us admit that you speak the truth, Bel Patek."

"What do you mean, 'let us admit'? Am I a liar, then; am I an impostor; am I a counterfeiter?" cried the big man, turning red.

The discussion was losing its bearings. As always happens between Jews who pursue a serious conversation (and next to a controversy over some point of religion, what conversation could be more serious than one which involves a question of 18,250 francs?) it threatened to degenerate into a violent dispute.

Afanassi, being the poorer of the two, yielded.

"I didn't want to offend you, Bel Patek. But, even in the case you cite, what would I have to fear?"

"Why this," answered Bel Patek glacially. "Andrea is insolvent."

"I might have guarantees."

"Pooh!"

"Jewels, furs, a necklace."

"Have you a necklace?"

"I say, I might have a necklace."

"Pooh! Pooh! In the first place your client's reputation isn't very good. Ugly affairs, you know, encouraging minors to debauchery. She's an ancient vestal, Afanassi. There are proofs—letters, for instance. Ask your friend Medviedoff."

"They don't diminish the value of the necklace."

"Certainly not. So I don't make a case of the necklace. No, but this is just what I wanted to get at. Do you believe that, even if you have pledges in your possession, it will be easy for you to realize on them, when you. . . ?"

"When I what?"

"Come, you understand me?"

"I don't understand you."

Bel Patek rubbed his hands together.

"You will not deny, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, that you are under the suspicion of the police?"

"The police? I am under the suspicion of the police? Somebody is going to denounce me to the police?"

"That is Andrea's fixed intention. It is a case of give and take."

"But I don't hold her love letters."

"No, but in denouncing you she also accuses Medviedoff. I repeat, it is a case of give and take. There are frightful charges against you."

"Charges! There are charges!" stammered the old man.

In his emotion he began to lisp, recovering his beautiful Yiddish accent, which twenty years of Geneva had respected more than they had Olebine's fortune.

"Charges! There are charges!"

Bel Patek's mouth showed a smile of triumph.

"Yes, there are charges, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch. Besides accusing you of usury (have you not advanced Medviedoff 290 roubles at sixteen and half per cent?) doesn't everybody know that you have profiteered in butter on the Carouge market?"

"And you? said Ouritzky, gesticulating furiously, "haven't you endorsed notes for Andrea's minors? Denounce me to the police! But you will be denounced, perhaps, before I am, partner."

This time Bel Patek judged it prudent to calm the storm.

"Come, come, don't let us dispute. Have you forgot that to-day is the day of Tisri?"

"It is true," murmured Ouritzky, still almost breathless. "May the Eternal bless you, Bel Patek."

"Praised be His name! May he protect you, Afanassi."

They had reached the southern edge of the plain, at the end of the street in which Ouritzky's grocery stood. A crowd of students appeared, coming out of the streets leading to the Jardin des Bastions and the University.

They were Russians for the most part, guests forced on the faculty, taking summer courses so as to be able to hang on themselves after the autumn session one of those chimerical diplomas to which they looked forward in their dreams as the key to all paradises. They were talking noisily, and passing from hand to

hand the single newspaper, bought to-day by one, to-morrow by another, just as they had in common their books, their food, even their shoes and evening coat.

"Greetings, Afanassi Nikiphorovitch!" they cried in passing.

"Is there good news?" he asked.

"Yes . . yes . . good news."

Ouritzky, glowing with satisfaction, turned to Bel Patek. His smile seemed to say:

"Go ahead and attack a man who enjoys such consideration!"

Unmoved, the Hungarian continued:

"All this would be nothing; but there is more."

"Ah! there is more?"

"At your age it is useless to try to joke things off. You would laugh less, perhaps, if they accused you of receiving suspicious people in your house. Good! You don't protest any longer. It is true, all the same. Everybody is talking about it in the city. Afanassi Nikiphorovitch is a conspirator; Afanassi Nikiphorovitch harbors Medviedoff in his house; Afanassi's an anarchist centre; Afanassi circulates contraband pamphlets printed at Saint-Julien. I still refuse to believe it, but Andrea proclaims it to all-comers. In the Devil's name, at least be prudent. Olebine is the brother of a minister. And haven't you a son in the army?"

"Ephraim!" cried Ouritzky.

He lifted, as if in prayer, his poor trembling hands, his old hands worn by sixty years of labor. Ephraim! Ephraim! The only son who remained to him, the sole survivor of five, the other four slain in the pogrom, that frightful evening when, re-entering his shop, he had found them hanging from the rafters, along with his father, the old Nikiphore, whose beard had been plucked out, and Ruth, his wife, already cold.

Oh cruel, oh implacable Bel Patek! Had he not suffered enough in the last two years, awakened each night by the vision of that handsome boy, lying, in his bloody uniform, out there on the snows of the Carpathians or in the black mud of the fields of Poland? Must this accursed Hungarian come and evoke a nightmare still more atrocious—Ephraim expiating the sins of his father, expiring under the Cossack lash, Ephraim, his child, his flesh, the last hope of his old age, tied, with his eyes bound, to the stake: "Son of a spy!"

"Bel Patek! Bel Patek!"

The cry sounded strangely in the thin air of this mild autumn morning. A boy in the street stopped and looked around.

"Bel Patek!"

"Well, you aren't going to take it tragically, are you?" the other said with a grin. "Wasn't I right in saying that fasting didn't agree with you? It's your nerves, partner. Shall I help you or do you prefer to sit down, Afanassi?"

He was so calm, once more so like the joyous Bel Patek of the better days, that the sight of him gave Ouritzky fresh strength.

"No, thank you. I can walk," he mumbled.

"All that I am telling you is for your own good, my excellent friend," the Hungarian continued, "you are free to receive in your house those who it seems good to you to receive. I was speaking just now of Medviedoff. He is a young man whom I hold in high esteem, and who can assure us that he will not play an important rôle in the world some day? For whither we are going the Eternal (blessed be His name) alone can know."

"He alone knows, Bel Patek."

"Has not the Eternal announced that the times are near at hand when Zion will reign in her glory?"

"And our enemies will be overthrown."

"Exactly. But until that day we must be prudent. So, to come back to what concerns us, be on your guard against Andrea."

"Ah! that is true—Andrea," answered Ouritzky, again feigning indifference.

Apparently, Bel Patek must have considered that he had come to the delicate point of the discussion, for he began to stroke his beard and spat on his shoes.

"Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, why shouldn't you turn over to me your claims on Andrea?" (And without leaving the old man time to answer.) "I cover you. What more do you want? Take note that it is a good stroke of business—one of pure friendship also, Afanassi. There is no danger, moreover, that Andrea will play foul with me, that she will try to blackmail me. I have a recognized and honorable position—better than yours, if that is possible, and above all suspicion. Come, do you accept? Is it a bargain?"

They had arrived at the grocery. Outritzky was astonished to see the door ajar. Bel Patek remained on the edge of the sidewalk. He balanced himself on his short legs and smiled ingratiatingly.

"Is it a bargain?" he repeated.

The old Ouritzky shook his head. A speck of dust on the sleeve of his cloak seemed suddenly to absorb his attention. As he flicked it off with a careful fillip, he answered:

"Bel Patek, I repeat, how dare you talk business on the holy day of Tisri?"

II

BEL PATEK had not lied: Ouritzky practiced usury. Bel Patek had not lied: Ouritzky profiteered in butter. Bel Patek had not lied: Ouritzky entertained suspicious characters.

By force of meeting behind the counter, where it dined on a sardine steeped in vodka, the "Intelligenzia" had come to regard the shop as its own private domain and had transformed it into a headquarters. They came there as to a club and, pledging with the old man a curio or a watch, discussed things at their ease, far from the publicity of the streets, better than in the café.

There were always several groups there; students, briefless lawyers, professors without pupils, stranded at Geneva, like Ouritzky, on the morrow of some pogrom; fugitives from Siberia, deserters from the army or from the imperial universities, whom the mirage of liberty had drawn irresistibly toward Switzerland.

On the banks of Lake Leman as on the banks of the Neva, eating was always a redoubtable problem for most of them. Characters became embittered and the strongest wills dulled by this constant struggle. The generous enthusiasms had slackened, the old dreams and glorious chimeras had taken wing. Too many winter winds had bitten them. There remained in the hearts of these men only a cold hatred—as cold as their garret rooms in the poor quarters, and, more despotic and more deeply rooted—a keen desire for pleasure, the revenge of the pariah who seats himself in the rich man's place, puts his feet familiarly on the table and shouts:

"Stop, friend, divide with me!"

Twice they had believed that their

dream was about to be realized. The first time in France, when the republic, shaken by too many internal crises following the Dreyfus affair, tottered on the edge of the abyss. The next time in Russia, after the bloody days of 1905, when Europe, with bated breath, thought for a week that it was holding the death-watch of Czarism.

Alas! the republic had pulled itself together. Czarism, though hard hit, survived. On all the battle fronts the old regime triumphed. There was panic then in the ranks of the "Intelligenzia" and when 1914 sounded the awakening of universal militarism the most ardent were in despair.

It was a brief panic, however. Day by day events contributed to attenuate that first feeling of desolation. As Europe was laid in ruin and the peoples, bled white, felt a rattling in their throats, a new hope was born in the ranks of the "Intelligenzia." The crisis was approaching, inevitably. The Marxist circle was showing signs of breaking. This time the task was simple. Only the will to break it was needed.

Slowly, secretly, and then with the certainty that success would crown the enterprise, the work began. Timid ventures at first and then increasingly bolder ones, as the rabble of the earlier years was joined by new and powerful recruits from international finance and by the hidden forces of diplomacy from beyond the Rhine. The end justifies the means, and by a strange coincidence, each pursuing an end different in appearance but identical in reality, the supporters of "Empire at all costs" extended a hand in the dark to the supporters of world anarchy.

Ouritzky entered the shop in a very bad humor. The Hungarian's revelations had spoiled for him all the charm which he had expected to find in this holy day. And by a strange fatality, as if to corroborate Bel Patek's prophecies, the first person he met was none other than Medviedoff.

He had come in the old man's absence, an habitué who knew the mysterious codes and the watchwords with which to countermand the most rigorous orders. Rachel had let him into the rear shop, where Afanassi found him munching stuffed olives and drinking white wine in company with his inseparable companion, Porodziansko, another of the faithful.

"*Dobri dien,*" said Ouritzky haughtily.

The two men were talking animatedly, their elbows on the table.

"*Dobri dien,*" the old man repeated, advancing toward them.

"Ah! it's you," said Medviedoff, finally. With a careless gesture he designated a chair. Then, with a glance of understanding at Porodziansko and sure in advance of the success of his pleasantry:

"We have kept some olives for you. Sit down, Afanassi. It's my treat."

Ouritzky shrugged his shoulders and spat as he turned his head away.

"Vladimir Ilitch, you know my manner of thinking. An unbeliever like you may eat olives on a day of Tisri if he likes, but not tempt a poor man."

Vladimir Ilitch burst into a laugh.

"Ah! Ah! Look at the synagogue rat! They rob poor devils with impunity, they fatten on our blood. But eat a plate of olives! . . Pfui!"

And, mimicking the old man's disdainful gesture:

"You can eat olives! Leonidschka, did you hear him?"

Porodziansko laughed in his turn, or, rather, closed his eyelids several times—the only manifestation of hilarity which the extraordinary thinness of his skin permitted him.

He was a slight young man, with curly black hair and brilliant little eyes, the right one comical in the persistence with which it always focused on a point slightly off the normal field of vision. It was an original eye, smitten with independence, like those troika horses which always pull on the reins and gallop, backed up against the dashboard, at the risk of upsetting everything.

"Let him alone," he said in answer to Medviedoff. "You see very well that he is not to be teased this morning."

"Is that so, Batushka?"

"Is what so?" growled Ouritzky.

"That you are in a bad humor?"

"I ought to be."

"Why?"

"I saw Bel Patek just now."

Vladimir Ilitch grinned.

"Bravo! You have seen Bel Patek. Tell me what happened, little father. You saw the illustrious gospodar Bel Patek. In what way was the sight of the illustrious gospodar able to change thus a good humor, which ordinarily . . ."

"That's enough of your pleasantries, Vladimir Ilitch. I tell you that I saw Bel Patek," Ouritzky repeated nervously.

It was Medviedoff's turn to grow indignant. He could not bear contradiction, being, in spite of his cold temperament, ready to take fire on the slightest friction. A true piece of flint, Porodziansko called him.

"Ah! and you are talking foolishly enough yourself! 'I saw Bel Patek,' 'I saw Bel Patek'; are you going to tell me a hundred times that you saw Bel Patek? Let us talk first about other things. I just . . ."

But Ouritzky interrupted him.

He was still standing before the table, scraping up some scattered crumbs. Medviedoff's last words made him prick up his ears.

"No, no, no more business," he cried. "I have had enough of your stories."

"Getting excited again," he said mimicking his lisp.

"I am only a poor man. I am honest. I don't want the police in my house."

"What are you trying to tell me about the police?"

"Yes, yes, get ugly about it, Vladimir Ilitch. I saw Bel Patek this morning."

"Again!" bellowed Medviedoff.

"He told me some fine things about you. You have been reported to the police, Vladimir Ilitch, and you, too, Leonid, and I myself. We have all, all been informed on. That's what."

He stopped. Medviedoff, sprawling on the back of his chair, burst into laughter. On the other side of the table Porodziansko batted his eyelids furiously, his little eye fixed now on Vladimir, now on the old man.

"Ah! Ah! Bel Patek told you that! And you, old fool (not meaning to offend you), you swallowed the story about the police. Don't you see that he was stringing you, your illustrious friend Bel Patek, to go and tell on us to that other fool, the consul of France, His Excellency Edouard-Hector-Roumald Siffre de Malongrin?"

He turned toward Porodziansko, as if to ask him to bear witness to Ouritzky's imbecility. His anger, badly restrained under this mask of

irony, showed in the deadly pallor of his face.

Porodziansko's eye remained inert, however. The little man was looking at the olive scraps in his plate.

"You know everything, then!" he murmured, dreamily.

The shop door opened. A woman entered.

"Now, what is all this? Laughing, fighting, arguing?"

The clear voice resounded in the room, which was now filled with a strong odor of oppoponax.

"Good day, children!"

She extended her hand with a gallant gesture to the two men, tapped Ouritzky protectingly on the shoulder, and, before taking a seat, seized an olive between her gloved fingers and bit into the soft pulp, disclosing her little pointed white teeth.

"He's really a wonder, this old man, at preparing these olives. Isn't he, Wolodja?"

She quickly bit into a second olive.

"I have never eaten any like these. Yes, I have—at Schlüsselburg, with the Meyers. A long time ago."

She repeated, "A long time ago," awaiting some gallant protestation. But Medviedoff made none. He contented himself with murmuring: "Low tastes," while Porodziansko winked and rubbed his delicate hands.

She looked at him in turn and in her green eyes, eyes like limpid water, there was a gleam of gratitude, the mute thanks of a woman to anyone who admires her.

She was tall, rather broad across the shoulders, and wore a becoming riding habit, fastened across her breast with two bone buttons. Her riding cravat, carelessly tied, was held together by a horseshoe pin, with three rubies for nails. Porodziansko noticed her handkerchief, whose lace hem protruded from a tiny pocket above the left breast.

"Ida," cried Medviedoff in his sharp voice, "let the old man alone. He is savage."

She clapped her gloved hands.

"Well, well, what has happened to poor Afanassi Nikiphorovitch?"

"He saw Bel Patek this morning at the synagogue."

"Good. What of it? I just passed Bel Patek."

"Indeed! And Bel Patek, to pump him, put strange ideas into his head. He can't see straight any longer. To listen to him, we shall have the gendarmes here within an hour."

"Is that all?"

Ida began to laugh.

"Don't worry, old chap. Bel Patek tries to be malicious. But you can see right through him. You will have your son again, Afanouschka. There will be two of you to keep the shop. Ah! children, what a robber's cave it promises to be!"

Ouritzky, tranquilized, went to put the bottle of wine on a shelf. Ida sat down.

"We have talked enough nonsense. Let us talk business."

"That's what I have been trying for an hour to make him understand," growled Medviedoff.

"No, no, you will talk afterwards, Wolodja. Let us proceed in order. I have the photographs."

Medviedoff started.

"You have the photographs!"

She passed her tongue over her lips with an ecstatic expression. Then, with infinite precautions, enjoying his suspense, she drew from an elegant, perfumed, aristocratic little bag a dirty card, rounded off at the corners, decorated with

beautiful round-hand script and tattooed, as it were, with stamps.

Porodziansko's little eye seemed to frisk up under its short eyelid. Old Ouritzky himself had drawn near and, leaning on the back of Ida's chair, looked over her shoulder.

They repeated in chorus:

"Mascarvigni!"

They passed from hand to hand the dirty card to which were affixed, and similarly stamped, several photographs of the same individual, representing him full face, profile, and three-quarters. It was the record of the agitator, Mascarvigni.

Ida turned toward Ouritzky.

"Hah! Afanouschka! Your friend Bel Patek would never have found anything like that. Without me Mascarvigni would have been arrested at the frontier to-morrow."

Medviedoff had taken her hand. With a deference not usual in him he lifted it toward his lips. Then suddenly changing his mind, he straightened up and pressed his lips against hers.

"You are a wonderful woman, Idouschka."

She shut her eyes, trembling under the caress.

"But come, don't make any mysteries about it," he continued. "From whom did you get this paper? Coco or Luigi?"

"Luigi," she said, lowering her voice.

"Bravo! Does he suspect anything?"

"Nothing."

"Was this description sent him by the secret service?"

"Yes."

"And the articles for the '*Avenire*'?"

"They went by mail under the stamp of the consulate."

"Splendid!" cried Porodziansko.

"Yes, not bad at all," conceded Medviedoff, who was making a studied effort to remain calm, although his face was radiant.

Father Ouritzky, who had said nothing so far, scratched his head.

"You were speaking about a matter of business, Vladimir Ilitch. . . ."

Then, seeing that the shop door had been left open:

"Rachel," he called, "go and put the chain on."

But Medviedoff interrupted him.

"Let that go, Afanassi. We will attend to your matter later."

He turned again to the young woman.

"One word more. Could you now (his finger designated Porodziansko) help me to pass this person into France?"

"Why do you want to send Leonid into France?"

"That's my affair."

"What part of France?"

"Creusot."

"Creusot?"

She shook her head.

"That's difficult."

"Why?"

"My dear fellow, you know the French consul as well as I do."

Medviedoff grinned.

"Just as well, I admit."

"Then don't talk nonsense. He is not so easy to manage—Coco."

"Nevertheless, if you wished . . ."

"But, my dear fellow, if I wished . . . It isn't enough to wish. You have become pretty well acquainted with him in the three months you have spent trying to get him to give you a passport."

Medviedoff contented himself with shrugging his shoulders. Then he murmured with a pitying smile:

"No, really, you don't try hard, my little one."

She looked at him, tried to an-

swer, but found no words. She could hardly keep from bursting into sobs. In a choked voice she said:

"Wolodja! How can you say such a thing to me?"

"In short, you make no promises?"

"I will do my best," she said simply.

She stood up, took her little bag from the table, arranged her hair and straightened her riding hat, which Medviedoff's embrace had left slightly awry.

"Are you going already?" asked Porodziansko.

"Yes," she answered. She waved him a friendly goodbye with the tips of her fingers. Then turning to Medviedoff:

"Are you going out to-night, Wolodja?"

"Perhaps."

"Are you going to the Kursaal?"

He flared up again. What need had she always to know what he was doing, or not doing? When one was not capable of helping one's friends, one kept quiet, or went away; above all, one didn't mix in and play the jealous woman.

"But why do you need this passport for Leonid?" she cried, racked by an evident despair.

"A strike," whispered Porodziansko.

"A strike at Creusot?"

"Yes, a strike there! A strike at Creusot, a strike in Switzerland, a strike everywhere!" blurted out Medviedoff furiously, pacing up and down the shop and crushing the olive pits on the floor. "Do you understand now?"

And in a few words, with that brusqueness which he loved to affect, he explained their plan. A simultaneous strike in the munitions works—that was a sure winning stroke. All the dispatches they received indicated, both at the front and in the rear, an evident exasperation on the part of the masses. France would quit at the first defection of the troops. France was always the keystone of the whole edifice. That is why he had sent Mascarvigni as a scout.

"Thanks to you," he added, glancing at Ida, as if to soften the blow which his words just now might have been to her.

But to attain this end he had to have dependable men, able agitators, (he glanced now at Porodziansko) energetic fellows like those who were now working in Russia. And he added triumphantly:

"Do you know what the last movement at Poutiloff was worth to us? Eighty thousand prisoners in the Carpathians and 110 versts of retirement."

"But why didn't you tell us?" cried the young woman in ecstasy.

Medviedoff smiled.

"Oh well! Is it always necessary to give you reasons? You understand now—that's the main thing. Once more, can we count on you for that passport?"

Ida threw her arms about his neck.

"Yes, my Wolodja—no matter what happens."

"Spare your effusions. You can go now."

"She is wonderful," declared Porodziansko, when the door had closed.

Medviedoff, who was lighting a cigarette, shrugged his shoulders.

"Useful—that's all."

Along the street of Carouge, so bright and clear in this soft September morning, the young woman walked toward the Corraterie.

She halted before one or two shops, and greeted with a quick glance the little shoemaker, Kou-

pritzin, who rose from his bench and proudly contemplated his work—two fine boots gliding lightly along the pavement. The glass of a shop-window reflected her image. Without stopping, like a bird seizing its prey in full flight, Ida smiled back at herself, carrying away in her eyes, brilliant from recent tears, the memory of a gracious vision, a delicate and supple silhouette, hardly in keeping with eager rhythm of her step. Nevertheless, she still felt a pang. Although long accustomed to Medviedoff's temper and his brutality, they had wounded her to-day. It wasn't that she wanted any further thanks from him, the kiss had repaid her a hundred fold, but she asked herself, without understanding, why Vladimir seemed to take pleasure, on this languorous and delicious morning, when all her being, in the pride of her success, opened so fully to tenderness and love, in humiliating her as he had done, to bend her once more under that grievous yoke of captivity which in spite of her instinctive revolt, she cherished, perhaps, above all other things.

"How he must have suffered," she thought, "how he must have struggled to become so cruel, my Wolodja!"

She quickly raised her head, as if ashamed of her weakness, and hurried on, still seeking on her lips the taste of that swift kiss.

"A wonderful woman, Idouschka!"

Oh! yes it is good to love, but better still to be a slave and to have beautiful eyes, which flash, more luminous and more limpid, after shedding tears.

As she crossed the Place Neuve before the outer gate of the Bastions, two men approached her.

"Ah! What a pleasure, my dear consul!" she cried, happy to be seen on a morning when she felt that she was looking more than usually pretty.

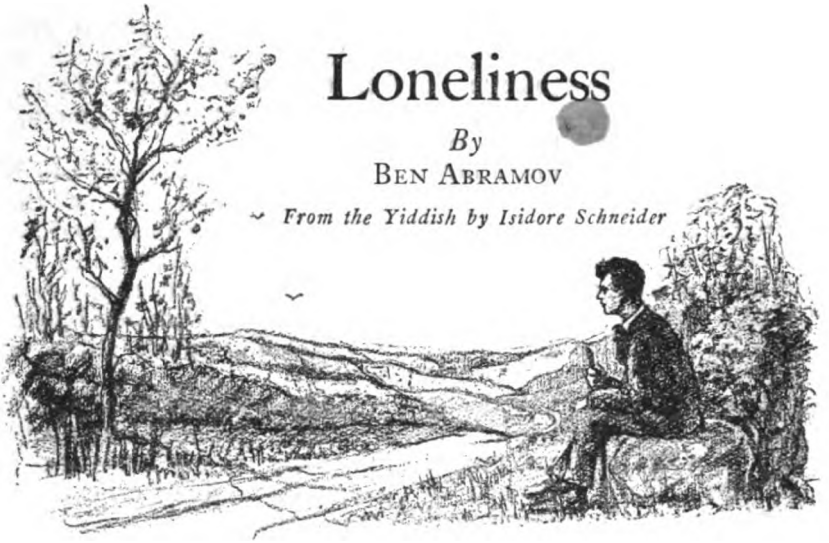
"The pleasure is mine—ours—Madame," replied the consul, pointing to the young man who accompanied him. Then came the formal presentation.

"Madame," said M. de Malongrin, as I in turn kissed a perfumed glove, "I present to you a newcomer to the consulate, one of my young diplomatic agents freshly landed in Geneva, on his return from captivity, M. Georges Hunter."

Then to me:

"The Marquise di San Carvagno-Vitterba, the wife of my excellent colleague, Luigi di San Carvagno consul of His Majesty the King of Sardinia. One of our exquisite allies."

(*To be continued*)



Loneliness

By

BEN ABRAMOV

From the Yiddish by Isidore Schneider

What is this torment that awakes in me
  When the first meadow-lark begins to sing
And the first leaf is green upon the tree,
  What mock of laughter with its bitter sting?

Morning and noon and night have grown more kind.
  The hills and valleys stir with a new birth,
A dreaming sigh is borne upon the wind,
  But in my questing heart there is no mirth.

Up from the meadow starts the meadow-lark,
  And straight across her singing mate is blown;
But there is one who wanders in the dark,
  Strayed in the carnival of spring—alone.

. . . For Tomorrow You Die

By
GUNNAR GUNNARSSON

From the Danish by Harald Toksvig

Gunnar Gunnarsson is one of the most widely read authors writing in Danish, and this in spite of the fact that Danish is not his native tongue. He was born in Iceland in 1889, and learned Danish, which is as different from Icelandic—the ancient language of Scandinavia—as French from Latin, in order to secure a wider audience. Two of his books, "Guest the One-Eyed," and "The Sworn Brothers," have been translated into English.

His work includes both verse and prose, but his greatest achievement is a series of novels, to which "Guest the One-Eyed" belongs, which though modern in spirit and technique are reminiscent of the old Norse sagas.

UNLESS you have seen him with your own eyes, it is hard to conceive anything as bewhiskered and dirty as Runolfur Snorrason, thief and crank, the hermit of Sildefjord. Neither can you have any real idea of the air in his hut, a sod hut, glued to the steep mountain with a rock for a wall, fittingly situated a little way outside the town; unless you have had occasion to stick your nose into the opening of a fox hole. You would have to hunt a long time to find anything as close and mean, lazy and shiftless, tight mouthed and reserved, as Runolfur.

How Hallur Hallsson, the doctor in Sildefjord, had gone about winning Runolfur's confidence and making friends with him, must be assigned to the big riddles which there is no possibility of ever solving.

If you asked Hallur Hallsson about it he would smile, lift his glass and say, "Your health!" and then change the subject. Unless he began instead to hum a bit of a tune. And if you asked Runolfur . . . well, I should not like to advise anyone to ask Runolfur; you can never tell with which end he will prefer to answer. But that you would get a less agreeable answer is under all circumstances certain.

Such is Runolfur. And such is Hallur Hallsson. And nothing can be done about it.

The inhabitants of Sildefjord themselves have long since given up speculating about Hallur's and Runolfur's friendship. Still, long since, is perhaps saying too much. The event which once and for all sealed their friendship and made it comprehensible and to a certain degree unassailable, is not old. That is what our story is about.

It may be remarked here that it cost me four bottles of port and countless cigars before I got Hallur Hallsson to relate it. That is why I cannot vouch for the truth of the story. It is also the reason I cannot reproduce it in his own words.

It was late in March. It had snowed steadily for ten days, and

for three days no one had seen anything of Runolfur. Hallur Hallsson was beginning to be a little worried about him. Runolfur had undertaken to supply the doctor's house daily with water from the town's well, and even if unreliability belonged among Runolfur's many bad qualities, he was not in the habit of staying away *three* days at a time. It did not occur to Hallur Hallsson for a moment that Runolfur might have fallen sick, or that something had happened to him. In all the years he had known him there had never been the slightest thing the matter with his health. The bottle of "coughdrops" Runolfur now and then took home from the doctor's office was, of course, not exactly meant to relieve coughing. On the contrary, when Runolfur took a regular swallow, it brought on a short attack of coughing—but Runolfur did not complain on that account. Hallur Hallsson then was a little perplexed about Runolfur, but in no way anxious. It was not probable that on the third day he would be sick from the cough drops he had given him on Monday—to melt the ice off the window panes—as he had said. No, but it was the month of March. And even if Runolfur both honestly and otherwise was in the habit of laying in supplies during the butchering season in October, and even if he also took care to have big bunches of codfish and other fish heads hanging in his hut, and even if at Christmas time, he had still been able to show his friend, the doctor, a large jar of rancid bird fat, melted from dead birds he had picked up along the shore; yes, even if once in a while a dog was shot or a cat hung in Sildefjord, and cast into the sea, to be later picked up by Runolfur—in short: even in a well stocked household there can after a long and cold winter be hard times.

"He is probably out foraging, the beast," was the way Hallur Hallsson accounted for the situation by noon of the third day, and he began worriedly to consider where in Sildefjord there was anything to salvage.

He racked his brain as though it meant his own welfare, but to no purpose. He did not know of a single larder in the city that was not supplied with locks and bolts, not an outer door that was not securely barred every evening.

"Poor beast," he sighed, depressed, and thanked heaven that he, himself, was not lazy, queer and a thief.

He decided to go out and visit Runolfur the very next day, take him some coughdrops, and at the same time find out how matters stood.

Hallur Hallsson had no peace anywhere that day. If he showed himself in the hall, the girls in the kitchen at once began to complain loudly that they had to get water themselves—snow up to the hips and the thermometer ten degrees below! Hallur contented himself with remarking that the mercury showed only six and a half degrees, and then drowned them out with a national air. If he came into the parlor his wife at once began a long lecture on Runolfur's different qualities; his dirtiness, his laziness, his unreliability, his utter worthlessness from every point of view; and ended for the hundred and seventeenth time by reminding her husband of all the meals, all the cups of coffee—and so on—that Runolfur through years and days had practically *sponged* for himself. Every time his wife stopped he left the parlor, it was the only reason she ever finished that

kind of a "conversation." Hallur never answered, he whistled.

After one of these lectures, Hallur Hallsson, still whistling, lit himself a cigar, and began to think further about the town's many solid locks. "Fine watchfulness"! There was only one thief in Sildefjord, and there must be bounds to what one thief could accomplish. He could not understand why people bothered to be so outrageously greedy and close. Somebody had to be bad. There had to be someone to steal—otherwise the seventh commandment would be completely superfluous—and the Bible in a way misleading. He, for his own part, kept all ten commandments—neither more nor less! "The poor beast—and then in the snow, too. . . Well, of course, the snow effaces footprints. . . What do you know, the crafty scoundrel!" Hallur Hallsson no longer had the slightest doubt that Runolfur's absence was due to the fact that he was out foraging. "Like any other field mouse," he mumbled, and thoughtfully exhaled the smoke through his nose, "Well, luck be with you, old lightfingers!"

Hallur Hallsson could not however free himself from a certain depression. He continued to see before him the many solid locks of the town. There was no real spirit in his whistling today, and his song snatches went to pieces before they were half through. His cigar kept going out and he did not really enjoy it. And it was only when he was through eating that he discovered that he had had smoked leg of mutton for dinner, and smoked leg of mutton was his favorite dish.

"How many legs of mutton have we left out there, anyway?" He asked suddenly—he was cheating—he sat and picked his teeth under cover of his napkin.

"Five," answered Mrs. Hallsson with housewifely pride, from over by the sideboard.

"And how about the salt meats?" continued the doctor, with evident interest.

Her eyes gleamed with sudden suspicion.

"We have just begun on the second barrel," she answered cautiously, "so if we are economical—"

Hallur got up quickly and smilingly gave her a kiss, which she received but in no wise reciprocated. She knew her husband. She suspected the reason for this sudden change of spirit. But before Runolfur got so much as one bite of food from *her,* he would have to bring water enough for a month's laundry—at least. And they were not going to wash for a week.

Hallur went back and forth chatting with his wife, and carefully watching her eyes. But the situation was quite clear to her, she was unapproachable, and he had to go out without saying what she felt was on the tip of his tongue. She breathed more freely when he left the room. And she sent Runolfur a hard unyielding thought.

Hallur was immensely pleased with himself—he had had an idea, made a decision. Now he could whistle again and sing snatches of songs.

For a time he rummaged around in his little drug store, weighing powders and washing bottles. When he was through he mixed himself a drink and went in to his wife. He sat down and began to play solitaire, which always amused him when he was too restless to read.

Mrs. Hallsson sat and embroidered. She was so glad to have him home. It was not often they could sit like this and be comfortable. And it was so empty in this childless

house when he was away on sick calls or trips. She glanced at him now and then, and Hallur sent her many cheerful and wily looks. What was the matter with him? For the present it was she who had won the victory.

"That must be a very funny game of solitaire," she said with veiled sarcasm.

Hallur laughed.

"It is—and exciting," he answered, sly again, and slammed awav with the cards.

Hallur waited until he heard the girls come in from the kitchen and settle down for the evening in the dining room. Then he suddenly threw down the cards and went through the kitchen out into the yard. On the way he snatched a key from a nail over the stove. When he came in again and had hung the key in its place, he smiled broadly, and stamped cheerfully on the floor while he shook and brushed the snow from his clothes. Now there was at least one lock open in Sildefjord. All depended on whether Runolfur would be lucky enough to be out tonight. He would not grudge him a leg of mutton or a taste from the salt barrel!

When Hallur stepped into the parlor again, he went right up to his wife and gave her a smacking kiss. She looked up at him, a little surprised, but he only laughed.

"What are you up to now, Hallur?" she asked and smiled a bit uncertainly.

"I am just in a good humor," he answered smilingly. He took a good drink from his glass and again sat down to play solitaire. "I am like the dogs—happiest when the weather is worst!"

He chuckled with pleasure at the thought of how frightened his wife would be, when she discovered that she had forgotten to lock the outhouse! If only that lazybones Runolfur would take a chance and show a little life. Well, a thief should have thieving instincts. He did not want to miss the sight of his wife's face, when she came to him early to-morrow morning to tell him that a leg of mutton was missing and a layer of meat from the salt barrel. It would be worth the loss, at least.

The next day everything was the same, the weather was just as bad; Runolfur persistently r e m a i n e d away. The girls had to carry water and it was a pleasure to hear the way they went on.

"Hallur, there were thieves in the outhouse last night." His wife had tears in her eyes and her voice trembled, as she told him.

"Thieves, you say?" asked Hallur and felt at once glad and light inside. "Why do you use the plural? Has more been taken than one man could carry?"

"A leg of mutton, a layer from the salt barrel, and a piece of tallow are gone."

"Well—tallow, yes of course, I had clean forgotten that." It came right out of Hallur's mouth.

His wife opened her eyes wide.

"Man, what do you mean?"

"I mean," Hallur hurriedly continued and turned a little red, "that it is in no way more than one thief can carry, that is, if he were a thoughtful thief, provided with a bag under his arm. Thieves, you said! You must be careful when you make accusations."

"Yes, but, Hallur—a whole layer from the meat barrel, a leg of mutton, and a large piece of tallow—don't you think it is shameful?"

"Yes, certainly. But how did the thief get in? Were the locks smashed?" asked Hallur harshly.

His wife shifted uneasily—and turned as red as a beet.

"No—the lock was open. But I know absolutely that I locked it securely yesterday."

"Securely?—you call that locking it securely? That depends on what you mean by securely!" Hallur was both mocking and severe.

But this was too much for his wife—she veered about to the attack.

"Of course, it's your fine friend Runolfur, who has been on the job!"

"Runolfur! . . . Runolfur steals only from people who can afford it!" answered Hallur sternly.

His wife stood a while and looked at him. There was something about him she could not fathom.

"Do you mean that *we* can afford it?" It came a little doubtfully.

"Can't we?" There was suddenly a merry gleam in his eyes.

His wife came closer, her eyes did not leave his for a moment.

"I'll bet that it was you who were out last night and unlocked the door," she said in deep surprise. "If you haven't gone and made a thief of yourself in your own house!"

Hallur laughed and kissed her.

"Should that be necessary? . . . But if it gives you any comfort to blame me—"

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she said with mock severity. "And I was so unhappy thinking it was I who had forgotten to lock it. Did you send a message to Runolfur? Or was it fixed up?"

Hallur recovered himself.

"Runolfur? Who says Runolfur took the stuff? I must ask you to watch your tongue, my girl. It is quite possible that there is more than one thief in Sildefjord!"

"Yes, perhaps one more," answered his wife smiling and with challenging openness hid a key in a pocket in her skirt.

Then they both laughed.

"I am going to look him up today," said Hallur, and went out to put on his overcoat.

Hallur Hallsson found Runolfur lying fully dressed on his litter of rags and skins.

Runolfur got up with difficulty and yawned, and made room by his side; there was no other place to sit down in the hut. Then he belched generously and showed all signs of satiety and inertia.

"Well, you're not sick at any rate, I see," remarked Hallur cheerfully.

"Sick! Why should I be sick?" grumbled Runolfur, his rusty bass even a note deeper than usual.

"No, no, I just couldn't understand what had become of you. We haven't seen anything of you for several days."

Runolfur looked belligerent.

"Well— what of it?"

"Haven't you undertaken to come and carry water every day? That's what my wife thinks anyway, and the girls."

"Well, what of it? Am I in the habit of being dependable?"

"No, certainly not; no, I wouldn't accuse you of that. But the weather is bad and the walking is not the best. The women are dying for even a glimpse of you!"

Runolfur shrugged his shoulders, grumbling.

"Let them die! I haven't even bothered to get water for myself, till this morning. Should I go out then and carry water for others?"

"There is something to that of course. What have you been doing anyway?"

Runolfur became suspicious.

"Doing? What should I have been doing? I have been lying in bed."

"So you have been sick then?"

"Do I have to be sick to stay in bed? I've been lazy, if you really must know, and hungry. I have slept most of the time," he yawned deeply at the recollection.

"Oh, you have been hungry? . . . Are you always hungry?"

"No," answered Runolfur crossly, "but I am thirsty."

"We can fix that," answered the doctor cheerfully, and brought up a bottle of coughdrops from an inner pocket.

Satisfied lines appeared in Runolfur's bewhiskered face.

"We ought to dilute it a bit." The doctor struggled with the cork.

Runolfur shoved himself painfully across the edge of the bed.

While he was finding a pair of chipped and scarred cups and getting water from a tin pot, Hallur Hallsson looked about the half dark hut with merry eyes.

Beside Runolfur's household utensils, which for the most part had apparently been scraped together from the town dumps, there was in the hut only his bed, and a tremendous chest with three locks on it.

"What treasures are you hiding in that chest anyway?" asked the doctor and laughed. "You ought to show me some time."

Runolfur sent him a quick look from his small, cunning fox eyes, but did not allow himself to be caught.

"Am I in the habit of asking to look in *your* hiding places, when I come on a visit?"

He let the doctor have one of the cups and extended the other toward him. Hallur Hallsson held the bottle forward to pour Runolfur's cup first, but stopped halfway, and listened. Runolfur also had become attentive, and stood with open mouth, round eyes, and head on one side. A peculiar sound, a rushing, that increased as if it were coming nearer, reached their ears. The doctor had just time to think that it resembled the roar of rapids—then he and Runolfur were knocked down in a crash of breaking planks and woodwork.

After the first moment's confusion he found himself lying surrounded by an inconceivable darkness and by an even more inconceivable silence.

Neither he nor Runolfur had cried out. Both had lain quiet as mice for the better part of a minute, paralyzed by the incomprehensible, which had come over them so suddenly. It was Hallur Hallsson who first recovered himself.

"Hello, Runolfur? Did you get hurt? Where are you?"

"Where am I!" answered Runolfur, sullen as always. "Where should I be? I am lying here."

"Answer decently, man! Are you hurt?"

"Not that I know of. Is the bottle broken?"

For the first time, Hallur discovered that as a man used to bottles, he had covered the mouth of the bottle with his thumb as he fell—and that the bottle luckily was unharmed. He smiled at the thought that he unconsciously must have sheltered it in the fall.

"The bottle is safe and full," he consoled Runolfur. "But what the dickens is this? What's happened?"

"Don't you know a snowslide, man?" answered Runolfur, unmoved. "I've been expecting it for a long time."

The doctor had not yet recovered sufficiently to grasp the full force of the situation.

"What luck the hut wasn't completely smashed!" he exclaimed.

"That's what comes of building your house with a cliff for a wall," boasted Runolfur with satisfaction.

"Otherwise we would now be out swimming among the herring. . . Aren't you thirsty, doctor?"

"There is something in that," Hallur Hallsson noticed that he really was quite thirsty and took a good drink of the "pure spirit." Then he surrendered the bottle to Runolfur's fumbling fingers.

Soon after he heard a chuckling, long and cheerful, in the darkness beside him.

Hallur Hallsson's brain began slowly to function.

"Do you think the snowslide has taken the town?" he asked with a sudden and violent heart beating.

"How the devil should I know!" answered Runolfur irritated. "I wouldn't shed many tears if it had. But still I don't think so. The hut is right against the mountain where it's steepest."

"You're right," agreed the doctor and felt a little reassured.

Then he sat a while silent and thinking, tortured by the darkness and quiet, and the uncertainty as to the town's, but chiefly, his wife's fate.

"Can we dig our way out, do you think?" it suddenly occurred to him.

"With bare fists through woodwork, frozen ground and God knows how deep snow! What a damned idiot you must be! And where would we stow the snow we dug out? Perhaps you'd undertake to eat it?"

"Take a drink of the bottle, man," answered the doctor, who saw that unfortunately Runolfur was right.

Then they sat a while in silence.

"Do you think they will try to dig us out?" he asked again.

"It would be because *you* are here. They wouldn't touch a spade for *me* until some time when they happened to find it damned necessary!"

The doctor heard him and yet did not hear him—he speculated about a probable rescue.

"Do you think they will find us if they dig?"

"Shut up now. You'd better take a drink from the bottle," answered Runolfur, persistently sullen. "What a doctor! Perhaps you're afraid to die?"

The doctor let the question pass, and ascertained for his own peace of mind with a certain satisfaction that his heart beats did not increase. No, he was not really afraid to die, but there was one human being who would mourn his death, and the knowledge of it sat and burned in him somewhere. And still—what was there really to be afraid of? . . . This chill, that had suddenly entered his body—was it not a bit of the fear of uncertainty? He could not decide. But—a drink from the bottle would do him good. And he fumbled about until he found Runolfur's outstretched hand.

He took a long drink; it did a lot of good, it did more than good, it actually helped. With every second that passed he became more quiet. Runolfur was right. One had to accept the inevitable like a man.

If it were only not so fearfully dark! He sat there and it seemed to him almost as though he could grasp the darkness and feel it. And then this silence that ate itself into his nerves like a poison—a nightmare quiet that made every word, yes, every movement, an almost tangible thing—a silence so complete and uninterrupted that it settled like a mountain on his mind.

Hallur Hallsson began to figure out how much air there might be in there, and whether he and Runolfur would more likely suffocate or starve to death.

"Have you anything to eat in the

hut?" he interrupted his rather gloomy thoughts.

"Yes," Runolfur hesitated a bit, "yes, the chest stands right here up to the cliff and I have the key in my pocket. But can you eat raw meat, doctor? The stove once stood over there by the other wall. But," for the first time Runolfur's voice was a little glad, "what luck we were both on this side of the hut, otherwise we would have been beautifully smashed."

"Oh, well," said the doctor, whose former good spirits slowly began to return, "it's all the same whether we die one way or another."

"What d a m n e d nonsense!" Runolfur was disgusted. "As long as you live, you are not dead. And anyway I prefer to die in peace and quiet and comfort."

Hallur Hallsson laughed, a short dry laugh.

"Tell me," he asked with curiosity, "isn't there one drop of blood in you that is affected by the fact that there is no particular chance of our getting away from here alive?"

"Well—I haven't a n y t h i n g against living a little longer," growled Runolfur.

"But on the other hand you haven't anything against dying?"

"Certainly I have something against it! But will you tell me how I shall prevent it?—if I must die?"

"Then you figure pretty certainly that we shall lie here—and—"

"I don't figure on anything at all, by God. I wait and take what comes. I have always done that, because it takes the least trouble. If I die, I die. If I live, I live. There's no trick to that."

"But aren't you in the least afraid of what comes after?"

Runolfur sniffed contemptuously.

"If I managed to get through one half, I guess I can clear the rest."

Hallur Hallsson laughed, laughed whole-heartedly.

"You're a regular fellow!" he exclaimed with hearty conviction and handed him the bottle.

The conversation had begun to amuse him. He continued.

"Tell me, Runolfur,—do you really believe in God?"

"I should think I do," it came crossly. "Why shouldn't I believe in God?"

"Yes—yes. But aren't you afraid that it'll be a dark day when He looks through your record of sins?"

"My record of sins? Do you think *I* am recorded in heaven? Anyway there is not much to my account. I've nailed a little here and there, that's the worst, but only from those that had enough both before and after. I've been lazy, but that's something I was born with. I drink what I can get a hold of, and much of it is damned spray—but who doesn't? I haven't always kept my word, but to make up for it, I haven't run around with gossip. I've not, so far as I know, harmed even a cat, so why the deuce should God harm me? . . . And He must have a little to forgive—else why should He be God?"

The doctor came near forgetting their real situation; he chuckled inwardly.

"It's a great shame you never were married, Runolfur. I'll bet no woman would have the last word with you."

"Women are women," answered Runolfur soberly. "They're not like men. There's no sense to what they say; they only abuse you and become noisy. And I don't like a row in the hut."

Hallur Hallsson and Runolfur agreed that it was time to get a little food. Soon the doctor heard

Runolfur rattling with many keys, heard several locks creak, then a chest cover screamed on ungreased, complaining hinges. Runolfur rummaged, and after a little while he came crawling through the darkness.

"Where are you? Here is a slice of smoked meat."

The doctor found his fumbling hand, caught the slice, dug his teeth into it, and ate with pleasure, glad of the darkness.

He felt a desire to tease Runolfur a little.

"It seems to me this tastes very familiar," he said—now that they were probably going to die together, he could risk a hint.

"You don't mean related?" answered Runolfur with complete self-possession.

Hallur Hallsson laughed loudly and ate on with enjoyment. They drank of the "pure spirit" and had a merry time.

When they were through eating, Runolfur yawned loudly and repeatedly. The doctor, too, felt that he was becoming sleepy.

It must be getting near evening, anyway.

They laid themselves side by side in brotherly fashion on Runolfur's bed; soon after Runolfur snored soundly.

While Hallur Hallsson slowly slid over into sleep, he found time to wonder how quiet and unexcited he felt. He also found time to settle with himself, that the situation was absolutely hopeless, and also so inconceivable and meaningless, that it seemed like a dream or an intoxicated man's fantasies rather than hard reality.

"Eat, drink and be merry," he mumbled and a smile slid over his sleep-stiffened features.

Then he slept.

Hallur Hallsson knew that he must have slept long and heavily, when something awakened him. He had no idea what it was, but the silence, the unbreakable silence, was broken. He started up and thereby woke Runolfur who growled over the disturbance. Hallur Hallsson listened, straining his ears. The blood pounded in his temples; was it only an hallucination? . . No, it, could not possibly be a mistake—what he heard was voices, and iron chopping into the frozen earth.

"Hello!" he shouted as loud as he could, and a tremendous gladness shook him, felt almost like a pain in his chest.

Runolfur jumped up frightened, and asked him in strong language if he had become stark mad.

"Hello!" the smothered but many-voiced answer came from outside; and the spades went to work again so the remaining pieces of the hut shook and trembled.

Hallur Hallsson thought that through the noise he heard a woman weeping. There was something so familiar about that weeping. Then Hallur for the second time was glad of the sheltering darkness; he cried like a child himself.

Runolfur crawled down from his bed.

"What a damned noise! You'd think all the evil spirits were turned loose. Stop splitting the wood work, you dogs!" he shouted raging, through clenched teeth.

In a little while, Hallur Hallsson and Runolfur were hauled up through a deep snow tunnel. Suddenly they stood in the brilliant day, a day without a cloud in the sky.

Hallur Hallsson filled his lungs with deep breaths. It was like a fairy tale. It was even more fairy-tale-like than a fairy tale itself; the sun sparkled on the white snow, and

stood in a golden stripe over the blue, blue fjord.

Hallur Hallsson freed himself tenderly from his wife's embrace, and tried to assume a joking tone.

"Now I have a little idea of how it feels to get up on the Judgment Day," he said smiling.

The people stood in a circle around them, leaning on their spades. They spat cheerfully, and wiped the sweat from their glad, red faces.

"It was a tough job, doctor," one of them said. "We have kept on fifteen man strong, for the better part of twenty-four hours. Luckily it stopped snowing toward evening yesterday, otherwise we couldn't have found the place so easily. We've been digging all over, and look, it must be half a score yards down there. It was the devil's own luck the hut didn't collapse."

Hallur Hallsson took one look down the tunnel; then he took his wife's arm and raised his hand:

"Everybody to the drug-store!" he cried significantly.

The people laughed, they all began to move; only Runolfur remained behind. He stood downcast and stared down the tunnel in a daze. He was just through swearing and cursing over the broken roof boards.

Hallur Hallsson had not gone far before he thought of Runolfur and noticed that he was not along. He pressed his wife's arm still closer, pointed back toward the ragged figure and whispered earnestly:

"He's at least as good as I am—and that is not so bad, if I do say it myself."

His wife threw a glance at Runolfur, for some reason or other she felt a little more gracious toward him, but—still—

"He ought to wash himself," she answered reluctantly.

Hallur Hallsson laughed quietly.

"That goes against his grain. But he must come along. The very idea! Runolfur! Runolfur!" he shouted and motioned energetically.

But Runolfur did not budge from the spot, did not even turn his head, whether he heard the shouts or not.

Then the doctor went back to get him.

"We're going home to have some coughdrops!" he said cheerfully and slapped him on the shoulder.

Runolfur looked crossly up at him.

"What a mess—I say, what a *mess!* Yes, they are smart people, those Sildefjord folks, what? Accommodating—he! he! he!—don't you think? Splinter the hut, make bad worse, they can do that! And do you think they'll help me build it up again in the Spring? Not on your life they won't!"

My Sister Antonia

By

RAMON DEL VALLE-INCLAN

From the Spanish by Harriet V. Wishnieff

Don Ramón del Valle-Inclán, perhaps the most picturesque figure in present-day Spanish literature, was born in 1870 in Galicia. From childhood on his soul was steeped in the tender, melancholy beauty of this Celtic corner of Spain, and in the wealth of legends, superstitions and traditions that haunt its every turn. Nowhere else in the world are people more prone to accept the supernatural as a respectable and probable part of experience. A Galician peasant will solemnly assure you that he "sube," goes up for a Saturday night flight with the witches.

Valle-Inclán's work is characterized by the most touching candor and naïveté, on the one hand, and exquisite refinement of style and language, on the other. "My Sister Antonia" is the first of his stories to be published in English.

SANTIAGO of Galicia was once a world shrine, and even today the souls of its dwellers have their eyes ever alert for a miracle.

II

ONE afternoon my sister Antonia took me by the hand to go to the cathedral. Antonia was much older than me; she was tall and pale, with dark eyes and a smile tinged with sadness. She died while I was still a child. But how well I remember her voice, her smile, and the chill of her hand as she led me to the cathedral of afternoons! Above all do I remember her eyes, and their tragic gleam as they followed a student who walked up and down the cathedral portico, enveloped in a blue cape. I was afraid of that student: he was tall and gaunt, and his face was that of a dead man. His eyes were the eyes of tiger, terrible eyes, beneath a stern, finely-molded forehead. To make him seem even more like the dead, the bones of his knees creaked as he walked. My mother loathed him, and to avoid seeing him kept the shutters of the windows that faced the portico of the *Platerias* always closed. I remember that he was walking that afternoon, as he always did, closely wrapped in his blue cape. He caught up with us at the door of the cathedral, and drawing out his skeleton hand took some holy water and offered it to my sister, who was trembling. Antonia looked at him beseechingly, and he whispered with the spasm of a smile: "I am beside myself."

III

WE entered a chapel where a couple of old women were murmuring vesper prayers. It was a large, gloomy chapel, its wooden floor re-echoing to the domed Romanic roof. When I was a child that chapel always gave me a sensation of rustic peace. Its shadows made me think of a leafy old chestnut, of a grape arbor, or a hermit's cave in the mountainside. There was always a circle of old women there in the afternoon saying vespers. Their voices, mingled in a fervent murmur, opened out beneath the dome, and seemed to light up the roses of the stained glass windows

like the setting sun. One heard the upward flight of pious, throaty prayers, dull footsteps on the wooden floor and the sound of the little silver bell which the acolyte swung back and forth as he held a lighted candle over the shoulder of the chaplain who read slowly from his breviary.

Oh, chapel of Corticela, when will this old tired soul of mine be plunged again in thy shadows' soothing balm!

IV

IT was dark and drizzling as we crossed the portico on our way home. The gloom of the wide vestibule as we entered the house must have frightened my sister for she ran up the stairs without letting go my hand. As we came in, my mother crossed the parlor and vanished through an open door. Hardly knowing why, full of curiosity and fear, I looked up at Antonia, and without a word she bent down and kissed me. In spite of my ignorance of life, I guessed my sister's secret. I felt it weigh down on me like a deadly sin as I crossed the hall where a lamp with a broken chimney smoked on a table. The flame had two horns and made me think of the devil. After I had gone to bed I remembered it in the dark and it troubled my sleep for many nights.

V

FOR several days it rained in the afternoon. The student walked up and down the portico of the Cathedral but my sister did not go to vespers. Sometimes as I sat studying in the parlor heavy with the scent of withered roses, I opened the window to watch him. He walked all alone, a twisted smile on his lips. And as it grew night he looked so like a corpse that it terrified me. I drew back from the window trembling, but I couldn't keep my eyes off him, and my lessons went unlearned. From the silent, sonorous parlor I could hear the creaking of his joints. . . . The cat mewed thrice, and it sounded to me like the student's name:

"Maximo Bretal."

VI

BRETAL is a little village up the mountain-side, not far from Santiago. The old men there wear pointed caps and capes of homespun. The old women spin in the stables in the winter because it is warmer than in the houses, and the sexton teaches school in the churchyard. Beneath his rod the children learn the legal hand-writing of mayors and town-clerks, reading in chorus from the old documents of a gentry family which has now disappeared. Maximo Bretal belonged to this house. He came to Santiago to study theology, and at first an old woman from the village who sold honey used to bring him rye bread enough to last a week, and bacon. He lived with some other theological students at an inn where they paid only for the use of their beds. Maximo Bretal had already received Minor Orders when he came to our home to tutor me in Latin grammar. The priest of Bretal had recommended him to my mother out of charity.

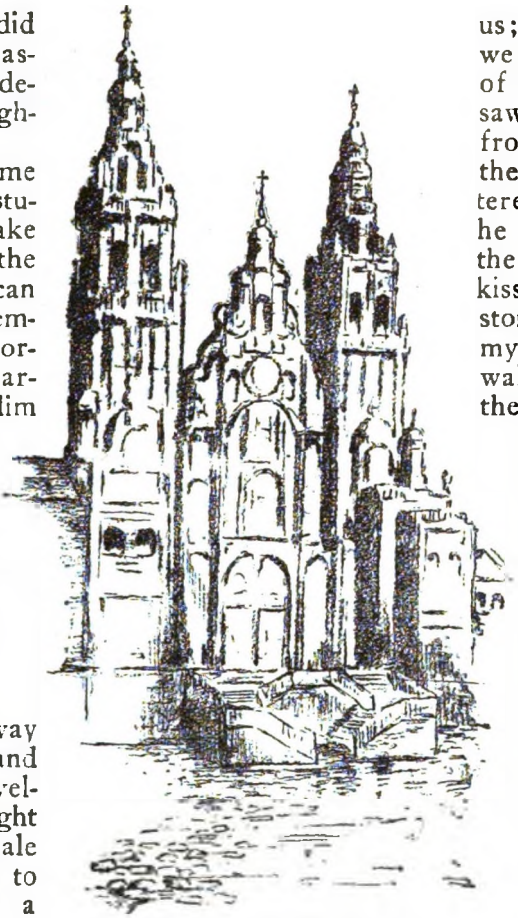
An old woman came to thank my mother and brought her a basket of apples as a present. People said afterwards that the charm which bewitched my sister was in one of those apples.

VII

OUR mother was very pious, and she did not believe in omens or witchcraft. But she sometimes pre-

tended that she did to excuse the passion which was devouring her daughter.

About this time Antonio, like the student, began to take on an air of the other world. I can remember her embroidering in a corner of the big parlor, so wan and dim that it seemed as though one were looking at her reflection in a mirror. Her languid movements seemed tuned to the rhythm of another life, and she had a far-away smile. White and sad, she was enveloped in a twilight mystery, and so pale that she seemed to be encircled by a halo like the moon. . . . And my mother draws aside the portiere to look at her and goes away without making a sound.



Santiago de Compostela

VIII

THE pale gold afternoons of sun came back again, and my sister took me as before to say vesper prayers in the chapel of Corticela. I was so afraid that we would meet the student again and that he would hold out before us his bony hand dripping holy water. In my fright I looked up at my sister and saw her lips quiver. Maximo Bretal who was always in the portico in the afternoons disappeared as he saw us; afterwards, as we crossed the nave of the cathedral we saw him emerge from the shadow of the arches. We entered the chapel, and he knelt down on the steps at the door, kissing the flagstones over which my sister had walked. As he knelt there, the cape falling from his shoulders and his hands joined before him, he looked like a carved statue on a tomb-stone. One afternoon as we were leaving, I saw his shadowy arm reach out and clutch a corner of Antonia's skirt between its fingers:

"I am desperate! . . . You must listen to me, you must know what I am suffering. Don't you want to look at me any more? . . ."

Antonia, pale as a flower, whispered,

"Let me go, Don Maximo, let me go. . ."

"I won't let you go. You're mine. Your soul is mine. I don't want your body. Death will come for that. Look at me! Let your eyes confess in mine! Look at me!"

The waxy hand pulled so hard at my sister's skirt, that it tore away a piece of it. And those innocent eyes looked deep into the fierce, gleaming depths. That night in the dark

when I recalled the scene I cried as though my sister had run away from home.

IX

I WENT on studying my Latin lesson in that parlor filled with the scent of withered roses. Some afternoons my mother would come in. I could hear her sigh in a corner of the big sofa covered with crimson damask, and I heard the moving beads of her rosary as she prayed. My mother was very lovely; all white and fair, always wearing a silk dress. She wore a black glove on one hand because two of her fingers were gone. The other hand was like a flower and all covered with rings. This was the one we always kissed, and the one with which she caressed us. She used to conceal the other in the lace of her handkerchief. Only when she crossed herself did we see it all, so sad and dark against the gleam of her white forehead, the rose of her mouth and her bosom of a Madonna.

Buried in the sofa my mother prayed, and I studied my Latin in the other corner to catch the light that entered through the half-open windows. I had my grammar open on one of those old-fashioned tables with an inlaid chessboard on top. One could scarcely see in that great silent parlor. Now and then, my mother, between prayers, told me to open the window wider. I took advantage of this permission to look under the portico where the student walked up and down in the shadowy twilight. That afternoon as I watched him he suddenly disappeared. I began mumbling my Latin again when somebody knocked at the door. It was a Franciscan friar who had just come back from the Holy Land.

X

FATHER BERNARD had once been my mother's confessor, and he brought her on his return from his pilgrimage a rosary made of olive stones from Mt. Olivet. That afternoon was his second visit since he had returned to his monastery in Santiago. As he came in I left my grammar and ran to kiss his hand. I knelt, looking upward as I waited for his blessing, and it seemed to me that he described instead two horns in the air. I closed my eyes in terror at this trick of the Devil's. It was a snare to make me sin like one they tell in the life of St. Anthony of Padua, in the stories of saints that I was beginning to read out loud to my mother and Antonia. Father Bernard, whom my grandmother would have called a saint on earth, hurried to greet my mother, his former lamb, and forgot to make the sign of the cross over my cropped little head, with its two ears that stood out as though they were going to fly away; a child's head weighed down by childhood's lugubrious chains: Latin in the daytime, and the fear of the dead at night.

The friar said a few words to my mother under his breath, and she raised her gloved hand:

"Go out, my child!"

XI

BASILISA, my mother's old nurse, was crouching outside the door. I saw her and she caught me by the coat, putting her wrinkled palm over my mouth:

"Don't say a word, bad boy!"

I looked at her hard because she made me think of the gargoyles on the cathedral. After a moment she pushed me softly:

"Run away, dear!"

I shook her wrinkled old hand off my shoulder and remained beside her. I heard the friar say:

"It's a question of saving a soul. . ."

Basilisa pushed me again:

"Go away. This isn't for you to hear."

And all humped over she put her eye to the crack of the door. I crouched down by her side. This time she said only:

"You mustn't remember anything your hear."

I couldn't help laughing. She really did look like a gargoyle. I didn't know whether it was a cat, a dog or a wolf, but it was one of those stone figures that peer over the cornice of the cathedral.

XII

WE could hear what they were saying in the parlor. The voice of the Franciscan went on for a long time:

"This morning a youth who has been tempted by the Devil came to our monastery. He told me that he had fallen into an unhappy love, and in his desperation had invoked the aid of Satan. At midnight the fallen angel appeared to him in a cloud of ashes with a great roaring of his bat wings."

My mother sighed:

"Oh, God."

The friar went on:

"Satan told him that if he signed a pact he would help him in his love. The boy hesitated for he had been baptized a Christian and he drove him away with the cross. He confessed all this to me this morning in the confessional. I told him he must forswear his diabolic practices, but he refused. All my advice did not move him. His soul will be lost."

My mother groaned:

"I'd rather see my daughter dead."

The voice of the friar, mysteriously terrifying, went on:

"With her dead he might triumph over Hell. But if she lives, perhaps they will both be lost. . . How can a poor woman like you defy the infernal wisdom?"

"With the grace of God!"

There was a long pause. The friar must have been meditating his answer. Basilisa had clasped me to her breast. We heard the sandals of the friar and the old woman loosened her arms to get up and run away. But she remained there as the voice went on:

"God's grace is not always with us, my daughter. It flows like a fountain and then it dries up. There are souls that think only of their own salvation and never feel the love of their fellow creatures; these are the dried-up fountains. Tell me what your heart felt when you heard that the soul of a Christian was in danger? What did you do to keep him from the powers of Hell? Deny him your daughter, that he might get her from the hands of Satan. . ."

My mother screamed:

"Jesus will help me!"

The voice of the friar trembled with revenge:

"Love should be for all alike. To love only your father, your husband or your child is to bow down to idols of clay. Without thinking so you are trampling on the cross just like the student Bretal."

There was a sound as though he were coming out. As Basilisa and I hurried away a black cat ran past us. Nobody saw Father Bernard leave. That afternoon Basilisa went to the monastery and they told her he was in a mission many miles off.

XIII

THE rain beat against the window panes and the sad afternoon light filled all the rooms.

Antonia sat beside the window embroidering, and our mother, reclining against the sofa, watched her so fixedly that her eyes were like those of a statue. A profound silence enveloped us, and all one could hear was the ticking of the clock. Once Antonia sat dreaming, her needle poised in midair. Our mother sighed aloud, and my sister's eyelids fluttered as though she were awaking from sleep. The bells of many churches began to ring. Basilisa entered with the lights, looked behind all the doors, and put up the window bars. Antonia dreamed again, bent over her embroidery. My mother beckoned me to her with her hand and put her arm around me. Basilisa brought her spindle and sat down on the floor beside the sofa. I heard my mother's teeth chatter. Basilisa, at her feet, looked up at her, and my mother moaned:

"Drive out the cat from under the sofa."

Basilisa bent down:

"Where is the cat?"

"It came in when you brought the lights."

"I don't see it."

"Can't you hear it, either?"

The old woman, moving her spindle back and forth under the sofa, replied:

"No, I don't hear it."

My mother cried,

"Antonia! Antonia!"

"Yes, ma'am?"

"What are you thinking about?"

"Nothing, ma'am!"

"Do you hear the cat scratching?"

Antonia listened for a minute.

"It isn't scratching any more."

My mother shook all over.

"It's scratching right here on the floor in front of my feet, but I can't see it either."

Her fingers closed on my shoulder. Basilisa went for a light, but a gust of wind that made all the doors rattle blew it out. My mother screamed as she clutched my sister by the hair. With an olive branch dipped in holy water the old woman sprinkled all the corners of the room.

XIV

MY mother went to her room; the bell rang, and Basilisa hurried away. Antonia opened the window, and with the eyes of a sleep-walker, looked out on the square. She drew slowly back, and then left the room quickly. I remained all alone, and with my forehead pressed against the pane I watched the last glimmer of light disappear. It seemed to me that I heard cries in the house but I dared not move. I had a vague impression that they were something which I, as a child, ought to ignore. I stayed there by the window, my head buzzing with frightened, confused ideas, recalling dimly scoldings and hours when I had been shut up in a dark room. Unhappy memories arose and seemed to fold themselves about my soul. I was a precocious child, one of those who, with eyes wide, leave their play to listen to old women's gossip. Little by little the noise died away, and when the house became entirely quiet I ran out of the parlor. Basilisa was just coming out of another room and she murmured to me in passing:

"Don't make any noise, bad boy!"

I stood on tip-toe outside my mother's room. The door was ajar,

and from within there came a querulous murmur and a strong smell of aromatic vinegar. I slipped in without making any noise. My mother was in bed, with cloths on her head. Her hand in the black glove stood out against the snowy sheets. Her eyes were staring wide-open, and as I came in she rolled them toward the door without turning her head:

"My son, drive this cat away from my feet!"

I went up to her, and a black cat jumped to the floor and ran out. Basilisa who was standing in the doorway saw it, too, and said that I had driven it away because my heart was pure.

XV

I REMEMBER my mother one long dreary day, sitting in a room where the light scarcely entered through the closed shutters, her hands crossed, her head wrapped in handkerchiefs and her face colorless. She did not say a word, and when others talked she turned her fixed eyes toward them, imposing silence. It was a day that had no hours, all twilight. Suddenly it came to an end as they brought in the lights. My mother screamed:

"The cat! The cat! Pull it off, it's on my back."

Basilisa came over to me, and with a mysterious air pushed me toward my mother. She bent down and, with her chin a-quiver, and the hairs of a mole touching my face, whispered in my ear:

"Cross your hands!"

I crossed my hands and Basilisa put them on my mother's back. Then she whispered.

"What do you feel, child?"

Frightened, I answered in the same tone of voice:

"I don't feel anything, Basilisa."

"Doesn't it feel hot?"

"I don't feel anything, Basilisa."

"Can't you feel the cat's hairs?"

"Nothing at all!"

And I burst into tears, terrified by my mother's screams. Basilisa picked me up and carried me into the hall:

"Oh, you bad boy! You've done something wicked today. That's why you can't drive the enemy away."

She went back into the bedroom, and I stayed out in the hall, frightened and unhappy at the thought of my sins. The screams kept on, and the servants went all over the house carrying lights.

XVI

AFTER that long, long day came a night that was just as long. Lights burned before the saints' statues, and the servants talked in whispers outside the doors that creaked as they were opened. I sat out in the hall by a table that was lighted with two candles, and began to think about the story of the giant Goliath. Antonia passed by and asked in a shadowy voice:

"What are you doing here?"

"Nothing."

"Why don't you study?"

I stared at her, wondering how she expected me to study when our mother was ill. Antonia passed on down the hall, and I went back to the heathen giant who had been killed by a stone. At that time nothing seemed so wonderful to me as the way the boy David used his sling. I made up my mind to practise the next time I went for a walk by the river. I had a vague, wild idea of aiming the stones at the forehead of the student Bretal. Antonia came back with a brazier full of fragrant lavender.

"Why don't you go to bed, child?"

And she hurried off again. I fell asleep with my head on the table.

XVII

I DON'T kow whether this happened one night or many, for the house was always dark and there were always candles burning before the saints. In my sleep I heard my mother's screams, the servants' mysterious whispering, the creaking of the doors, and a bell that passed on the street. Basilisa took away the candlestick, and came back with two new candles that gave scarcely any light. Once, as I raised my head from the table, I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves sitting across from me sewing. He was very small and bald-headed, and he wore a red vest. He smiled at me.

"Were you asleep, studious youth?"

Basilisa was trimming the candles.

"Don't you remember my brother?"

My mind was hazy with sleep, but I could still remember Juan de Alberte. I had seen him at times when I went with the old woman to the towers of the cathedral. Basilisa's brother sewed in an attic under the roof mending cassocks. Basilisa sighed:

"He's here to tell them when to come from Corticela for the last rites."

I began to cry and they told me not to make any noise. My mother was screaming:

"Drive away this cat! Drive away this cat!"

XVIII

BASILISA went into that bedroom at the foot of the stairs leading to the attic, and came out with a black wooden cross. She mumbled a few words which I could not understand, and made the sign of the cross on my back, breast, and sides. Then she handed me the cross, and took her brother's tailor shears:

"We must free her as she asks." Taking me by the hand she led me to the room of my mother who was still screaming.

"Drive away this cat! Drive away this cat!"

In the doorway she whispered to me:

"Go over without making a bit of noise and lay the cross on the pillow. . . I'll stay here by the door."

I went into the bed-room. My mother was sitting up, her hair in disorder, and her hands sticking out like claws. One hand was white and the other black. Antonia watched her, pale and beseeching. I tip-toed past to the other side and saw my sister's eyes, dark, deep and dry. I climbed quietly up on the bed, and laid the cross on the pillows. In the doorway, all bent over, crouched Basilisa. I just caught a glimpse of her as I climbed up on the bed, because I had no more than put the cross on the pillows than my mother began to writhe, and a black cat jumped out of the bedclothes and ran toward the door. I shut my eyes, and with them closed I heard the scissors click. Then the old woman came over to the bed and carried me out of the room. In the hall, beside the table with the tailor's dwarf shadow behind it, she showed me two black patches which oozed blood on her hands. She said they were the cat's ears.

XIX

THE smell of wax and the murmur of confused prayers filled the house. A priest, dressed in his vestments, entered hurriedly with his

finger on his lips. Juan de Alberte led the way for him. The tailor skipped along, with his head cocked over one shoulder, twirling his cap between two fingers, his cape dragging behind him. After them moved a slow colorless group, praying in a low voice. They formed in column up to the doors of my mother's room. Inside knelt Antonia and Basilisa wearing mantillas and holding up tapers. The gnarled hands of the old women lined up along the wall of the corridor, their shadows hugging their bodies, pushed me forward. In my mother's room a lady who was crying and who had a perfumed handkerchief, took me by the hand and knelt with me, helping me hold a taper. The priest walked around the bed murmuring a Latin prayer from his breviary.

Then they raised the covers and I saw my mother's feet all rigid and yellow. I understood that she was dead, and I huddled, terrified and motionless, in the warm arms of the lovely lady. I was afraid to cry out or to move, as she bent her profile down beside my cheek and helped me sustain the funeral candle.

XX

BASILISA took me from the lady's arms and led me to the bed where my mother lay stiff and yellow, her hands hidden in the folds of the sheet. Basilisa lifted me up so I could see the waxy face:

"Tell her good-bye, dear. Say 'Good-bye, mother, I'll never see you any more'".

She put me on the floor a moment to rest, and after a long breath raised me up again, putting her wrinkled old hands under my arms:

"Take a good look at her, so you won't forget her when you're a big boy. Kiss her, dear!"

I bent over the dead face. As I almost touched the motionless eyelids I began to scream and twist in Basilisa's arms. Suddenly Antonia, her hair all dishevelled, appeared on the other side of the bed. She snatched me out of the old woman's arms and pressed me to her breast, sobbing and choking. My sister's kisses, and her eyes all swollen with weeping made me very sad. Antonia was rigid and her face had a strange obstinate expression of grief. We went into another room, and she sat down in a low chair and took me in her lap. She caressed and kissed me, sobbing bitterly, and then she began to twist my hand, and to laugh and laugh and laugh. . . One of the women fanned her with a handkerchief; another with frightened eyes opened a flask of smelling salts, and another hurried away for a glass of water.

XXI

I SAT in a corner filled with a confused sorrow that made my temples throb with pain. I would cry for a while, and then stop, listening to the others weep. It must have been near midnight when they threw open the doors and I saw the flickering light of four candles. My mother was laid out in her black coffin. I entered the room without making any noise, and sat down on the window-sill. Three women and Basilisa's brother were seated around the coffin. Every now and then the tailor got up and spat on his fingers to trim the candles. There was a kind of clownish gracefulness about the little dwarf as he pinched off the blackened wick and puffed out his cheeks to blow on his fingers.

As I listened to the women's talk, little by little I left off crying. Thev were telling stories of ghosts and people who had been buried alive.

XXII

AS day began to break a very tall woman, with black eyes and white hair, came into the room. She kissed my mother on her half-closed eyes without shrinking from the chill of the dead body, and almost without a tear. Then she knelt down between two tapers, and dipping an olive branch in holy water shook it over the corpse. Basilisa came in looking for me, and beckoned to me with her hand:

"Look at grandma, dearie."

It was my grandmother! She had ridden in on a mule from her home in the mountains seven leagues from Santiago. I heard the mule stamping on the stones in the courtyard where they had tied it. The noise seemed to re-echo through the emptiness of the weeping house.

Antonia called from the doorway:

"Brother! Brother!"

I went over to her slowly as Basilisa told me to do. She took me by the hand and led me over to a corner.

"That lady is our grandmother, and we're going to live with her."

"Well, why doesn't she kiss me?"

Antonia looked thoughtful for a moment as she wiped her eyes.

"You foolish child, don't you know she has to pray for mamma first?"

She prayed for a long time. Finally she got up and asked for us, and Antonia led me over to her. She had put a black mourning handkerchief over her curly silver hair which made her black eyes shine still brighter. Her fingers brushed my cheek lightly, and I can still remember the feeling of her harsh hand, without a touch of tenderness. She talked in dialect:

"Dead is your mother, and now your mother am I. Ye have nobody else in the world. I shall take ye with me and we will close this house. Tomorrow, after mass, we start." And her work-hardened hand brushed my cheek again.

XXIII

THE next day my grandmother locked the house and we set out for San Clemente of Brandeso. I was already in the street, on the mule of one of the mountaineers who was going to carry me behind him. I heard the doors of the house slam as the servants called Antonia. They could not find her, and, with frightened faces, they opened up the windows and went back through the empty rooms calling her. Finally an old woman in the door of the cathedral spied her on the roof where she had fainted away. We called to her, and she opened her eyes in the morning sun as though she were awakening from a bad dream. The sexton in his shirt sleeves brought out a ladder for her to climb down. And as we started away, the student Bretal appeared in the portico, his cape all blown awry by the wind. He had a black bandage on his face, and it seemed to me that I could discern under it the bloody gashes where his ears had been cut off level with his head.

XXIV

SANTIAGO of Galicia was once a world shrine, and even today the souls of its dwellers have their eyes ever alert for a miracle.

Kerkeb

By

ELISSA RHAÏS

From the French by M. W. Biggs

From the seclusion of a Mohammedan home and training to the bustle of literary Paris seems a hazardous trip. Yet Mme. Elissa Rhaïs made it with flattering success. The daughter of Algerians of the better class, she grew up in "the house of stories," for her mother and her grandmother before her were famed as story-tellers. She was allowed to attend the French school in Blidah, and early published some little sketches in a Moroccan newspaper. And then one day, with her three children and an armful of manuscripts, she presented herself to the editor of the haughty Revue de Deux Mondes in Paris. Several days later she was informed that her work had been accepted. Her stories have been translated into many European languages, but "Kerkeb" is the first of them to appear in English.

ON the heights of the ancient city of Fez they were celebrating the festival of the Marabout of Ellouali. Around the white cupola dedicated to the great saint, among rocks and aloe-plants, flags waved from countless tents. Black, red and green, the men's burnooses mingled thickly with the dark-bordered white cloaks of the women. A crowd pressed forward at the entrance of the shrine to leave their offerings to the saint. Harsh voices chanted the *Fatihah*.[1]

On the banks of the neighboring stream hundreds of sheep were being slaughtered. Severed carcasses hung from the carob-trees, and the waters were flowing red. The smoke of incense rose from beneath the trees. Bonfires blazed on all sides and music filled the air. Women interrupted their singing to call out to one another, "*Yaou! yaou.*"

Coffee venders were setting up their stoves in a grotto and arranging shelves for their long-handled pots and little gilded cups. Pastry-cooks were spreading out on cloths heaps of date-bread and almond twists. Around a fountain horsemen were accoutering themselves for their ceremonial performance.

The crowd of pilgrims kept growing. New brotherhoods arrived, climbing the rocky paths, preceded by flute-players, standard-bearers and men carrying many-colored candelabra to be placed on the saint's catafalque.

And with it all, the torrid heat of July and the dazzling light of the great Moroccan sky.

A few leagues from Fez, the harem of Sid Hafid had been aroused. The women of his retinue were also preparing for the festival. Before the finely carved gate mules laden with silk mattresses, woolen cloaks and coffers inlaid with mother-of-pearl stood waiting until Sid Hafid's wives were ready for the journey. The master himself was there at the entrance, clothed in a white cloak and with yellow leather slippers on his feet. He gave orders to the servants in strident tones. He

[1] *A passage from the Koran.*

was a Moor of pronounced type, whose tall, thin frame and bony face revealed his high-strung temperament.

His rounded beard quivered whenever he gave an order, trifling though it might be. His hooked nose alone, between piercing eyes, heavily painted according to the native custom, betrayed all the sensual egoism, cunning and unbending pride of his race. His least word must be obeyed even as the dromedary yields to the driver's goad, for he was the master.

Now he walked to and fro, preoccupied and even more nervous than usual. After reviewing the whole caravan, carefully inspecting the piles of baggage and seeing that the girths were securely fastened beneath the beasts of burden, after pushing his servants about roughly, he went back into the house.

He passed through the lofty corridor, into which little light penetrated, crossed the mosaic pavement of the courts adorned with fountains of porphyry, and galleries with twisted pillars and bas-reliefs of carved cinnamon bark. A very palace it was, abounding in treasures and as cool as a well.

He stopped near a great door, both wings of which were open, though the whole frame was covered with a heavy velvet curtain. He listened intently and held his breath so as to hear what was going on within. His face paled as he sniffed with a sort of rage the musk and amber perfume that stifled him. After a moment he made up his mind and, raising the curtain with a trembling hand, entered Kerkeb's quarters without removing his slippers.

Kerkeb was reclining on a red satin couch in the dim light of a richly furnished room. She was his favorite wife, a splendid creature, with lightly tanned skin, large black eyes, also heavily painted, a thin nose and voluptuous lips which were always half open with her rapid breathing. On her knees she held a box filled with flasks of perfumes and aromatic pastes—a box whose intricate carving must have exacted years of careful workmanship from one of those craftsmen who live in the slums of the upper town. She was putting the final touches on her lips, as the rays of dawn filtered through the skylight, when Sid Hafid appeared before her. She gave him a smile of greeting, showing her sharp teeth like the seeds in a broken pomegranate. Without paying further attention to her lord, she continued to study her features in a gold-handled mirror embossed with silver.

"Oh Sidi, is it time to start?" she asked.

Sid Hafid fixed his piercing eyes on her but did not deign to answer her question.

Kerkeb seemed indifferent to his silence. She took from her box a jewelled diadem and placed it in her hair which was smoothed down with cumin oil. Then she gave her image a final glance of admiration, smiled with satisfaction and rose slowly from the couch. She was ready. The curves of her young and vigorous body were outlined under her white robe, held around the waist by an embroidered sash of black silk fastened with a large emerald buckle.

Then the master approached her. Restraining his longing for her and looking straight into her eyes, he said:

"Oh, Kerkeb, take care not to disobey me. You are going to the festival—and may God grant us his blessing!—merely to sing the praises

of the saint and bring your offering to him. . ."

"And for my pleasure also. . . To have a little fun!" she interrupted with the pout of a spoiled child which, as she well knew, added to her charms.

The Moor seized her wrists.

"Yes," said he, "but you will not dance?"

He knew how she longed to dance, this daughter of a mountain tribe, and he had misgivings about sending her to the festival. He was tortured with jealousy. Ah! thought he, those dances in which she ravished the beholders, as she yielded to the rhythm, her eyes dreamy, her supple limbs and bosom quivering, her face transformed into a picture of abandon! It was thus that he had first beheld her, one festal evening at a distant shrine on the banks of the Sebu, dancing in the moonlight in the centre of a crowd that watched her, fascinated. It was thus that she had bewitched his heart and his senses, and now that she was his wife he wanted her to dance for none but himself.

At the brutal order this woman, accustomed to love, made a movement of revolt. She tried to free her arms from the master's grip, but he only held her the more firmly.

"Swear, Kerkeb, that you will not dance," said he.

Clenching his teeth, he looked deeper into her eyes.

Kerkeb turned her head, relaxed the tension of her hands and remained silent.

How that obstinate and disdainful resistance irritated him! It was the first time he had met with such behaviour in a woman. The eight other wives who composed his harem were as submissive as servants, always ready to do his bidding, happy to humor his lightest whim, picking his teeth with a gold pin, strewing his couch with jessamine leaves or lulling him to sleep at night by rubbing his heels. She alone was still as untamed as the mountain where she was born. And this pride, pitted against his own, exasperated the Moor even while it piqued his love.

"Kerkeb," he repeated, "swear that you will not dance!"

Sid Hafid in his anger grasped her frail wrists tighter. A diamond bracelet snapped. Kerkeb grew pale and sank down on one knee.

"Swear," said he once more, "or in spite of God's wrath that I may call down upon my head, you shall not leave this house."

Kerkeb stiffened more than when he had hurt her physically, but the promise he demanded would not pass her lips.

"Swear!" roared the master, his patience at an end.

"*Neuleuf!* I swear!" said she. The promise was broken in thought even as she uttered it, and he read her treacherous look.

Sid Hafid loosened his thin fingers

from her bruised wrists. He threw his wife down on the couch, then went out with haughty bearing but his face was pale.

"Ah!" said he, "if it were not a sin to keep you from going to this pilgrimage, you should remain here, woman who have tortured me, body and soul, from the first moment I laid eyes upon you!"

II

NIGHT was falling over the broad scene of the celebration. Lights were appearing in the tents one by one. The candles offered to the saint shone in clusters around his shrine. Here and there might be seen the flowing burnoose of a man seeking the cool air beneath the carob-trees, or the shadow of a woman putting out her bonfire. All human voices were stilled, but from a distant tent came the dull monotonous thumping of a drum.

Sid Hafid's harem had spent a joyous afternoon. The women had wandered among the stalls, eaten cakes, lighted thousands of candles of every imaginable color around the tomb of the saint, sung the *Fatihah,* and watched the equestrian performance on a slope behind the mountain. As the sun was setting the young women made their pilgrimage to *sedjret El Habbala,* an old pepper-tree which stood a few hundred yards from the temple. They hung locks of their hair or strips of their sashes upon its branches, lying face down upon the ground to call on the spirit of this tree to give them children, that they might thus win the favor of their master.

Kerkeb had not gone there with them. She had no need to perform this rite, certain as she was of the master's preference for her over all his other wives, thanks to her physical beauty. Alone in the middle of her tent she listened to the distant sound of the drum.

"Dov! Dov! Dov!"

The sound attracted her, lulled her for a moment, then made her quiver all over. Oh! she thought, what a joyous gathering there must be in that tent! Young men and women watching breathlessly, old women beating the drum, the dancers steeped to forgetfulness in the fumes of benzoin, their minds wandering in regions beyond the ken of ordinary mortals!

"Dov! Dov! Dov!" the drum sounded.

The rhythm was growing faster. It must be the *djdib* they were dancing. Women were whirling around, swaying from the hips, swinging their heads frantically from side to side, gradually becoming thrall to the djinn, or presiding spirit, excited by the old women's cries and the feverish breathing of the spectators.

"Dov! Dov! Dov!"

The thrumming grew wilder. The voices of the "inviters"—those whose task it was to keep the dance going by calling other women to replace those worn out with the mad whirl—could be heard shouting: *"Ermiou el mharem!* Loosen your scarfs!"

The dance was fast becoming furious. The dancers were beginning to whirl all the way across the tent as though possessed, until they dropped to the ground.

"Dov! Dov! Dov!"

The critical moment was at hand. The "inviters" were vociferating *"Ermiou el mharem!* Loosen your scarfs!" Women were carrying in pitchers of water which they stood in readiness to throw in the faces of the dancers.

Kerkeb had risen. Instinctively she caught up her light cloak. Slowly

she began to dance, all alone, in her tent...

"Dov! Dov! Dov!"

Oh, what a cruel restraint it was that held her back! For Kerkeb this dancing epitomized all the warm splendor of those Southern lands. There came to her the memory of clear nights at the river's edge where she used to dance herself into ecstasies in a paradise of stars, murmuring waters and the sound of golden coins piling up around her, all mingled with the jealous cries of admirers who threw themselves at her feet, leaped into the river or fought one another among the cactus.

Oh, what nights were those! And by taking just a few steps from her tent she could live it all over again. She had only to cross a few rocks in the darkness and once more she could taste that vivid emotion—once more before death.

... As the sound of the drum died away, announcing that the dancer had fainted, Kerkeb's limbs quivered. Her thick sash weighed heavily upon her, her diadem had become loosened and the mass of her hair fell upon her shoulders. The djinn had taken possession of her, too.

She seemed to hear the sound of approaching steps. She felt a cold breath upon her forehead. She stiffened and tried to resist the djinn. She remembered, as if in a mist, the master's piercing eyes, her bruised wrists, her promise. A terrible punishment awaited her. But her young body reacted instantly. She was possessed with the desire to flee—rush out of the tent.

The voice of the "inviters" resounded in the darkness:

"Come, who will be next?" they cry. "May God break the legs of those who refuse to dance for our Sid Ellouali!"

"Dov! Dov! Dov!" spoke the drum again.

Their voice called her, drawing her with the attraction of a magnet for steel—irresistibly this time.

III

IN his own spacious mansion through echoing galleries flooded with moonlight, Sid Hafid paced restlessly, with his hands behind his back tearing at a crimson chaplet. From time to time he stopped and leaned against a pillar, his lips compressed, his eyes gazing straight in front of him, alight with his one obsessing thought. A deep line furrowed his low forehead. Suddenly, in sharp tones, he called his faithful servant.

"Oh, Knett!"

Knett had just appeared like a shadow from the dark well of the stairs. He was a short, thick-set man. His bulging temples bespoke energy and the doggedness of toil. A pair of gray eyes gave a look of tranquil kindness to his mulatto physiognomy.

"Dog! Son of a dog! Where are you?" cried his master.

"I alone am the dog, master," he responded. "My parents are resting under the protection of Allah."

"Is my horse ready?"

"As the master ordered. Knees and hoofs daubed with alum and henna; eyes painted like your own, with khol."

Sid Hafid clicked his teeth and the little man sped away through the door like a flash.

The two were soon together again before the gate. Sid Hafid wore a simple burnoose. Knett held Zerdani by the bridle. The horse was groomed as if for battle. A silk and gold mantle covered his black coat that shone like a mirror. The master mounted and spurred forward

across the dark plain without leaving any orders.

Gazing after his master as he rode out of sight, Knett pondered thus:

"He is riding toward the shrine. And yet he was not to have brought his offering until three days hence. What has become of the traditional practices of the house?"

Then, with a shrug of the shoulders, he muttered:

"*Allah berk iaref bel gloub!* Allah alone knows the hearts of men!"

And then he closed the gate.

. . . The women of the harem had just returned from their pilgrimage when the Moor appeared at the entrance of their tent. They all began to tremble, for Sid Hafid wore that terrible expression of his bad days. Without answering their greetings, he looked around for the favorite. She was not there.

"Get ready to go home," he ordered. "The tent is to be taken down."

"*Nam. . . Nam. . . Sidi.* Very well, master, very well," the women stammered, faint with fright.

He was already gone. In a moment he came back, dragging Kerkeb by her sash—Kerkeb, whom he had snatched by the hair from the infernal dance. Her eyes were haggard, her features livid; her torn mantle dripped with water. The culprit had not had time to regain her senses when Sid Hafid drew from beneath his burnoose a great black and white scarf, and, with the roar of a wild beast, his lips flecked with foam, he flung it in her face. The women shrieked. Kerkeb was condemned to death.

IV

THE die was cast. Kerkeb was to die. The three days of grace, which the Mohammedan religion grants to the condemned had elapsed.

On the fatal evening, an hour before the execution was to take place, Knett, his face pale, opened the door of the cell at the foot of the garden. It was not the first time that Knett's master had imposed on him such sinister tasks. But the few heads which lay in the bottomless well were those of brigands who had attacked the master in the woods or men who had avenged themselves on some of his servants, cutting off their ears or noses or leaving them, bound hand and foot, beneath the stream of a fountain. On such occasions Knett could nerve himself for the task, saying:

"You have slain others; now it is your turn to die."

But what had Kerkeb done? Of what crime had she been guilty? Her hands had never been stained with the blood of others. He knew her to be loyal and faithful to her husband. Her offense could not be a grave one. The little man supposed she must have been guilty of disobedience and one does not disobey the master. But did such a fault call for punishment by death?

As the door of the cell opened the moonlight fell upon the prisoner. Kerkeb was more dazzlingly beautiful than ever, tall and pale from suffering and fasting. A light garment clung to her body. A black cord was tied around her waist. Her hands were bound behind her back.

At the sight of her jailer, Kerkeb shuddered. Her big eyes grew anguished, but she could not utter her plea for mercy, as the words seemed to stick in her throat.

Knett turned his head away. He placed at her feet a round basin of water, untied her chilled hands and spoke in a voice which he tried to make severe.

"Daughter of Mussulmans, the hour draws near. Make your ablutions," he ordered.

Kerkeb choked. Every muscle of her face was strained in a desperate effort to speak.

"Knett! Knett!" she finally articulated.

But the slave had already left, bolting and locking the door behind him.

Seated on the door-step, Knett listened with a sad heart to the young woman's sobs. He was waiting with a feeling of horror for the moment when the moon's rays should strike the rim of the well, giving him the signal to throw the victim into its depths.

A little incense burner had been placed near the well. Knett must set a light to it when the Mussulman's soul had rejoined Allah. Silence reigned in the house and in the garden of slender palm-trees. The establishment was deserted. The master, taking the full moon as a pretext had set for that evening the festival of the *sloughis* (desert dogs) so that every one might be away. The entire household had marched slowly over the vast plain in the direction of the rocks of Moulouya. The master led the caravan, mounted on Zerdani who snorted impatiently, for the bridle hung loose on his neck, and that was his order to walk slowly. With his head low, the hood of his burnoose pulled down over his eyes, Sid Hafid seemed lost in endless meditation. The women of the harem followed on foot, all clothed in white. On their heads they wore scarfs of gold striped with black. The servants, white-skinned or dusky, came next, balancing on their heads great olive-wood dishes containing the ceremonial pudding.

It was a mournful procession; every one was conscious of the horrible scene about to be enacted at the place they had left behind, and the master felt his heart torn at every step of his horse. Then he grew firm again in his resolution, but he could not bear to hear the death-cry of the woman he had loved.

Meanwhile the *sloughis,* sniffing the night air, began to howl. The moon shone full and brilliant in a velvet sky.

The time had come. Knett was dragging Kerkeb toward the pit. Crouching at his feet, she dug her fingers into the stones and roots in the narrow strip of ground that separated them from the yawning pit. The task should have been accomplished with much more despatch, but Knett had left her wrists untied, thinking that a woman would give him little trouble. But the unhappy creature resisted desperately and her cries filled the air.

"Knett! dear Knett!" she implored, "have pity on my youth. Spare my tender years and God will lengthen yours. Remember when I was queen of the harem; what harm did I ever do you then? Oh, Knett, remember!"

A violent struggle was going on within the little man. The honest fellow heard the master's voice which commanded him: "Knett, son of a dog!"—and the master's orders were to be carried out without question. Nevertheless this fellow feared God also, and he was afraid to bring an innocent woman to her death. He was still hesitating, for he did not know what she had done. Never before had the master concealed from him the crimes of those condemned.

Kerkeb's teeth chattered. All her nerves were quivering. A cold sweat poured from her face.

"Have mercy, kind Knett!" she

begged. "Leave me my life. Let me live as an insect rather than sleep forever in the bottomless well. I will go away and bury myself in the deep forests on the banks of the Sebu, and none shall know that I am still alive."

Knett gripped himself. The moonbeams had already passed the rim of the well and were now bathing the wall of the enclosure in light. With a great effort he seized Kerkeb by the shoulders and dragged her to the edge of the well. But she managed to clutch his cloak and dug her nails into his flesh, putting him in danger of being drawn down with her into the gulf.

"Think of your beloved daughter, Knett!" she appealed. "In the name of your beloved daughter have mercy on me!"

The slave started. In a vision, which made his face tense, he beheld his Bekhta, the heart of his heart, the apple of his eye, struggling with a pitiless executioner. His conscience, gaining the upper-hand, demanded justice.

"But tell me," he cried at last, without relaxing his grip, "tell me at this solemn moment what is your crime."

"I—I—" stammered Kerkeb, in tones deadened by the tightness of his grip, "I danced the *djdib* at the festival."

Knett stood motionless just long enough for Kerkeb's answer to penetrate his brain. Then he stepped back, drew a dagger from his belt and cut the cord at her waist. Lowering his voice, he said:

"Hear me, I am risking my own head and my daughter's and my wife's with yours. If your crime is what you say we will be saved."

He lifted his hand to his chin with a threatening movement.

"But if you have lied to me," he added, "God will punish you. Go!"

Kerkeb stood up. She moved away from the well, staring ahead as if in a dream, her mind still dazed with surprise and terror. When she had reached the wall that surrounded the master's domain, she spoke again, swearing to Knett by the moon which shone upon them that what she had said when face to face with death was the truth.

But Knett called her back. He had put his hand into the little incense burner near the well, and held out to the condemned woman a handful of the powder.

"For the dogs," he said, "in case you meet them."

Kerkeb sank down on one knee and kissed the slave's hand fervently. "God will reward you, good Knett," she said.

And opening a little gate in the wall, she fled out into the plain.

She had scarcely advanced more than half a league when the *sloughis* sniffed her trail. Messaoud, Aabah and Soudani appeared on the luminous horizon. Soon the whole pack of dogs was pursuing her. Kerkeb, beside herself with fear, caught sight of a sharp stone and began feverishly digging a hole in the sand in which to bury herself. But the *sloughis* were closing in on her as fast as their lean legs would carry them. Soon they were springing at Kerkeb, ready to tear her to shreds when she recalled Knett's injunction. With all her strength she flung the incense powder at them. The dogs leaped back. The odor seemed to have hypnotized them for the moment. In a few seconds they fled, baying wildly.

"It is done," said Sid Hafid to himself, trembling in his saddle. "They have just seen Azrael."[1]

Wheeling his horse sharply about,

[1] *The Angel of Death.*

he gave the signal to return.

He found the well covered with its flagstone, and Knett seated near-by, his eyes on the ground. He dared not face his master.

"Knett, what has happened?" asked Sid Hafid.

"Nothing, master," he replied. "*Rba saa ou rahi feddet.* A quarter of an hour ago she departed."

V.

MONTHS had passed. Winter, the bitter winter of Fez enveloped the city in its bitter breath. Heavy fogs swirled above the plain. The desert wind howled in the valleys like a hungry wolf. Beneath the gloomy sky, among mists tinged with mauve, the heights of Djnah-Meksour were crowned with snow.

Since the wife who had disobeyed him was no more, Sid Hafid had sought the solitude of his own quarters. He was more silent and fiercer than ever. Wrapped in a tiger-skin, he spent his days smoking a narghile in front of an earthenware stove, whose dry heat warmed the vast halls with their Granadine tapestries, their red copper vessels and ancestral armor. He no longer trod the maze of corridors that led to the quarters of his wives. His gruff voice was heard only when he summoned Knett to attend to his narghile or hand him a glass of alcohol. Sometimes he would stray into the passage, lingering by the door of his favorite's room, both wings of which had been closed in sign of mourning. Then his step was slower and his nostrils dilated as if to drink in with voluptuous pain a certain perfume which still hung in the air. Of a sudden he would turn his head and hurry away.

At night, when the whole establishment was wrapped in the silence of sleep, he would go and wander near that evil well. In the clear, pale light of winter nights, wrapped in his ample burnoose, he would walk round and round the dark orifice into which he believed Kerkeb had disappeared forever. He would roam thus all through the night, sometimes approaching so near the edge that Knett, who followed him like his shadow, thought he saw his master suddenly vanish in his turn into the bottomless well. This haughty master, whose mouth never opened except to command or rebuke, would sigh in silence within Knett's hearing. One evening when a nervous breath seemed to have shaken him to the very marrow of his bones, Knett heard him mutter:

"*Ma merrha fi hiaha ou ma hlaha fi moutha!* Oh, the bitterness of her alive, and the sweetness of her dead."

As he heard the remorse of that cruel man, Knett was on the point of consoling him:

"Rejoice, master, for Kerkeb is not dead."

But Knett was afraid of his master's wrath if he let him know that he had guessed his most intimate secret, so he held the words back, hoping only that time would assuage Sid Hafid's grief.

One terrible December morning a beggar-woman stopped at the gate of the enclosure. She was clad in miserable rags infested with vermin and she shivered in the pitiless wind of the desert.

"*Ya ntaoua Rebbi ya elmoumnine!*" she begged. "Ye who belong to God, oh Mussulmans! *Fi khater Rebbi ya elmoummine!* In the name of God, oh Mussulmans!"

She cast an anguished look through the fine fretwork of the gate down the paths that crossed the grounds. Suddenly she caught sight of the master and quickly pulled up

her veil. At the same time her voice became humbler and more insistent.

"In the name of God, Ya Sidi," she implored, "take pity on me that He may have mercy on your loved ones that are dead."

She stretched out toward him her benumbed little hand.

Sid Hafid had just returned from his pilgrimage to the foot of the garden. His face was pale and his eyes sunken from another night of grieving. The last words of the beggar softened his heart.

"See that she is given the Prophet's three days of charity," he ordered.

As he returned to his rooms the vagrant woman was led into the big hall on the first floor, where she found herself in the company of a few dervishes and some caravan drivers.

Sid Hafid entered his own chamber. But the aspect of the house had been changed for some days. The walls were quite bare, as was the floor, and every ornament had been removed. In one corner stood the master's narghile; in another, carpets, hangings and cushions were rolled into a heap. A cold draught swept through the rooms thus denuded. In this way had the most austere Moroccan mourning been inaugurated—the penance of a living person who wants to become penetrated with the cold desolation of death.

Sid Hafid sat down on the floor in front of his narghile. But several nights' vigil had worn him out. The silence of this immense living tomb, the cold and damp of the flagstones against his legs and the smoke of his narghile completed his feeling of stupefaction. It was not long before he let his head sink back in the hood of his burnoose and closed his eyes.

He had been drowsing thus for an hour when he thought he heard a slight sound on the other side of the wall. He listened, but the noise had ceased. Doubtless it was some slave passing in the corridor, or was it an illusion of his fevered brain? His eyes closed once more and he dozed off again. Soon, however, the noise again aroused him. He heard the furtive steps of some one in the room on his right.

"Almighty Allah!" he cried. "Who can ever have dared to enter that room!"

Then all was silence again. But Sid Hafid had shaken himself out of his stupor. Soon he heard a piece of furniture being moved. He raised himself on his elbow. Somebody was unfolding a garment. He would not yet arise. He put his ear close to the wall to convince himself that this was not some nightmare. Then suddenly, and quite clearly this time, he heard the key turn in the little cabinet of toilet accessories which opened with its familiar creak. Then he sprang to his feet. Who had the boldness to meddle with these relics? The sound of that little key in its lock upset him completely. What memories it evoked! Before that precious box the favorite had passed some of the sweetest hours of her life. He reached the door, boiling with rage, his mind made up to inflict cruel punishment on the trespasser, whoever it might be, that had dared to enter this shrine.

At that moment the portiere was drawn aside. A woman glittering in silks and jewels appeared in the doorway. Sid Hafid drew back.

"*Bismi Allah Sma Errahme!*" he exclaimed. "In the name of Allah the Merciful!"

Kerkeb fixed her bewitching eyes upon the master. Then she let the

portiere fall and went toward him with little, fearful steps.

"Kerkeb! You here!" he cried. "You still alive!"

"Oh, master, forgive me," she murmured. "I have suffered so much in the forest, among lions and wolves and black snakes, perched in the highest branches of the cedars. Snow, wind, hunger, loneliness, after your beautiful harem, your gilded nest, your caresses. Master, I have suffered more than on that night at the edge of the bottomless well."

But as Kerkeb advanced toward him, Sid Hafid kept stepping backward, haggard, afraid, not knowing what attitude to take. His heart was beating wildly with joy. He gazed at this woman whom he loved and whom he had thought dead. Had he not suffered also! And on seeing her come back to him, repentant, broken, submissive at last, his pride should be satisfied. But he could not forget that his order had not been obeyed.

"How did that wretched Knett let you escape?" he grumbled. "So he did not throw you into the well as I had ordered?"

Kerkeb had had time to cast her eyes round the room. The walls stripped of their coppers and coats of armor, the rugs piled in a corner, that single narghile bubbling in the cold, sonorous halls, everything told of the mourning which had marked her absence. And then, she saw how thin the master had become, and the black rings around his heavy eyes and the pallor of his withered face, and she understood that she was still the mistress of his heart. This emboldened her to say:

"Oh, master, forgive your slaves. I alone am guilty. I begged him so much and I wept so much that the kind-hearted Knett let me go."

Her voice was becoming more and more seductive and her eyes softer. Sid Hafid turned his head away, trying to resist her charm. He frowned and in a peremptory tone muttered again:

"And you have dared to come into my presence, realizing what you and my ungrateful servant have done?"

But Kerkeb was already close to him. She kissed his thin fingers. The perfume of musk and amber which rose from her garments, mingled with that of her saffron skin, struck at his heart. He made a last effort to resist. Then his nostrils dilated, and breathing rapidly he drank in the air which surrounded his favorite. Kerkeb was kissing his knees.

"Master! Master!" she whispered, "Knett did not kill me because he knew you loved me still."

VI.

A LITTLE later, toward noon, Knett came to inform his master that the beggar-woman he had entrusted to his care for the Prophet's three days had disappeared from the strangers' hall. Kerkeb smiled, for Knett, who was speaking to his master from the door with his eyes lowered, had not seen her. Sid Hafid coolly replied to his slave:

"The beggar-woman, Knett? Here she is."

"We are lost," thought Knett, recognizing Kerkeb in her costume of the harem, seated beside the Moor. "The master is showing her to me thus, to make the lesson harder."

Kerkeb, understanding his misgivings, came to his rescue.

"Do not be afraid, Knett," she said to him in a clear voice. "Do not be afraid. The master has forgiven us."

Then Sid Hafid, deeply moved but

smiling, turned to him and said:

"Knett, I give you my blessing, you have gained a victory. Servants such as you cannot be kept forever."

He rose, called Knett to him, and with a sigh threw his right arm around his neck in the embrace that gives freedom to the slave.

"You have given me back my life," he added. "Go; I grant freedom to you and yours."

While the slave sank down and kissed the master's knees, Kerkeb put her jeweled arms around Sid Hafid's neck and whispered softly in his ear:

"Master, I swear to you that I will never, never dance again under the tents of Sid Ellouali."

The Night

By

ALEXANDER BLOK

From the Russian by Leo Pasvolsky

At night, when darkness, calm impelling,
Enshrouds the city's fitful mirth,
God's own unuttered music, welling
From heaven, invests the throbbing earth.

For what are life's grim storms, when roses
Which thou didst give me, burn in bloom,
And human tears when light reposes
In roseate West, untouched by gloom?

Accept, O Thou, who life didst fashion,
Through blood, through suff'ring, through the grave,
This brimming cup of final passion
Poured out by thy unworthy slave!

Moonlight

By

JAMES WOOD JOHNSON

An American Story

Mr. Johnson shall introduce himself to "World Fiction" readers. "As for biographical details—I'm afraid there are few that could be called interesting. I am twenty-six years old, and a graduate of Cornell. Early in 1917 I enlisted in the American Ambulance Field Service. After the entrance of the U. S. into the war I transferred to the American Air Service, became a pursuit pilot, was commissioned lieutenant, but after wrecking a few expensive Nieuport 'planes the army decided it could dispense with my flying. I was made a sort of liaison agent between French and American camps—what is known as a 'ground hog.' I continued to live in Paris for two years after the armistice as representative for an American firm, but during which time my real interest was to absorb as much French literature and art as I could. Which is, perhaps, the reason why, late in 1920, I returned to the U. S., came to Indiana, and have now become 'Secretary' of an Indiana manufacturing concern."

IT was a hot evening in July, hot and humid as it gets in Southern Indiana, in the "Pocket" district, as it is called. The sun had just begun to set, but the pavements were still soft from the blasts of heat of the day.

Mr. and Mrs. Schlueter left their house on River Street, the well-to-do avenue of the city, and made their way towards Sunset Park, facing the Ohio River. Mr. Schlueter was a lumber dealer, and he prided himself on his capacity to appreciate the comforts of such a home as his, and the delights of a quiet game of pinochle with a few of the boys while Mrs. Schlueter was at the "movies"; but to-night he was really too wet with perspiration even to attempt a game, and moreover Mrs. Schlueter had obstinately refused to consider the "movies" in such weather. It was too hot even for a drive in the car; for what a horrible mess it would be if they had a puncture in that heat! So they strolled very slowly down the street towards the park, hoping for a breath of cool air from the river, Mr. Schlueter in his shirt sleeves, his coat slung over one arm and his straw hat pushed as far back as possible on his head, showing half of his red and moist bald spot. He was short and heavy-set, and slightly bow-legged, so that his steps also were short, and kept time with those of Mrs. Schlueter. He gazed about him critically with pale gray, bulging eyes, which twitched and rolled nervously, like those of a chicken; and he sucked his cigar, snorting impatiently, "Aw! such heat! Phew! What is there to do on a night like this?" And Mrs. Schlueter, round and balancing from side to side as she walked, a broad hat perched on top of her head and a large hand-bag flapping against her side, sighed and kept repeating with him, "Phew! What is there to do?"

They could look into the windows

of the houses as they passed along River Street, for all the shades were rolled up and lights were already lit. Here and there a family was still at dinner; the father in shirt sleeves, reading his newspaper. Others had finished, and in the shadows of the porches one could see the white shirts of uncoated men and boys, and hear the loud but indistinct *wah-wah-wah-wah* of their voices. All along the line of front porches were moving white objects, swinging to and fro; fat men in sofa swings, children and women creaking in rocking-chairs, watching passers. From a dozen points at once floated the rasping tones of phonographs, and the white spots in the shadows swayed and leaned, swayed and leaned, in time to the sounds of drums and of saxophones.

"H'ye! Carl!" came voices from the porches from time to time as they moved along.

"H'ye! Phil!" or "H'ye! Herman!" Mr. Schlueter replied to each, twisting his cigar into one corner of his mouth and squinting at the shadows. "Hot, ain't it?"

"You said it—hot!"

"Nothing doing in weather like this, is there?"

"Nope—not much!"

"What doing to-night?"

"Nothing. The wife and me are staying in to-night. A little cold water-melon later on. Only thing to cool you off."

"Aw! that don't last long!" And Mr. Schlueter stood gazing undecidedly up and down the street; then, "Well, so long, Herman!" or "So long, Bill!"

"So long, Carl!"

They reached the park at last, a strip of scorched grass along the water-front, and made their way to a bench near a cement structure in the center known as the "Pagoda," where the Boy Scouts' Band gave an occasional concert, and sank down heavily, Mr. Schlueter fanning himself furiously with his hat. Mrs. Schlueter sighed and mopped her face and neck with her handkerchief.

"Phew!"

Near the Pagoda was a pump, with a rusty tin can propped up on its handle, and dripping dismally into a circle of mud about it. An iron fountain, which showed traces of having once been painted white, but which was now gray and streaked with rust, stood near by. The figure of a boy holding a large-mouthed fish stood in the middle of the fountain's basin. No water ever gushed forth from the mouth of the fish, but the basin was always filled with a thick green and yellow slime, and about this slime were now buzzing a multitude of flies and mosquitoes.

Mr. and Mrs. Schlueter gazed with melancholy at the green slime of the basin and listened to the drip-drip-drip of the pump in the mud and the whirr of the insects. "Oh! but it's hot!" sighed Mrs. Schlueter. "No air! Not a particle of air stirring!"

Mr. Schlueter listened to her for several minutes, and finally he said, angrily, "Well, this is no place to sit! What are we sitting here for? Let's go over to one of those benches near the bank, and look at the river."

They chose a bench near the river-front, and Mr. Schlueter lighted another cigar and leaned back with his arms spread out behind the bench, his coat and hat lying on the ground, and watched the river.

They looked at the expanse of the curve in the Ohio River, a sluggish, brown, oozing sheet of liquid. On the opposite shore was a stretch of

marsh land dotted with a few straggling trees. Below them, at the edge of the bank, was a string of ramshackle huts and wharves for motor boats, and piles of paper, garbage cans, masses of cinders and boards. Farther down, opposite the green patch facing the New Lamasco Hotel, which was hidden from view by the thin trees of the park, was a dock, by the side of which puffed lazily a river steamer with a double smokestack. A houseboat and two barges floated behind it. Down at the bend in the river was a line of factories, from whose chimneys climbed thin, tranquil spirals of smoke.

The light was fading quickly, and the river turned gradually from brown to a jet black, with a broad flash of red gold across the middle. The line of trees on the opposite shore became a waving dark fringe. The glow of the sky encircled the black masses of the factories, the piles of rubbish and cinders faded from view, and the little river steamer was transformed into a dazzle of tiny lights which danced upon the water. All was tinged by the disappearing red and purple light, which clothed the scene in shadows.

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Schlueter, "it's fine here!"

"Yea," assented her husband. "I've heard 'em say Sunset Park was better than any other park in any city the size of this. And there's one thing, the 'Dispatch' says the sunset from here can't be beaten by anything on the Riveera!"

When darkness had settled down at last, they became aware of the crowds of people that had gathered behind them, lying on the ground. Voices were calling, and feet were crunching back and forth on the gravel paths. The sudden loud and shrill tones of a steam calliope drifted over to them from the river steamer, which also began booming its whistle. A steady stream of shadows was making its way through the park towards the dock.

"Come on, Lill," said Mr. Schlueter. "Nothing doing here. Let's go take a look at the boat."

They followed the swarm of people out through the end of the park, past the hotel—a blaze of lights from all its windows—and came to where a dense throng was standing along the edge of the bank, watching the people climb down the slope and cross the plank to the boat, which was still shrieking vague tunes with the calliope. Long lines of automobiles were drawn up along the street, blowing their horns; a flashlight from the boat played on the people, blinding them, making them laugh and shout; there was a general uproar of cries, laughing, the scraping of feet, the horns of the cars, the steam calliope, the boat whistle. From a deck of the boat came the strains of dance music, heard faintly now and then, and they could see the blur of forms moving up and down the deck in time to the music. Mr. Schlueter felt a shiver of excitement run through him as he watched.

Two young men standing beside them—they looked like out-of-town salesmen to him—were talking, and he could hear what they were saying.

"Aw! come on, J. C.!" one of them said. "There's nothing else to do in this burg. Come on! We might pick up a Jane and pass the time."

"All right," replied the other, laughing. "Let's go!" And they moved off rapidly down the slope towards the boat.

Mr. Schlueter watched them cross the plank, and stared at all the couples that passed them on their

way down to the dock. He felt a sudden desire to follow them, and to have something to do, perhaps to keep cool. He watched the flashlight of the boat, wandering up and down the shore, and which stopped suddenly and glared on a red and white sign. "Moonlight Ride," it said. Moonlight ride! A moonlight ride on the water!

He grasped Mrs. Schlueter's arm. "Let's go on there, Lill," he cried. "Come on, old girl!"

"Carl!" exclaimed Mrs. Schlueter, horror-stricken. "With those people! Why, what are you thinking of!" But the cries, the strains of music, the whistles, the general excitement persuaded her more than his insistence, and so, just as the gong rang and the plank was about to be lifted, they slipped on board together.

The paddles ground and churned, and the boat trembled and rattled. They climbed up a narrow stairway to the next deck where was a crowd of people sitting on little chairs and on benches, and standing in a thick row around the dancers, looking on. The rattling of the boat, the scraping of feet, the laughing, the pushing made it all quite gay, it seemed to Mr. and Mrs. Schlueter. "Quite a lark!" cried Mr. Schlueter, and his wife simpered, "Oh! I just feel so ashamed to be here with such people! What are they, anyway! They're factory hands! Factory girls: Look at the way they dance! Isn't it awful? Look at that girl—she has her face right against her partner's cheek! And there's another! They're terrible! My, my!"

A young man, hurrying past, bumped against them. "Oh! hello there!" he called out as he pushed by them.

"Alvin Reade!" exclaimed Mrs. Schlueter, nudging her husband. "That's Alvin Reade! What is he doing on this boat? With girls like that here? Isn't it shameful, the way some boys act! Oh! I'm so glad my Otto isn't like that! He tells me he doesn't like these girls with bobbed hair and rolled stockings. Ah!" she sighed loudly, "he must be one of the old-fashioned kind!"

"Aw! pooh!" Mr. Schlueter laughed. "You don't know what you're talking about, Lill!"

Some one slapped Mr. Schlueter noisily on the back. "Well! Well! Here's Carl!" came a gruff voice.

"Well, Bennie! What are you doing on this boat!" shouted Mr. Schlueter, recognizing Bauer, the Cashier of the Standard National Bank. "You old rascal, you!"

"Yea? And what about you two? But say, Carl, let me ask you something. Just out of curiosity. How did you two happen to come on?"

"Oh! Mrs. S. and I just took a little notion to try a little excitement."

"But how'd you get on?"

"Just walked on. Paid our fifty cents each—and walked on. Why?"

"Well, I'll be . . . That explains what I wanted to find out! So they let anybody on that wanted to come! Ah! now I see light! That explains all these girls from Beheimer's cigar factory! That's how so many of them got here! This is supposed to be the Bankers' Club Boat Ride, you know. Oh! yes, we bankers, you know! Huh! about as many factory hands as club members, it looks like!"

"Why, we didn't notice anybody but factory people!" exclaimed Mrs. Schlueter in surprise.

"Oh, there's quite a few of our crowd, but of course it's the younger set mostly. You wouldn't know

them. See that girl there? That's Frances Schultze. Yea, Schultzie's daughter. And there's George Andersen. Sister's somewhere round here. That little kid over there, in green—that's Elsie Strouse. Oh! there's quite a bunch of 'em. Too bad the party's sort of spoiled by the rough element, though. . . Well, have a good time, everybody! So long!"

"Carl, did you ever!" gasped Mrs. Schlueter when he had gone. "Isn't it awful, these young girls? Who'd have thought there were any girls of our sort here!"

"You said it, Lill!" was Mr. Schlueter's remark.

"Just look at that Strouse girl! Oh-h, my! I guess I don't belong to this age, Carl!"

They soon tired of watching the dancers, and they left their point of vantage and sat down on a bench near the boat rail.

"God! listen to that music!" moaned Mr. Schlueter, mopping his forehead. "Neow-neow-neow! Chah-chah-chah! Phew! I'm not much cooler yet!"

They stared out at the river, crossed by a pale bar of light from the moon, which had just risen. "The old boat's hardly moving at all!" complained Mr. Schlueter. "This is no fun! I'm thirsty, Lill! There's a soft drink counter down the line. I'll go over and get something."

After waiting, and pushing, and cursing for several minutes, he finally succeeded in procuring two small bottles of brown liquid with straws in them. They sucked on these in silence for a while, and felt comforted. The two salesmen whom they had seen on shore sat down on the bench beside them, fanned themselves, and looked at the band of rippling light on the water.

"I'm off that stuff!" grunted one. "Too hot! And those Janes give me a pain! God! the way they dance! Graceful as young heifers!"

"Yea, they're rotten all right," assented the other, "but what can you expect, J. C.? Got to have something to do!"

"Just as soon do nothing."

They gazed for a while in silence at the river, flicking their ashes over the side rail.

"A moonlight ride!" growled one at last. "Hell! Moonlight on the mud!" He laughed dryly and threw his cigarette out into the black space beyond the rail.

"Well, let's go up on the top deck again, J. C."

"What for?"

"Oh, there's a bunch of kids up there in the dark, that look as if they'd start something. Looks like hot stuff to me, J. C.!"

"Aw! shoot!"

"Oh, come on! Nothing else to do! You don't want to sit here, do you? There's a long time to kill yet."

"Well. . . all right."

They rose and strolled off together.

Mr. Schuleter lighted another cigar and he and Mrs. Schlueter sat staring out over the water, shifting their position from time to time, and yawning.

"Carl! Don't smoke so much!" Mrs. Schlueter kept insisting.

"Nothing else to do, Lill. Can't you let me alone?"

"Oh! Neow-neow-neow!" He groaned again. "That music! Hell!"

"There, the damn boat's turning around, Lill! Ah-h! We're on our way back! Thank God!" He looked at his watch and cursed under his breath. "Two hours more,

Lill. Two hours more!" And he leaned forward and spat on the deck. "Oh! when I get back! Will I be glad to get off this boat? Will I!"

Mrs. Schlueter leaned her arms against the railing and Mr. Schlueter, who did not speak for several minutes, did not notice that she was dozing until he asked her a question, which she did not answer. He moaned, then, and kept puffing on his cigar and lighting a fresh one, smoking one after another, and looking at the people that passed back and forth, and grinning at the short skirts as they came down the ladder from the top deck. "Oh! my ba-ba-baby!" came the voices of the musicians, who were shouting as they played. The people swarming up and down the deck hummed with them, "Hm! Hm! Hm! Ba-ba-baby!" His head sank forward heavily, and he sank off into a half doze.

"Carl!" Mrs. Schlueter called, after what seemed an age. "What time is it?"

"Eh? Oh! we've got another hour yet."

She turned around the other way on the bench and fell asleep again. He listened impassively to the noises, numbed by the trembling of the boat, the shuffling of feet, the passing forms. From time to time he turned around and watched the light that seemed to move across the water with the boat. It was broader and brighter now, for the moon was high. "Neeow! Neeow! Purrooo!" came the sounds of the instruments. "Ba-ba-by! Eeyow! Hm! Hm! Hm! Ba-ba-by!" seemed to come from all over the boat. The light on the water was queer, dancing around. He could close his eyes and still see it. And he found himself squinting at it with half-opened eyes, which made the light spread out wider and wider, until it was like an immense glaring sheet. And in a little while his cigar dropped from his fingers, and he, too, was asleep. The shrieking of the calliope awoke them, and they sat up with a start, rubbing their eyes and looking about uncertainly. There were lights near by, and there was the dock, and the hotel up above.

"At last!" they both exclaimed.

Half tottering, they pushed their way with the crowd down the narrow steps, hardly conscious of the people about them, thinking, "Once we get off! Once we get off!" In the crowd they brushed against the same two salesmen, who were holding the arms of two girls and pinching them; and one of them was saying, "Pretty good time, after all!"

"You bet, J. C.! Some pretty hot stuff in this town! How 'bout that, kiddoes?"

The two girls laughed and one of them made a sly grimace and poked him in the ribs.

At last Mr. and Mrs. Schlueter squeezed their way across the plank and when they felt the ground underneath their feet, they breathed loudly and contentedly, and Mrs. Schlueter laughed from sheer pleasure. "Oh! Carl! did you ever, though! I'm so glad it's all over!"

They puffed as they toiled heavily up the slope, and Mr. Schlueter took off his hat and mopped the top of his head. "Phew! It's still hot back here!" he gasped. "I can feel it more now, after the air on the boat. But let me tell you one thing, Lill; you'll never get me to go on that boat again! There's no use talking another time—I won't go, that's all!

"Well!" she retorted, "who was it wanted to have a good time, anyhow? Was it me—or was it you?"

The Luckiest Man in the World

By

LEONID ANDREYEV

From the Russian by Herman Bernstein

In spite of the fact that he died in 1919, no living writer is more modern in aspiration, conception or technique than Leonid Andreyev. He was only forty-eight years when he died, an exile from the Russia he had loved and pitied so much and in bitter want and suffering. His heart was broken with disappointment over Russia's fate. The last words he wrote were: "Revolution is just as unsatisfactory a means of settling disputes as war."

His early years were a series of failures and disappointments, but once he managed to publish his first stories, his success was almost instantaneous. He came to be the most popular writer in Russia, overshadowing Gorki and Tolstoi. Many of his works have been translated into English: "Anathema," "The Seven Who Were Hanged," "Satan's Diary," "He Who Gets Slapped," "The Red Laugh."

MANY people believe without any reason that tragic Fate exists only for kings and heroes, that ordinary small people are beyond the horizon of tragic Fate, that they are not noticed by it, and that they are in no way of any consequence to Fate. Yegor Chemodanov was neither a king nor a hero, yet Fate never worked with such obstinacy and wrath on Oedipus himself as it worked on the life of Chemodanov. One might have thought that during the thirty years of Chemodanov's life, Fate abandoned all its other occupations—so much time and care and indefatigable attention did it devote to its strange choice.

Yegor Chemodanov was born (of unknown parents) in one of the Siberian cities, and was left in a suitcase at the front door of the merchant Yegorov's. Hence his name Chemodanov—which is Russian for suitcase. The first years of Yegor's life were unusually happy. Neither the son of a famous grandee, nor even the prince of a reigning house could have had bestowed upon him more love and luxury than was bestowed upon Yegor. The rich and childless Yegorov and his wife devoted all their wealth and their love to the foundling, thereby exciting the envy of their relatives and heirs. They fed him on cream; they dressed him in silks and velvets and called him endearing names. And he was then plump and round, somewhat drowsy from excessive feeding. This appearance of a man half-asleep and half-awake he retained for the rest of his life, together with his other characteristics—his soft yellowish hair and his small stature. But he lost his pleasant plumpness and towards the end of his life he impressed people with his sorry, sickly thinness.

When Yegor was seven years old, his adopted parents suddenly perished in a wreck on the new railway; and while pitying them, nobody suspected that Yegor was the real though involuntary cause of their

terrible death—this catastrophe was but the first link in the chain of catastrophes and horrors with which his life was to be surrounded. The merchant's heirs who hated Yegor immediately dragged off his silk and velvet clothes, and simply turned him out into the street. There he would have died, if other kind people had not come to his rescue. Having sheltered him, they placed him in a colony for young culprits. He was not a criminal, nor did he have any criminal tendencies, but there was no other place where they could keep him. Besides, such was the command of Fate.

The transition from complete happiness to complete misery Yegor accepted with humility, which was characteristic of his nature. Nevertheless this did not make cruel Fate more generous, but rather intensified its irritation. Yegor was beaten and starved. They called him thief, and they cracked nuts on the flat crown of his head. Yet he was not indignant, nor did he revolt—instead, he began to love his shelter and the authorities sincerely and heartily. He forgot the time of his happiness completely, so that he was not tortured even by recollections. Seeing this happiness, which was growing with custom and the lapse of years, Fate resorted to an extreme and dreadful measure—one winter night a fire broke out in the asylum and the building was destroyed. The keeper, a kindly woman, together with her three small children, lost their lives in that fire. But Yegor was saved again by kind people. And a passing cattle-merchant, who chanced to be at the fire, decided to take Yegor along with him, evidently believing that his preparation at the asylum had equipped the boy with commercial training.

"Are they going to rebuild the house?" asked Yegor, crying.

"They'll rebuild it, don't be afraid," said the cattle merchant and took Yegor with him to Samara, without realizing the secret significance of the boy's question. The truth was that Yegor then and there resolved to run back to the asylum at the first opportunity—something that no one had ever done before. Many escaped from the asylum, but no one has ever heard of a boy returning there voluntarily. Apparently, that was the first manifestation of Yegor's peculiar will which led him on the road of extraordinary adventures. But even if this was revolt, it sprang from his humility—since he had been placed in an asylum, he must stay there, Chemodanov reasoned inconsistently.

He ran back to Siberia three times. Twice he was caught and beaten cruelly, but on his third return he was lost for a long time on the roads, in the thickets and the vast stretches of Siberia. But even there he was not neglected by dangers and tribulations. In the woods he was frequently pursued by bears, on the roads he was robbed, in the towns and villages he was beaten as a suspicious character. There was no ground for suspecting him—for under all the adversities of Fate, Yegor never lost his respectable appearance; at thirteen he always wore a paper collar, and when he was lucky he even wore a starched linen collar. In order to secure a collar and a decent suit of clothes he displayed wild energy, almost genius: hungry, he would rather spend his last few copeks for a collar; pursued by bears, half-dead with fright, he ran through the bushes carefully so as not to tear or spoil his garments. He was generally honest, though he stole vests and collars all his life, and strangely

enough, he never regarded that as a sin.

Then the years of painful wanderings extinguished in Chemodanov his passion for the asylum, and at the age of seventeen we find him in Tiflis as an assistant telegraph operator at the railroad station. This was quite an important post, and his success was due exclusively to his clothes. During the following three years of happiness he wore that same costume and always clean collars; modest and unassuming, he wore his uniform so eloquently that it substituted the most lofty conversations about the aim and significance of life. For that same reason his morality was above reproach. When, in accordance with the custom prevalent among telegraph operators, he secured a guitar and played "The Little Tiger" between trains and telegrams, all words became superfluous—and his life was established upon solid foundations. Curiously enough, Yegor never recalled his past sufferings, he seemed to have forgotten them. Of the catastrophes, of the fires, the bears and the escaped galley slaves he had met, he talked briefly and simply, as of ordinary and inevitable incidents.

When Yegor was twenty-one years old, and he sang for the thousandth time, "Make me a present of a tear, and I'll rush with it to Granada, on the wings of my love!," a girl heard his prayer and gave him her heart. She was a girl of means, and a fine perspective opened before him,—but suddenly cruel Fate appeared again: it had been hiding, as if gathering strength for a new and terrible blow. The girl died of small pox, and though Yegor, who also contracted the disease, recovered, he lost the beauty of his face and his prospects forever.

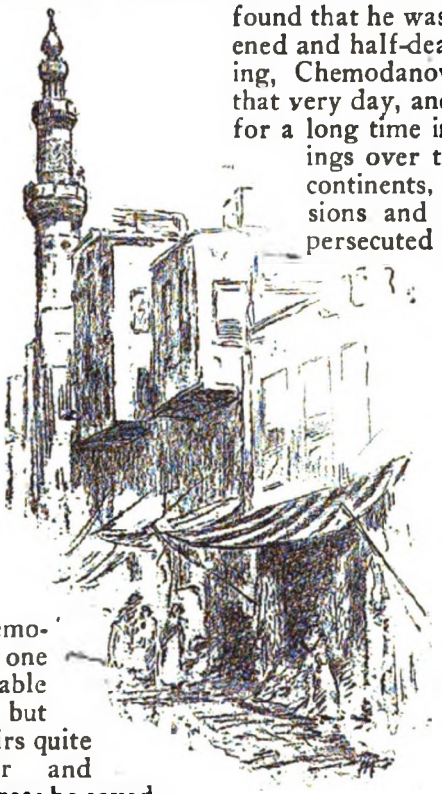
During that year Chemodanov became a recruit, and before completely recovering from his illness, he was drafted into the navy, and stationed on one of the Baltic cruisers. This event was quite ordinary, but to Yegor it proved to be the greatest hardship—almost slow murder. He hated the sea, he feared it as nothing else in the world, and even in calm weather, when nature and other sailors were cheerful, he suffered from continuous seasickness. And the things that happened to his insides and to his soul when the ocean swell began to play with the heavy ship, tossing it about with an unseen force! He seriously commenced to wonder whether it would not be better for him to end the life for which he had paid so dearly, rather than continue to submit to Fate's endless persecutions. And his lot was particularly bitter because his weakness did not arouse compassion in anyone, but rather made people laugh at him. And his superiors with deliberate sternness sent him to places where the dangers and the rocking of the boat were greatest. Neither Chemodanov's punctuality nor his absolute sobriety and obedience softened their stern sea hearts or improved his bitter plight.

Thus two years went by, and Yegor at last deserted. . .

It happened that Yegor, hiding behind railroad cars, remained behind on the shore, when his cruiser sailed away. He was alone, upon an African shore, among a black-skinned African crowd, without knowing a word of any other language than Russian, and without any money in his pocket!

Undoubtedly Fate supposed and was even convinced that under these conditions Chemodanov, whom it hated, most inevitably perish, but at

that time a new circumstance revealed itself in all clearness: side by side with cruel Fate, some invisible forces of Good followed Chemodanov's life extricating him every time from the deepest hole into which he had been cast by Fate. It is very possible that it was only a game between Fate and the forces of Good, but whatever it was, Yegor survived even in Africa. After the most fantastic wanderings, of which he could tell nothing, as though they were some absurd and immediately forgotten nightmare, he settled down permanently in Cairo, in the capacity of apprentice to a native cobbler.



The eighteen months spent in Cairo were perhaps the best in Chemodanov's life. Only one thing was disagreeable—the summer heat, but he arranged his affairs quite well, being sober and moderate in his desires; he saved some money, fell in love with a dark-complexioned lady—which was necessary for his humble and sensitive soul—and on holidays he promenaded the streets together with the other citizens of Cairo, wearing the whitest of collars. Once he even looked at the pyramids from the distance, but he did not like them.

But can happiness be lasting? Yegor was beginning to think of opening a shoe shop of his own, when suddenly, for some unknown reason, his employer was thrown into prison, and because of him Yegor was also put into jail. There both his master and he were beaten with canes; Yegor's money was taken away from him, and he was driven out in the street when it was found that he was innocent. Frightened and half-dead from the thrashing, Chemodanov fled from Cairo that very day, and again he was lost for a long time in fantastic wanderings over the earth, changing continents, names, professions and masks, and like a persecuted "Wandering Jew," finding nowhere rest or refuge.

In the course of these wanderings Chemodanov survived three shipwrecks which testified clearly to the fact that Fate continued to follow him incessantly, not leaving him out of sight for a single moment. But these terrible wrecks added nothing in Yegor's soul — they only intensified his strange views, according to which bears, fires and other catastrophes were to him most ordinary, simple incidents, inevitable in the life of every man.

II

EXHAUSTED by the African heat and seeking cooler places, Chemodanov went as a stowaway in a first class steamer from Alexandria to Naples.

In Naples Chemodanov starved at first and spent the nights in suburban vacant lots, carefully guarding his collars; then he worked in a corset shop; then he was for a short time a guide to Vesuvius, and afterward established himself as a peddler; he bought a box, corals, cheap mosaics and other trinkets, and went into business. With his box Chemodanov walked through Italy, went to Switzerland which he did not like, and crossed over to France which he liked very much. As before, he knew nothing but Russian, but he made himself understood to the natives by a wild mixture of Arabic, Georgian, Turkish, Italian and other words, which satisfied his simple demands in commercial and spiritual intercourse.

In general, his life was growing almost agreeable because the persecutions on the part of Fate had suddenly ceased; either it had grown tired of Chemodanov, or it had forgotten him, or it had simply lost sight of him and could not find him. Perfect peace accompanied Chemodanov on all his roads—there were no bears, no galley slaves, no shipwrecks. He grew somewhat stouter on account of his unprecedented prosperity and, strange to say, he even seemed to worry because of that. His soul, accustomed to struggling against Fate, to enduring hardships and thunderous blows, missed something, his restless eyes were seeking something all the time—they were unaccustomed to peaceful views and to pleasant relations with people and nature. A certain anguish crept into his soul, he was seized with strange desires and caprices, he felt a certain longing to go far away—in a word, it was a state of mind thus far unknown to Chemodanov.

From this it may be concluded with complete certainty that Chemodanov had been deceived and that the idleness of Fate was only illusory. Powerless to defeat Chemodanov in an open and honest conflict, Fate crept stealthily into his soul and treacherously planted there dangerous feelings and desires. The first result of this treachery was a sudden and intense longing in Chemodanov for Africa, as he had felt in his childhood days for the asylum. Why he craved Africa in particular, which he had cursed a thousand times for its heat and his misfortunes there, he did not know himself, but the sensation was keen and compelling to the extent that he was unable to resist it. In vain did his presentiment and past experiences caution him to fear the sea above all—his longing for Africa was stronger, sweeping away the arguments of reason.

At that time he was doing business as a peddler in the North of France. Then drawing a broken line from north to south, slightly resisting and yet pushing ahead, as if drawn by a rope that was growing ever shorter, Chemodanov came to Marseilles one fateful morning, paid his passage and boarded a large steamer that was sailing for Algiers.

All Europe was shocked at the time by the terrible calamity which befell that steamer. It had lost its way during a great storm and struck against the rocks of the island of Majorca, and of the hundreds of young, handsome, wise, rich, dignified and happy passengers, only one was saved, thrown by a wild wave upon the only tiny strip of sand lost among those rocks. Of course, the chosen one was Yegor Chemodanov. If, however, this shipwreck in which so many human beings perished, was caused by the same Fate which pur-

sued only Chemodanov, it should be remarked that Chemodanov cost humanity too dear, especially since the aim was not attained. However, his goods and the rest of his property went down with the steamer.

The fact that only a single person was saved was so remarkable and fired the imagination to such an extent that for some time Chemodanov was the hero of the day and a sensational celebrity. With the shipwreck, his strange craving for Africa was suddenly extinguished forever, and he was sent back to Paris on funds collected by the local population and by the journalists. He went there willingly, and consented to all the cross-examinations and interviews with which he was besieged on the way, but he experienced no sensation of pride, he did not even understand this curiosity—all that had happened seemed to him ordinary, inevitable, something that happens in the life of every man. And the interviewers and other inquisitive people, after an hour's conversation with him, went away with a feeling of strange perplexity; they looked back at him, and they felt that they had not asked him some of the most important questions. What was it?

In Paris he was exhibited, at a good salary, in the offices of one of the sensational newspapers as the "luckiest man in the world." There artists and thinkers, fat bourgeois and stern laborers examined his small head and his flat skull, his pockmarked face and his meek eyes. Once even an American billionaire smoking a cigar, came to see him, with his daughter and two secretaries. But no matter how long they examined him, neither the billionaire nor the thinkers understood anything; and as they walked away, they looked back at his little head, at his meek little eyes and at his white starched collar which was entirely too high for his neck.

The luckiest man in the world!

And while the invisible forces of Good endeavored by all means to keep Chemodanov in France, indefatigable Fate again resorted to all kinds of cunning and treachery. Chemodanov had earned enough money at the exhibition to last him for the rest of his life and to start him in business anew, but while he was being examined, a new restless idea was born in his mind—fatal in its consequences. "Everybody has a mother—I must have a mother, too!" thought Chemodanov with a certain longing and a sense of offended self-respect. And as the desire grew upon him, unembarrassed by the obvious improbability of finding his mother whom he had never seen, and of whom he had never thought before, he commenced to draw a broken line on the map—from the west to the east—to Siberia, where he believed he would find his unknown mother.

Being a deserter, he took a great risk—but in Russia there was a revolution during those days, too—there was great disorder, as Chemodanov defined it—and that made his task easier. It seemed easy for such a grain of sand as he to hide and avoid the dangerous eyes of the police at a time when all life and the people were stirred to the very depths. Chemodanov did not understand the revolution itself and did not like it. He sought quiet and order in everything, and he looked upon revolution much as a traveler looks upon bad weather, with humble displeasure.

At the Russian frontier he was robbed and cheated by contra-bandists. Instead of being taken across the frontier, he was thrown

into a ditch where he was almost shot by the frontier guards. A guard on horseback fired three times in the dark at the ditch, and Chemodanov's overcoat was hit twice. Chemodanov himself succeeded in reaching the road by some miracle. Half dead with fright, and starved, he dragged himself on into the depths of Russia. That terrible night in the ditch was for him the beginning of new fantastic wanderings, so gloomy and cruel that it seemed to him then the sun would never rise over his head again. Stray shots, pursuits over roofs and across fences, detectives chasing him as in nightmares, sternly excited mobs carrying him away he knew not where nor for what purpose, terrible Cossacks, dark and strange cellars,—and only occasional moments of rest, when he succeeded in securing employment as a clerk in a shop. But just as soon as he managed to go over to the church to pray, the uprising broke out, and then came again a long night of endless terror. He shivered in every limb and was shocked to the depths of his soul.

But however strange it may seem —amidst all the horrors and misfortunes, the thought of his mother never left him—it moved him slowly but surely to distant Siberia. During these painful days he might even be called a romantic, so completely did this thought take possession of his soul. But what was stranger still, as soon as he found himself in Siberia, in the place where he was born, the persistent thought suddenly vanished, as if it had not really existed at all, but was merely the deceptive will-o'-the-wisp which leads wanderers astray into swamps and then suddenly dies out.

And there, in Siberia, Chemodanov was hanged—his life was interrupted in his thirtieth year. The cause of his execution was as should have been expected, a most absurd circumstance. The passport which Chemodanov had secured in Moscow belonged to a political offender who was wanted by the police. Of course, at some other time this misunderstanding would have been easily cleared up, but just then things were done in such haste that there was no time for inquiries or investigations.

Thus Chemodanov was hanged. And as he had neither friends nor relatives, as he had never accomplished anything important, all memory of him vanished with his death, as though he had never lived on earth.

Did he ever live? Perhaps he did . . . But it may be that all this was only the dream of stern and gloomy Fate in a moment of absentmindedness.

And when Fate awoke and opened its cruel, searching eyes, there was no Chemodanov on earth any longer, and only kings and heroes were standing, waiting, preparing for a tragic battle.

Kings and heroes!

A Conversion

By
LUCAS MALET

An English Story

Lucas Malet (Mrs. Mary St. Leger Harrison) has no need of reflected glory, but it does lend her added charm and interest to know that she is Charles Kingsley's youngest daughter. She is the author of many books and stories, the most popular of which are those of her mature production, "The History of Sir Richard Talmady," "The Gateless Barrier" and "The Far Horizon." A new volume, "Da Silva's Widow," is shortly to appear.

In "A Conversion" Lucas Malet has gone profoundly to the heart of a soul-intriguing question—the unreality of the real world and the reality of the world that is not within the grasp of the immediate senses. And perhaps the best of it all is that she has left it a problem, for who would be bold enough to venture a solution or explanation?

THIS is a story of forty years ago, before men flew, or the horn of the motor was heard in the land.

Towards the end of dinner our conversation settled on to the ever fertile subject of Fosdick. We and his friends—there were five of us present—talked his pictures, his poems, his absence, one might almost call it his disappearance, up and down and in and out.

The gods had been too kind, had overdone it. That was what was the matter with Fosdick. If they'd gifted him with one outstanding talent instead of two, if, still more, they had not saddled him, from childhood, with a private income of twelve hundred a year—more or less—to what height of achievement might he not have attained? But they made things altogether too easy for him—while he scoffed at the bare notion of their existence—there lay the irony of the position! So that he had never for an instant felt the spur of an empty pocket, and empty stomach which—when all's said and done—is the finest recipe yet invented for making genius show its paces.

"And he *has* genius," little Craddock cried, in the fervour of youthful discipleship, thumping the table with a diminutive fist. "Even his enemies admit his painting and verse have moments which take you by the throat. It's no earthly use. You can't help yourself. Hate him as you like, you're still bound to acknowledge him a master. For all Fosdick's work is so sane, so gorgeously destructively sane. In that sense there's not a grain of imagination in it. For he hasn't a superstition left, has cancelled heaven and hell, thrown theology, mythology overboard. He lays hold of life in the raw and flings it, bleeding, shrieking, in your face without the smallest attempt to explain, to account for, either the horror or beauty of it. He never apologizes, speculates, theorizes, but just simply states, as a convinced realist should. And then"—with a positive wail—"to have him desert us like this! Hide away, sterile, unproductive, while every sort of wall-eyed idiot spawns out books and pictures of a shallowness, an ignorance, which makes contemporary English art and literature the by-

word of Europe! Oh! I tell you I'm sick with shame and rage—despairingly, hideously sick!"

We laughed—not unkindly—for the sincerity of the boy's emotion went far to redeem his extravagant expression of it. Brandon, veteran of the company, grey-bearded, indulgently smiling, patted him affectionately on the back.

"And now, my son, having so loudly borne testimony and spit up your bile, you'll feel better, I hope," he said.

"But isn't it true?" Craddock blazed round on him.

"True?—With modifications, yes—oh yes. Fosdick's work has great qualities—I advisedly use the word great. From almost every point of view he's a good head and shoulders above the rest of us."

"Not in all?"

Brandon mildly shook his head.

"There is a door to which he's found no key—whether of set purpose, because he refuses to look for it, or because, with all his power of seeing, he was born blind in respect of it, I can't pretend to tell you."

Then after a pause—

"But, hang it all, where is Fosdick?"

Brandon put this question to the company at large, while looking to me, as I knew, to answer it. For my relation to Fosdick differed from his own and that of the three other men, being one, not of election only, but of circumstance. Fosdick's people and mine were old acquaintances. He and I had been at the same preparatory school, later at the same Oxford college. So Brandon, naturally enough, supposed us intimate. What he didn't suppose—nor any one else, as I trusted—was that, while I recognized and admired Fosdick's immense cleverness, I found myself less and less drawn to him by personal sympathy. For he struck me as unbalanced, as having far too big a brain and too small a heart. I went further than Brandon. In my opinion it wasn't one door to which he'd found no key, but a sound dozen. With all his versatility he was narrow.

On the other hand, I, conceivably, was jealous. He, without any apparent effort, did things, and that brilliantly, I would have given my two ears to do and—couldn't. Oh! no doubt I was jealous! His ability mortified me. I felt uneasy, unhappy when he and I were together. That gave me an accusing conscience. For, as time went on, Fosdick seemed increasingly to turn to me. He showed that he wanted our old friendship, not only maintained but the bonds of it drawn closer. He went out of his way to find opportunities of intercourse. Which was a considerable compliment, for towards most men—women he'd no apparent use for—he wasn't conspicuously civil or tractable! But I sheered off—did my best to elude him—making the excuse to myself, that his materialism repelled me. He offended my taste, so I told myself, came near offending my sense of decency, whereas, as I see it all, now, he only offended my self-love and that quite unintentionally.

From all which it indirectly followed, that when Brandon propounded the question of Fosdick's present whereabouts, it fell to me, as I have said, to make answer.

"Why at Killalmee, I imagine—the shooting lodge in the west of Ireland, on the county Kerry coast to be exact, which he took on lease eighteen months ago."

"You've been there? Then you've seen him?" Craddock almost shouted.

"Fosdick was good enough to ask

me to stay with him last autumn."

I still addressed Brandon, ignoring the boy, whose excitement began to get on my nerves.

"But unfortunately I could not get so far. I was booked for other visits, and found it impossible to make dates fit."

Craddock fixed me with angry, sullen eyes. I knew what was in his mind—to be granted such a privilege and let it slip! Happily before he had time or assurance to express his contempt, Lewis Johnson cut into the conversation—J o h n s o n, the critic, who has made it his business in season, and out season too, as some think, to write up Fosdick.

"And what," he said, "if one may enquire, constitutes the overmastering attraction of this place, with a name suggestive of the Irish Melodies of that arch-sentimentalist—beloved of our great-grandparents—Mr. Thomas Moore? Rennel Fosdick, last word of modernity—contemplate it, oh my brethren—and that cherubic tootling and footling Hibernian, Tommy Moore!"

"Attraction?" I said. "A very considerable one in the estimation of many men. Killalmee, so Fosdick wrote me, offers some of the choicest rough shooting, river and sea fishing in the British Isles."

Craddock held his head, distractedly with both hands.

"Is that all? How preposterous. Sport—the wasting of life in stupidly killing things as against acknowledged pre-eminence, leadership in the sacro-sanct cause of letters and art!"

"But you, I believe, still find pleasure in those barbaric pastimes?" Johnson, disregarding the boy's outbursts, said to me.

"I am sufficiently uncivilized by no means to despise them."

Here Brandon, getting up from his place at the further side of the table, came round and took the chair next to mine.

"Then, my dear fellow, it's borne in on me as not impossible you're designed by Providence to save this situation. That we've to look to you," he went on gently persuasively, "to come to the rescue—to help us and Fosdick out."

I still bristled. The whole business of Fosdick bored me. But Brandon, in his calm, reasonable maturity, is a winning creature, by no means easy to refuse or resist.

Slightly mollified—"I n d e e d? How, pray, how?" I said.

"By paying now, this autumn, the visit, which you were prevented by other engagements from paying last."

I did not look best pleased at this declaration, I imagine. Very certainly I didn't feel so. But Brandon followed it up, and with so excellent a mildness, so insinuating a suavity.

"Honestly," he said, "I feel it is time we had some authentic information about Fosdick. He has developed a disconcerting habit of not answering letters. No one of us has had a line from him for months. And we've all written—Johnson repeatedly—Haven't you, Johnny?"

"Oh! I've plied him—I've plied him; but he's as deaf to my blandishments as to my curses," the other returned, not without bitterness I thought.

"I'm growing queerly fanciful about him," Brandson went on. "I keep on asking myself if anything is wrong. Is he ill, or—or what?"

"He's forgotten us—forgotten us," Craddock wailed.

"Then it's up to us to find some way of reminding him of our existence, my son, and—of our love. But delicately, bless you, ever so

delicately with tact; not by making railing accusations against him of deserting either his friends or his work."

Brandon lowered his voice, and the two other men, taking the hint, moved away from the dinner table. Craddock would have stuck, but in passing, Johnson laid rather violent hands on him.

"Get a move on. Can't you see when you're not wanted"—and as the boy remonstrated—"Did you never hear of darkening counsel by words without knowledge, you silly young ass? Leave Brandon to thrash it all out."

And in the end Brandon—from *their* standpoint—thrashed it out to some purpose. He prevailed over my lively disinclination, let alone my better judgment—knowing, as I only did, on what that disinclination and judgment were based. He drove it home that I alone possessed a valid excuse for approaching Fosdick; since had he not, last year, wanted me, asked me, while cold-shouldering the rest? Hadn't I, too, one interest in common with him denied to the others,—namely, sport?

"And between ourselves, I'm frightened about Fosdick," he clinched matters by telling me—"queerly frightened to a degree I don't understand, or make out. I'm fond of him, I'd set my hopes on his pulling things off, giving us something of outstanding merit and worth. I try to pacify myself with the belief he is painting a great picture, writing a great book,—and just lying low till it's finished. I trust to Heaven that may be the explanation of this silence. But I can't disguise from myself I feel pessimistic. It troubles me quite horribly. If you care to make me eternally your debtor, you'll go and find out. Only you can do it. The others would muddle the business—approach him, reproach him, on wrong grounds. It lies with you, my dear fellow. In the name of charity, go and find out."

A week later I went. At the wayside station, where my two days' journey ended, an outside cab met me, driven by a middle-aged, somewhat unkempt retainer of Fosdick's—Michael Callaghan by name—and with a beautiful country-bred brown mare between the shafts. She took us out the twenty-five miles to Killalmee, over a road altogether too fertile in incident, as to the surface of it, at a noble pace.

This high-way, abominable from the start, ran through a couple of squalid straggling villages and skirted the shore of a shallow, reed-grown lake off which rose flights of wild fowl. Then, by an outstanding mass of rock, it turned sharp to the left, and began great stretches of treeless moorland, towards a range of dark, round headed mountains blocking all the south. Black bog filled in the hollows. Now and again a stream spread over the road, or a roofless cottage, with gaping door and window spaces, set in a patch of forsaken field and garden bordered it. Once, I remember, we passed a lad herding, with the help of a particularly ill-favoured lemon coloured dog, a little herd of mountain sheep. And once we were met by a posse of half-naked children driving donkeys loaded up with creels of turf. This for all human interest in as forbidding a piece of country as I ever looked upon. The sadness and emptiness of it bit into me, specially when scuds of rain, brought up by a bleak wind, stalked across it in slanting grey sheets.

Passing one of those ruined homesteads—"But where are the people gone to?" I could not help asking.

" And where, for the love of God, is it you would have them to be going, sur, except out of it all, away to Ameriky," Callaghan answered.

Which brought me, rather forcibly, up against the question of Fosdick. For in face of this desolation—from which the native born thus despairingly fled—and with all the world before whence to choose, what, in the name of reason, brought and held him to so bodeful a wilderness?

My embassy, hitherto seeming a weak subscription to the wish and will of others, assumed a different aspect. Brandon's belief that something must be wrong with Fosdick, something have overtaken him strange to the point of demanding—and repaying—enquiry began to infect me.

To pump a man's servant in respect of his master, is a somewhat low caste proceeding. Nevertheless, I own to an attempt upon Callaghan. It proved unproductive. On other subjects he was garrulous enough; but on that of his employer uncommunicative, beyond the single statement that—

" Shure, himself was a gentleman of a thousand in the matter of charity. Did he not give with his two hands to every poor soul that would ask of him? And if it had pleased the Holy Powers to have created him with three hands instead of two, would not he just be giving as much again with the third one, also? "

After which, he cleverly led the conversation away to the habits of golden-plover, the yearly date of the advent of wood-cock, of wild geese and widgeon,—and with such discourse beguiled the dolorous way until the summit of the mountain pass was reached.

Here both the scene and pervading spirit of it suffered disconcerting transformation. The purple blue plain of the Atlantic stretched out to a silver blue horizon. In the foreground, steeped in soft sunshine, the land broke sharply the better of a thousand feet, first in open, rock strewn pasture, then in richly wooded valley, sweet with the music of a hurrying stream.

Upon the right of the valley, about a mile and a half distant, facing south and securely sheltered by the conformation of the hillside, Callaghan pointed out the shooting lodge. A long, white, one storied house with high peaked gables at either end, it and its adjacent stables and other outbuildings backed by a screen of ilex, arbutus and yew. In front a roughly terraced garden ran down to a little land locked haven, beyond the immense natural breakwater of pinkish grey rock protecting it westward, the coastline curved away to right and left forming a wide bay.

Here the atmosphere was of an exquisite purity. I could distinguish every detail of the house and its surroundings, the blue column of peat smoke curling up from its chimneys, a flash of colour here and there amid the green of the garden, the yellow grey of the shingle upon which a glistening black painted boat was beached.

Seen thus, without doubt Killalmee might claim to be seductively lovely, an abode of gentle, and embowered peace.

As ten minutes or so later, Callaghan swung the brown mare and the cab up to the foot of the steps, Fosdick strolled out onto the porch. His appearance also partook of the unexpected, though in a different mode to that of his dwelling place.

It occurred to me, for one thing, that I had never realized what a

very big man he was. In breeches and gaiters and a roomy old frieze shooting coat, he struck me as little less than gigantic. He had let his beard grow since I last saw him,—and, above the flaming red of it, in the shade of a battered felt hat, his grey-green eyes shone as a cat's shine in the dark. A couple of Irish setters nosed and padded round him, with waving tails and smiling, slobbering chops. An aggressive figure he was as he stood there, for the moment silent, guarded by his handsome fine-limbed, restlessly pacing red dogs!

But Fosdick had often looked and been aggressive. I'd prepared my mind for that,—and in so doing, as I discovered, counted without my host. For the moment of silence past, during which he scrutinized me with those lambent eyes, his greeting was one of delightful cordiality.

"I call it uncommonly charming of you to have uprooted yourself and made such a journey. Come right in. Murphy will see to your traps. You must be chilled stiff with the drive over from Castleroony."

"On the other side of your black mountain range—well, yes. But here in this veritable vale of Avalon —"

"We lie warm enough," he took me up—"Sheltered from every envious wind which blows. The fuchsias and myrtles grow into timber. One might have palms for the planting. But they would offend my eye. I object, on principle, to mixing my latitudes."

He put an arm round my shoulders, as one of those sudden movements of confidential expansion of our school-days—and drew me into the house, whence, as we entered, a cheerful whiskered man-servant ran forth, wriggling on a black coat over his shirt sleeves to possess himself of my baggage.

The front door opened directly onto a large flagged hall, comfortably if rather dingily furnished. The absentee owner of Killalmee from whom Fosdick rented the place, had, it appeared, been a mighty hunter. Skins of great beasts from Asia and Africa lay upon the stone floor, trophies of horns and heads adorned the walls. On the right a door led into a carpeted and altogether more civilized apartment, stocked with well-filled book-cases. On the left a corresponding door gave access to Fosdick's bed and dressing rooms. From the back of the hall an open stone staircase mounted to the upper storey. This consisted of three guest chambers—the one allotted me being situated over the book-room—and a landing lined ceiling-high with cupboards and presses.

After ministering to my needs in the matter of drinks, Fosdick—not without a certain shy satisfaction in displaying his possessions—took me the grand tour of house, stables, poultry yard, piggery and garden. Through this last we sauntered down, the red setters in close affectionate attendance, to the shore of the peaceful little haven, whose placid surface reflected the glow and then the fading of a tender sunset above the rock wall to the West. And all the while we talked, or rather he—Fosdick—talked, I listened—of simple obvious things, such as weather, sport, farming—of where we might still hope to put up some few brace of grouse on the moors inland. Where, on the marshes at the head of the bay, we might be sure of duck and widgeon and, with any reasonable luck, of white fronted geese.

Which was pleasant, easy conver-

sational exercise and suited my humour to a nicety. Yet, as I couldn't but intermittently reflect, how astoundingly unlike all previous intercourse with Fosdick! Not a word of pictures or their painters, of books or their authors. Not a syllable of criticism—criticism which strapped the wretched offender, be he man or god, system, theory, or whatever else happened at the instant to have stirred his rancour, to the operating table and proceeded to vivisect it with relentless ingenuity and sardonic laughter.

Surely it was hardly credible the fires of his hot brain could have been extinguished by the softness, the leisure of this exile to which he condemned himself? Mustn't he be playing with me, feinting, talking off the surface, so as to conceal some purpose, some secret enterprise of cardinal importance? Oh! he showed himself the agreeablest of companions for a lazy afternoon. Still, as time went on, his very smoothness and complacency caused me to question whether I should not feel more at home, more secure, with the volcanic Fosdick of my earlier experience.

Once, standing beside him on the shingle, watching the fair sunset, and listening to the trample of the Atlantic at the back of the granite barrier that guarded the peace of the little haven, something of the earlier Fosdick did, or so at least I fancied, come near flaring out on me.

In all innocence I remarked what an ideal bathing place the pool offered. Declared myself tempted, though late in the day and late in the year for such physical indulgence, to strip and swim, so washing the soil and fatigue of my journey off me. I pointed to certain ledges of rock, just discernible opposite in the deepening shadow—to swim across, climb out and, diving off them, swim back again would be finely recuperative.

But Fosdick who, pipe in mouth and hands in pockets, had presented the embodiment of happy idleness, turned on me savagely. Protested, forbade indeed, not only now, but at any future time during my visit, that I should attempt to bathe in the haven.

"Disabuse your mind of the idea you can reach those ledges save at imminent peril," he went on. "I know you are a strong swimmer, but there are incalculable currents in the pool, specially over on the far side of it, which catch and suck you under. Swear you won't play any fool's tricks, Malet. I don't want to have your death on my conscience —"

"As you will, my dear fellow, as you will," I told him, I hope amiably, though his violence, I own, ruffled me. "You know the secrets, the evil hidden humours of this seductive piece of water best."

"Secrets?" he said. "Hidden evil humours?"

"Evidently. Look at that placid surface, those heaven-born reflections. Who would suspect treachery in so exquisite a place?"

For a minute Fosdick's grey-green eyes shone as—I can only repeat the simile—a cat's shine in the dark. I had an absurd feeling he might spring on and tear me. But he only put his arm round my shoulders heading me homewards.

"Come indoors, old man," he said, "and if your flesh craves ablutions let Murphy get you a hot bath."

Murphy provided the hot bath as desired. There were few things, as I began to apprehend, this cheerful, whiskered creature was not equal to providing—at a push.

Dinner—an excellent one—passed off in peace, amity and small talk. Only later, when we had adjourned to the library—which contained, it may be noted, the most comprehensive collection of books of modern Celtic literature and legend I remember ever to have met with—did Fosdick strike a more personal note.

"By the way, how are Brandon and Johnson and the rest of the old lot?" he rather casually asked.

"Worshipping as devotedly as ever and straining their ears to catch an echo of your returning footsteps."

"Long ears—donkey's ears," he said. "They'd be defrauded of their hope, for my returning footsteps would bring them no comfort. I've nothing to tell them they'd welcome or want.

"They want you—rather pathetically, simply want you—yourself."

"And"—Fosdick laughed, but not unkindly, in his flaming yellow-red beard—"and to know what I am at."

"Oh! if you insist on probing, though in a lesser degree this too, no doubt, to know what you're at."

He turned sideways in his chair and, throwing one leg across the other, fingered his ankle. And, as he moved in this large easy fashion, it came home to me again how notably big and powerful a man he was.

"I give you my word, Malet, I'm not at anything. I've moved from the active to the receptive plane—a higher one that lasts. I'm out to learn, not to teach."

"Put it differently then," I said, though rather taken aback by such un-Fosdick-like humility. "They, or rather Brandon wants to know what is at you? For he's got it upon his brain something *is* at you. That frets him badly—he worries about it."

"And do you share his opinion? Are you worrying about it?"

If I had had the courage to say 'yes'? But I had not! I seemed to hear a growl of challenge in his tone. We proposed to spend a week together. There was time, opportunity ahead. I would wait.

"I? Never in life," I told him. "Ah, I'm worrying about all the grouse and wood-cock and whether I shall acquit myself with credit before you and your retainers at to-morrow's shoot."

Fosdick laughed again quietly, with perhaps a flavour of contempt. Heaved himself up out of his chair, and stood resting both hands on the mantelshelf making to kick the peat fire into a blaze with his foot. Paused, his great body stiffening, keeping the same attitude, the foot in the air,—listened, and listening his face took on an extraordinary expression, at once of hunger and of ecstasy—these, at least, were the words, watching him, which came to my mind. He stepped back, crossed the room, and drawing aside the curtains pushed up a window sash and leaned out into the soft fragrant night.

Curiosity was too much for discretion. I followed and stood behind him. A moon, two days past the full, flooded the whole scene in brooding ethereal radiance.

"'Magic casements, opening on the foam
'Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn'"

I murmured under my breath.

Then stiffened, too, listening. For I heard, a voice—was it?—or a violin, faint, distant, at once strangely wild and divinely alluring. I am not and never have been easily moved, a prey to sentimental emo-

tion—but the sounds went through me, as the saying is, piercing my entrails, shuddering down my spine. And surely they reached me from the far side of the little haven, from those rock ledges to which Fosdick forbade me to swim?

I suppose I made some sort of questioning outcry; for he brought the window sash down with a crash that caused every square inch of glass in it vibrate, and pushing me aside drew the curtains together.

"Keats"—he said—"yes. Keats of course. The quotation is apposite. That young man could write. He'd the root of all poetry which matters in him—vision, and the heaven-born gift of clothing his vision in the word which lives. Faery lands forlorn—yes, always forlorn—"

Fosdick fixed me with those shining grey-green eyes of a cat, but wistfully, appealingly, the ecstasy not yet wholly faded from his face.

Again had I possessed the courage, the presence of mind to speak, to ask, he might have given me his confidence, then and there and so—possibly—tricked fate. He was upon the edge of giving it me, the very edge—had he met with the smallest encouragement, he would, I believe, have unburdened himself. But I was bewildered by the incomprehensible character of the incident. And, at bottom, I was jealous, with evil stirrings of that old jealousy of Fosdick's supremacy which before now had—so unworthily on my part—estranged us. I found nothing to say to him, no comment to make.

A quiver of disappointment crossed his face. I became conscious he pulled himself together and changed his tactics—with regret was it, or with relief?

"You must be considerably tired, my dear Malet," he said. "And if we are to manage anything of a day on those outlying moors we are bound to make an early start. Another drink? No? Then pray don't stand on ceremony. Turn in just as soon as you like."

This clearly spelled my dismissal. I accepted it, although he added with a winning friendliness:

"Believe me, I warmly appreciate your coming so far to look me up. It's uncommonly charming of you. I hope to reward you to some extent, at all events, by a few days' good sport. This faery land"—once more his expression was wistful, appealing—"however forlorn, can fortunately be relied on to supply at least that."

Whereat I retired to bed, but not to sleep. I tried to read The Spectator, Blackwood, The Contemporary—which I had bought on the journey. The pages failed to act as an opiate; or, more truthfully perhaps, I failed to concentrate my attention upon their estimable pages. The problem of Fosdick obtruded itself, obsessed and possessed me. For here, minus his followers and his throne, humbly protesting he no longer aspired to teach but only to learn, he still dominated, confound the fellow, taking up more room than ever before. His face, with that extraordinary expression upon it of ecstasy and of hunger, confronted me. The hunger was spiritual. No bodily appetite provoked it. The ecstasy was spiritual, likewise, divorced from all soil or satisfaction of the flesh. To this conclusion I attached absolute faith.

Small wonder, under such conditions, mental excitement gained on me to the effective murdering of sleep. The airlessness of the room contributed to make me restless. For, though comfortably furnished

and of ample size, the said room had, as I apprehended, long lacked an occupant. It smelt fusty, stuffy, stifling, in short. At last, a prey to increasing nervous irritation, I got up, blew out the candles on the bed-table, lest any inrush of draught happen to set the bed curtains alight, felt my way to the nearest window and opened it.

At first sight, save that the moon rode higher in the sky, and that I viewed it from a higher level, the scene appeared precisely the same as when I had beheld it an hour and a half earlier, from the library below. The atmosphere had the same radiant clarity, the whole the same effect of ethereal loveliness, stillness and peace. But as I watched, soothed by the beauty of it, new elements projected themselves and those of no common sort.

Along the light wooden jetty that crossed the shingle near to where the beached boat lay, and extended for some yards out over the now rising tide—a man walked, mother naked. At the extreme end of the jetty he stopped, a pale glistening figure in the moonlight—Fosdick, unmistakable from his height, his great shoulders, the large freedom of his movements and his pose. And, after an instant's blank amazement, my mind accepted his presence and his nudity as natural, in no respect outrageous or indecent. For he was at one with that setting of trees and flowering shrubs, of moonlight, rocks, sea and mountain by right of his fearless poise and unspoiled virility.

He waited, his head thrown back listening, until presently the distant voice, or violin, once more took up its wild, alluring music. And I heard him cry:

"I come."

And saw him slip into the pool over the side of the wooden jetty. Saw further, thanks to that translucent atmosphere, white rings swirl to the surface as at the commencement of each powerful stroke his hands swept rhythmically outward.

He swam, straight as a dart, towards those forbidden rock ledges. Half way across, standing for an instant bolt upright in the water, he exultantly shouted:

"I come—yes—yes—I come."

I saw him swing up onto the lower ledge, and saw, surely, another pale, glistening figure lean from above, with arms outstretched, to greet and to receive him. I strained my eyes to gain some clearer knowledge of this figure, but vainly. For just then a fleet of clouds brought by some upper wind —from off the vast plain of the Atlantic, drifted over the moon obscuring her light.

In my existing state of nervous exaltation, I yielded to the rebuff, the rebuke, thus administered by nature. I'd seen enough, perhaps more than enough—to see more was merely further to complicate my amazing situation. I drew back, closed the window, lowered the blind, and in the blind darkness groped my way to the bed. I sat down on the side of it, holding my head with both hands.

For I was shaken, awed, as by contact with things transcending human reason. The problem of Fosdick had assumed portentous proportions, with which I felt wholly unequal to cope. Any idea of intrigue, of amorous adventure I dismissed in disgust. Whatever the explanation, it didn't lie in that commonplace, vulgar direction. If Fosdick had wanted women, he would have taken them, bless you, brutally, singly, without ceremony or scruple, or any exalted *mise en scene* of this

sort. The most fly-blown London rendezvous, in his contemptuous estimation, would serve well enough.

But what—I held my aching head—was to be the upshot of this revelation in relation to my present visit? I debated that backwards and forwards, and, in the end, hedged. Silence, until Fosdick should speak, or I be forced to do so by further outside occurrence.

At breakfast Fosdick presented a serene, if slightly watchful countenance. I felt his eyes keenly upon me once or twice. Immediately afterwards we started up the wooded valley for the moors. He and I riding dim coloured ponies, fine, hardy beasts, with a queer dark stripe across the shoulders and along the spine. A third pony carried the game bags and our luncheon. The red setters were joyfully of the party, as were a couple of game-watchers, by name Dennis and Pat. Sport was excellent, the dogs working well and under perfect control. And the world grew normal again. Whence I suffered agreeable reaction, and began, if not actually to question, yet to slip away from the oppression of my experiences of last night. It could wait—Oh! it could wait.

In point of fact it did wait, for one cause or another, until my last evening at Killalmee. Fosdick, I think, saw to that. He kept me busy with rod and gun, proving himself in every particular a generous and considerate host. Even the last evening might have passed without further revelation, but that conscience, my obligation toward Brandon, suddenly asserted itself. How could I meet him, empty-handed as to results?

And so sitting over the peat-fire in the library, against my will, I said to Fosdick at last:

"You realize, the whole devoted crowd will be on to me, vociferous for news. What am I to tell them? Have you no message to send? Are you never going to come back?"

"Never is a long word—but what is there to go for?"

I preached him a little sermon on his duty to his friends, to society, to his own talents, even to the State. It was a feeble performance; he bore with me very patiently, but pushed his chair back, into the shadow where the lamplight did not reach.

"The night you came—after dinner—did you hear?"

My mind sprang to attention.

"I heard," I told him. "And more. Later—from my window upstairs, I saw."

Fosdick moved, and his grey-green eyes shone, holding mine, whether savagely or appealingly, I had no means to determine. I own to a moment of blank unreasoning fear. Yet I could not unsay that which I had said, could not withdraw my confession. It was made; and at that I must leave it, whatever the construction put upon it.

"You saw?" Fosdick repeated. "What did you see?"

"It was pure accident," I allowed myself thus much of exculpation. "I felt a bit feverish—couldn't sleep—got up, and, standing at the window, saw you down on the jetty, saw you swim across the haven—against doing which, as you may remember, you warned me—to those rocks."

"Anything more?"

"Yes—before a cloud shut off the moonlight, I saw that you were not alone in your vigil."

Silence came down upon the room—a silence which might be felt. But, behind and through it, I was conscious of the pulse of Fosdick's pent up emotion. The man's soul and mind were strangely in travail.

Again I went in fear—fear of what that travail might bring forth. But when at last he spoke it was calmly.

"I don't blame you," he said; "though I hoped you had remained in ignorance. I thought I'd safely arranged my dates. Usually"—he hesitated—"t h e s e manifestations are confined to the nights of the full moon. When it begins to wane they cease. I didn't lie to you about the dangers of bathing in the pool. On a rising tide, during the full moon it is for some obscure cause comparatively safe. At other times a death trap—which may get me, will, as I fancy, get me even yet."

"Then why, in Heaven's name why"—I waited, moved by an affection not unworthy of Brandon, an urgency not unworthy of hysterical little Craddock.

"Why remain here, you mean," Fosdick took me up, "instead of breaking out of faery-land forlorn, and returning to the old friends and the old London life? Because hearing that which you acknowledge to have heard and seen the other night you surprised the fact which makes it a farce, a heart-break, a thing altogether impossible and grotesque that I should go back. As long as that which you heard and saw doesn't leave me, I cannot leave it. It holds me here, at Killalmee, prisoner—if you like—but prisoner to and in virtue of the illimitable freedom it has brought me. It has emancipated me from the most damnable of all earthly superstitions—the superstition of disbelief."

So to that heretofore locked door Fosdick had found the key. But after what disastrous fashion, if I apprehended his meaning aright!

"It?" I cried. "And what, I beg of you, really is this all-converting It? Do you seriously ask me to accept the visible existence—here in full nineteenth century within the demesne of your remarkably comfortable modern shooting lodge—of some variant of the classic Siren, the Teutonic Lorelei, a legendary non-human monster, who woos men by its singing only to drown them, having first made them mad?"

"I am afraid, my dear fellow, that's precisely what I do ask of you," Fosdick said. "Subject to this not wholly inconsiderable reservation as to madness. That as a result depends, in great measure, upon the nature and capacity of the individual man. In my case it has worked the other way about. All my life until I heard that singing I was mad—mad with obstinate conceit of my own intellect. Now I am sane, having learned through it the smallness of my own value in the universal scale and scheme of things. Leaning through it there are beings, pure essences outside and independent of our narrow, puny human sphere — resident in all nature, earth, air and sea, this manifestation, this emergent spirit"—he sunk his voice as one who worships—"is of the sea. It sings in the language of the Ancient Wisdom, that of the six days of Creation and of that mystic seventh when the Creative Energy, its initial work fulfilled, had rest."

This rhapsody chanted by Fosdick, he leaning forward now, the lamplight touching his flaming yellow-red beard and his ecstatic face! He was wonderful. Oh! yes, I succumbed to, subscribed to his greatness, whole-heartedly at last. Only—only wasn't it greatness in ruins? The question presented itself, with painfully ironical force. Under pressure of it I couldn't sit still. Irritably I rose. My temper was short—because I felt unhappy—quite

abominably unhappy. I ceased to be afraid of Fosdick. He was to me, somehow, as a man already dead.

"You think me a lunatic?"

"I give you my word I've not a notion what to think—except—oh! you've convinced me. I'm with you there—it's useless, useless for you to go back."

Fosdick had risen, too. He stood opposite to me. He laughed, but sadly as one who strives to hide the bitterness of some profound farewell.

"Faery-land has got me!" he said.

"Faery-land," I answered, "curse the place. Yes—poor, dear old chap, it has."

Early next day I started for Castleroony station, in the outside car, Callaghan driving. Fosdick stood on the porch, cheerful whiskered Murphy behind him, and the two red setters, with waving tails and smiling, slobbering chops, padding and nosing round them both.

That was my last sight, my last impression of Fosdick. About six months later news arrived of his death—drowned, when swimming in the charming little haven belonging to his Irish shooting lodge. No mystery, no question of suicide, surrounded the event. Cramp, it was reported, and no one at hand, unfortunately, to attempt a rescue owing to his singular habit of bathing late at night.

Brandon mourned him, I think. For the rest, absence too often spells oblivion, specially in London life. Fosdick had outstayed his vogue. Craddock had transferred his discipleship. Johnson discovered a newer genius to push and puff in conversation and in print.

Haltekok

By
CARIT ETLAR

From the Danish by Harald Toksvig

Denmark is par excellence the home of folk-lore and the fairy tale—not the eerie, supernatural, blood-curdling sort, but the gentler, more kindly, more human variety. There is hardly a person who does not owe some of his sweetest childhood memories to Hans Christian Andersen.

Fairy tales, moreover, are ageless and, if the truth be told, appeal as much to the grown-up as to the child. For this reason we are including in the first number of WORLD FICTION this delightful little tale, in spite of the fact that its author died in 1900. Carit Etlar (Johan Carl Christian Brosböll) was not only a writer of fairy stories, but was famed as an historical novelist. His principal themes were taken from the Denmark of the seventeenth century. His name is a household word among his countrymen.

THE trolls lived in a hill in the forest. The family consisted of a score of persons; perhaps there were more, but it is known for sure that one of them was called Haltekok. The wise ones insisted this came from the fact that he limped. He is the hero of the story.

"Gee whiz! that's awful beer you serve," said the old grandfather one evening as the trolls were sitting around the fire, eating. "We must try to borrow a jugful somewhere or other, now the holidays are coming."

"Let Haltekok take care of that," said his wife, "he is the smartest of us all and so handy with his fingers."

Haltekok lay over in a corner rummaging in a pile of straw.

"Do you hear what we are saying?" asked the grandfather.

"I'm asleep," answered Haltekok, and kicked out with both legs in the straw.

"You are going down and borrow a jug of musty ale from Mads Cooper."

"No, I don't go to any cooper. Ouch! it hurts. Something's in my throat; it feels as if I had swallowed a whole pound of awls."

"What a grandson I have," said the old one and threw a bone at him. "He won't obey his elders."

"What a grandfather I have, he says I have to out and steal."

"Go, now, my sweet boy!" said the grandmother and wrapped a woolen scarf around his neck. Haltekok got up reluctantly and stretched himself.

"Well then, I'll go, but I want a regular piece of Christmas cake for it, and the nice pig's foot you stole from the butcher's."

"You shall have it."

"I want the big pants button, that Mikke wears in the middle of his shirt, too."

"That will all be fixed up. Only get a move on now."

They tied the beer jug around Haltekok's neck, started him on his way, and wished him a successful trip.

When he came to Mads Cooper's house he crawled in through an

open window, and sneaked over to the full beer barrel. The cooper was asleep and snoring, but his wife heard the troll moving around outside.

"Pa! Pa!" she said, "there's somebody in the other room. Get up and see what it is."

"It must be kitty with a mouse," said the cooper.

A little later the wife called again. "It's getting worse and worse, you. I'll run away from you, if you don't get up at once to see what it is."

And she began to scream, so Mads had to get up.

When Haltekok heard him coming he jumped down an empty salt barrel.

Mads Cooper opened the door at that very moment. The moon shone in the room and he saw the troll's head and his red cap disappear down the barrel.

"Ho, ho!" said Mads, "is it you, my boy! Now I'll catch me a mouse." With that he sprang over to the barrel and fastened down the cover with two new hoops. "Sit there now," he shouted through the bunghole, "tomorrow you'll go for a nice little sail in our mill pond."

With this pleasant promise he went to bed again, but he forgot to shut the door after him. Haltekok sat all humped up in his prison and wept so loud they could hear him in the other room. He tried to tip the barrel over, but couldn't. He used all his strength trying to raise the lid but that, too, was useless. At last he thought of his knife, and began to cut the bunghole larger. It was hard work for the little troll, as the wood was so tough. The sweat stood in pearls on his wrinkled face, but he kept on, and at last he got the hole big enough so he could stick his head out and look around the room. The moon still shone through the small panes; everything was as still as the dead, but the hillman thought only of the living. He set to work again, and made a new hole large enough to get one leg through. He had just finished when his knife broke, and he had no other tools.

"Now I must be going," he whispered, after he had rested a while, "that sailing trip Mads promised doesn't appeal to me at all. He'll have the world's worst luck when I get out of here."

When Haltekok had gathered new strength, he stuck one leg out of the little hole, and put his head through the big one. Then, barrel and all, he hopped out of the house.

It was high time he went. The roosters were crowing at the neighbors'; dawn had come, and the morning sun threw its warm light over the woods. Mads Cooper was awakened by the noise of Haltekok's departure and he went out in the yard. He stood awhile and looked at the bobbing barrel, with which the little puffing and groaning troll was hopping off. He called his wife so that she too could have the pleasure of seeing it. Then he ran into his workshop and returned with a big mallet.

"Here's a little present for the trip home," he said, "and thanks for the visit," and he hit the barrel such a whack that two of the staves broke. A plaintive wail came from inside the barrel. Mads was a strong man, and Haltekok lay there a few minutes without moving. Then he poked his head up through the smashed staves and hopped away, faster than ever. When he got up the hill he was received with a great shout of laughter. From behind every bush came the head of a little troll. They had been waiting for him a long time and had

seen part of what had happened between him and Mads Cooper.

Mads and his wife were very pleased with themselves and their adventure, and thought the affair was now ended. They were wrong. The next night they were awakened by a terrific din in the house. All the doors swung and groaned and slammed; the chimney howled and the windows rattled as though there were a terrible hail storm. Mads and his wife lay in bed and quarreled about who should get up, for Mads was brave only in the daytime Finally they both sneaked over to the door and saw in the moonlight that the house was surrounded by small hill folk. Some were dragging the staves and hoops down to the pond where they merrily tried to drown them. Others had loosened the cattle and were chasing them around the yard. A group of them stood in front of the windows and threw sand and gravel on the panes with great effect. All was screaming and howling and complaining, and in the middle of the yard stood Haltekok with a hen under each arm. He was just going to drown them in the watering trough. When the cooper came out in the yard, he let them go, took off his red cap and bowed deeply. "We had a fine time," he said. Then he and the family made off.

The next night it was no better. Mads Cooper found his tools dulled and useless in his workshop. The eggs were crushed in the hens' nests, the linen which was out to bleach was thrown in the pond, the cows in the field were untied and came bellowing home; in short, everything was done to make the poor cooper's life miserable, and when he was awakened by the noise and looked out of the door, he always met Haltekok's mocking and grinning face, and was greeted with the shout: "We had a fine time!"

"God save me, poor wretch that I am!" said Mads one morning, "What'll I do to make peace with these wicked hill folk. I'll have to leave my house and home and look for a place in some other country."

"Not at all," said the wife, "let's try first to fix it up with the miserable beings, I mean, couldn't we do something for the dear little darlings? I'll go out and bake a big basket full of cookies with a raisin in the middle of each one; perhaps we can afford a bit of porridge too. Then tonight we'll carry the basket and a jug of our very best musty ale out on the hill. We'll see what they say. There's always time to think about moving.

No sooner said than done; the wife baked the cookies, Mads filled the hill man's forgotten jug, and in the evening they carried their gifts to the hill.

A little man sat outside in the heather. He had a red cap on his head, and the cooper at once recognized Haltekok's mocking face.

"You make the speech," whispered the wife, "you're not afraid of words, and it's you who offended the little dears."

"No, it's best for you to begin," said Mads. "I am so hoarse this evening. Go ahead!"

"Oh, dear Mr. Troll!" said the wife, "we're bringing a little food and a good drink of beer for you and your genteel comrades."

"Thank you for that! Let's see what it is! Uncover the basket! Oh! are those supposed to be cookies? They look sort of lean and pale, and they must have given you light weight when you bought those raisins, there's only one in each cake."

"Yes, but it's a big one," Mads Cooper allowed himself to remark respectfully, "and see how fat it is!"

"There's only one!" repeated Haltekok severely,—"and what a mess of porridge! Why it's so hard and tough I could ride on it. But, anyway, thank you just the same, you splendid people! It's very seldom that anyone thinks about us poor wretches; people always pinch and scratch and torment us, whenever they get a chance. Now, let's hear what you want in return for your presents!"

"Oh, nothing," answered the wife.

"No!" cried Mads, "we are not the kind of low souls who want to get paid for the things we give away, are we, Ma?" Then he winked at her and the wife understood him at once; she cocked her head on one side and exclaimed with her nicest smile:

"The only thing I could possibly think of would be, if the kind hill folk that we both think such a lot of might perhaps help us to get rid of the evil spirits that plague our house every night."

"We'll see what can be done," said Haltekok and made a magnificent bow, "but just remember never to do us little folk any harm." With these words he took the jug and the basket and crept down a hole in the hill.

"Did you hear how well I spoke?" said the wife on the way home.

"Yes, you did pretty well," answered Mads, "but just the same I was the one who got the best of them."

"How was that?"

"I mixed half bad beer, stale beer and old leavings with the good beer that I filled the jug with. Let's go in and tell the minister how well we managed it; now I guess we'll have a little peace."

The night was calm and peaceful, they heard nothing of the hill folk, but in the morning when the wife came out in the kitchen she found to her horror dishes and tubs swimming about the room in a sea of beer. The bung had been taken out of the big barrel which contained their whole supply of musty ale, and on the bottom of the empty barrel was chalked, "We had a fine time."

Spring

By

MIHAIL SADOVEANU

From the Rumanian by Adrio Val

Mihail Sadoveanu, the most famous of modern Rumanian authors, comes from the province of Moldava, where he lives today. He was the inaugurator of the literary movement in Rumania which sought its inspiration in the popular customs and folk-lore of the country. His is a sane, healthy spirit: he is methodic and constant in his production, he is passionately fond of country life, and besides his other claims to fame, is the father of ten children. He has founded several magazines, among them the well-known "Viata Romineasca" (Rumanian Life). Although already past his first youth, he served in the front lines from the beginning to the end of the great war.

"Spring" is a perfect expression of the Rumanian soul—passionate, sensitive, and lyrical. It is amusing to observe in passing, that the "flapper" is not so new a phenomenon as we are often inclined to think.

"TRULY, it seems a bit long to me since 1845," said 'Domnita' settling herself daintily in front of the fire. Outside the sky and earth mingled in a torrential thunderstorm.

"Ah, yes—what can one expect? It was in another century, another constellation of life. . ." and the old Princess in her old armchair muffled herself warmly in her old sable cape.

"Your parents were not even born, and it was in the time of the great Boyards with their long beards and loose clothes—the great Boyards who were carried and held up under their armpits by gypsy slaves.

"It's so long ago—so long," she murmured in a scarcely audible voice. "I was a little, seventeen-year-old devil then. I was supple and slender, very slender, and restless like quicksilver—and my nose was little and impertinent and I had keen eyes.

"I made my debut the winter of that year, going to balls and receptions, and for the first time I heard Italian and French singers in the theatres; even my father, who was a Boier of the Protipendada,[1] took me to the Voivod Mihai Sturdza's evening receptions. I certainly was not timid. Mlle. Bayard, who had been my teacher for seven years, had acquainted me with her whole library, hidden in a big trunk. I had read Chateaubriand and I could look at the Universe with a smile. My teacher and friend had taught me to know and to appreciate even the ridiculous side of the society I entered—the Oriental indolence, ignorance and lack of French chivalry. There is no use talking; even my father and mother belonged to that society! I was very sorry for it, but I pitied them sincerely and I considered myself superior to everyone in the world. I admired much more the bandits and little

[1] *Protipendada—the highest class of Rumanian nobility, that formed by the exclusive privileged persons who intimately surrounded the Voivod (the King) at all assemblies.*

devils the Italians depicted and sang about. I couldn't get along with anybody.

"An old lady who made and unmade marriages, found me all alone one day and she immediately tried to talk to me with terrific praise about Postelnic Canta's son. Deeply serious, I looked at her:

"'Coana Aretia,' I told her, 'your Prince Charming's nose is too long! And besides, if Babaca and Neneaca desire to marry me off, they will try to decide it according to their good pleasure and impose their will upon me! That is our custom here. But I tell you that neither old ladies, will-power, threats, fasting nor even blows shall make me marry! I am going to choose my husband according to my own desires and pleasure! There!'

"Madam Aretia clapped her hands together, rolled her enormous eyes which she raised Heavenward and then lowered, looking at me as at a strange animal.

"But laughing, I looked at her steadily, without shame or nonsense; seeing this, she wrapped her Turkish shawl around her mustached and bearded face and went away, grumbling against 'the weeds and the little horned devils of these days.'

"My mother also tried to talk to me about the same son of the Postelnic. But I didn't love my mother a bit because up to my tenth year I had lived with slaves and gypsies and after them with my French teacher, who was so intelligent and so good! I said the same things to my mother, bravely, that there was nothing of the kind in my heart. Then my father, with his long, iron-gray beard and his eyebrows knit, appeared: he began to call me *Psihi-mu*[1] and talked as if he were in the Royal Council Chamber. But my father also was a stranger to me; I could almost say that until my twelfth year I had never seen him.

"'What is it, Father?' I asked him simply. 'You say that "my time" has come? Do you want me to marry?'

"'I don't want to force you, my little daughter,' my father said, 'but haven't you thought about it yet?'

"'No.'

"'Then, know that we have thought about it!'

"'Yes,' I said slowly, 'but I do not want to marry like your slaves over there, at the command of the Lord.'

"'Really? And where, I pray, did you get such ideas? That devilish Frenchwoman has ruined your sense!'

"'Tatutza! Little Father,' I burst out with emotion. 'The Frenchwoman taught me how to think—how to be better—how to be nobler in my soul than others. She has been like a mother to me!'

"'Whew,' the old man grumbled. 'You are like a new style porcelain cover—when one touches it, it breaks! I shall leave you alone for a while, and with time you will learn to be sensible. . . .'

"'Father!' I cried joyfully, seeing a tender light in his eyes, 'I forgot to tell you that the Postelnic's son's nose is too long!'

"'That is what you told Madam Aretia also, it seems, little snake that you are!' he answered, kissing me on the forehead.

"Of all those who surrounded me it was always my father who was the most refined and who began to understand me. Besides, he was also a man of letters and I found a magazine with new verses which thrilled me, in a drawer of his night

[1] *Psihi-mu—my soul or my dear in Greek.*

table; it was the Ode to the year 1840:

Let us master the sorrows that conquer mankind.
. . . Let us await in peace Destiny's help. . .

"Again, it was among his old, yellow papers that I found a collection of poems written in beautiful, flowering letters by hand. I learned only later that these pretty verses had been rhymed by a young Boyard, Vornic Alexandri's son. I do not know if you others still remember some stanzas, but ever since then, I have known the ballad which begins like this, by heart:

In the convent, high on the hill,
The novice weeps in the garden.
She weeps at night and sighs at dawn
For the world's joys, all lost to her.

"This story of the novice and the Haiduc[1] as well as others of the kind which fascinated me, were the first verses I learned in the dear language of those who raised me. That is how I was in the year I spoke of, a daring little girl, willful, not much loved, dreaming. . .

"My father sent us to his estate at Lunca Mare in the Moldavian Valley for the Easter holidays in the Spring. And what I want to tell you about happened there. It was a sensation rather than a fact. It was the coming of Spring in the first year of dreams. Until then I had not noticed other Springs. All Nature, gray and monotonous, had passed before my eyes without affecting me, during childhood's years. This time I suddenly saw a green carpet spreading around our Boyard lands, and beyond the merry meadow, the very old forest which, according to peasants' talk, went smooth and endless to the mountain top.

"The willows' little, fluffy blossoms opened for the Florii feast, the Sunday before Easter, and bees began to buzz around them. The gardens were still empty, the buds having barely started to burst; only the willows drooped their pale, green-yellow tresses on all sides. The heaths steamed faintly and made, between the horizon and our courtyard, a mysterious mist behind which fairy-tale shadows seemed to lurk.

"The Spring sun and wind had some burning quality. At evening my face smarted and my head hurt. Spring had set out to overcome, gently, slowly, all that surrounded me. I walked along the edge of the forest and the dead leaves rustled. Hazels, oaks, elms and birches had bloomed and blossomed, while the buds of the wild-cherry trees were bursting and showed the new, little flowers like flakes of fragrant snow. Little flowers, the color of the sky, iridescent violets, yellow primroses and bear-honey had pushed through the dead leaves.

"And I don't know why it seemed to me that all these little flowers looked around as astonished as I, myself. I walked slowly, looking at them and not daring to pluck them. In the branches above them little birds, that did not fly away at my approach, scolded each other noisily and gaily. It was then for the first time that I saw a rabbit with her young under a hazel bush, on a cover of green moss. And I also saw a beautiful wild deer; he came out to the edge of the glade and looked toward the heath. I remained motionless and looked at him; he also stood without moving, his head in the last rays of the sun. His little horns, quite new, were still covered

[1] *Haiduc—a kind of national hero, half-bandit, half-benefactor of the poor.*

with their fine sheath of ash-colored skin. He was so fragile and tender, and big black lights shone in his eyes. Then, all at once he turned his head toward me. I had made a movement; he trembled, I closed my eyes for an instant and when I opened them again the wild hart had noiselessly disappeared like a phantom.

"The first Spring of my Life! Everything was new; the sky clear, the heath still restrained with the snow's freshness, the mysterious woods, the waters of the troubled Moldova, the blue mountain. All the earth's colors entered my eyes; I felt damp and sharp odors in my nostrils and my soul. This first impression, this peculiar rebirth has always dwelt suppressed in my being. Many times the memory of it is so strong, that after so many years I see the perfect vision of all these things rise before me, I feel the warm mist of yester-year which awakens the sensation of all the perfumes of that time.

"Hidden in a corner of the forest a little road began which led to the quiet valley of bees where honey was gathered. There was a cottage in the little valley below, and all around it in a rustic grillwork of branches were the bees' little houses.

"A dog barked in a hoarse voice when I approached and an old man with a white beard came out on the sill. The whirring of thousands of bees was heard and an aroma of honey and wax was wafted warmly toward me. Now, listen:

"On one of the Easter holidays I was walking along the high-road with my gypsy, Raritza, who always accompanied me. The dead leaves on the edge of the woods rustled softly. The little, new leaves were motionless. There was not a breath of wind stirring. I stopped near a fountain in a glade, called the Glade of the Well. Near the fork, chained to the high arms, was also a cross—someone must have died a horrible death and been buried there. Raritza did not know who it was but she said that a long time ago she had heard of a great robbery and crime, but she didn't know just when. I was not thirsty, but I said to the Bohemian girl:

"'Raritza, go and draw a bucket of water.'

"The slim, strong girl put her hand on the polished wood, but before letting the pail down into the well she paused, strained her ears and said shudderingly,

"'Duduitza, little Lady, do you hear?' Someone in the woods close by began to sing with a green leaf. . .

"'Who is it, Raritza?' I asked. 'Who is whistling?'

"'I don't know, Duduitza Despina!'

"The quivering of the leaf ceased; a voice began to trill; then, the leaf sang again. . . Afterward there was another silence. The cautious Tzigane looked through the thicket.

"'What is it, Raritza? Do you see anyone? It must be some man from the village!'

"'I don't know. . . I don't believe. . .' she answered very low. She wanted to add something. She lowered the bucket midway; suddenly, she let go of everything, terrified, cried:

"'Run, Duduitza.'

"She then fled along the little road under the thick roof of the woods. I was not afraid. I looked about me. Coming out of the thicket, right on the edge of the glade, I saw a young man. He must have been about thirty years old. He carried a *durda* on his shoulder, as it was called in those days, meaning

a rifle whose principal barrel was cup-shaped, and he had a *baltag* in his right hand. He was very cleanly dressed in his short *cojoc*[1] thrown over his right shoulder, his snowy, embroidered shirt and his *itzari*[2], the *chimir*[3] studded with various metals and his *opinci*, magnificently made with black tongs tightly laced over each other, higher than his ankles, and he had pretty red tassels at the pointed ends of them. He wore a high fur bonnet on his head. He stared at me, astonished. For a moment he looked towards the spot where the gypsy had fled. Then, he looked at me again. Indeed, he was not a homely man; he had a fresh, shaven face and a short, thick mustache. He seemed to hesitate a moment, then he came out of the forest's shadow and into the light of the well.

"He stopped and said to me, 'Good luck.'

"I answered, 'Thank you.'

"I saw him smile; I did not understand why.

"'You are the Boyard's daughter?' he asked me.

"'Yes. But why do you ask?'

"'Just so! And aren't you afraid to go so far away from the Cour all alone?'

"'No. But who are you?'

"'Oh—a man. I come from the mountain and I'm going to the village. . .'

"He stayed and looked at me steadily; he had an astonished and kind smile; it has remained in a mysterious corner of my soul until this day, that smile. He seemed to be a kind and timid young man and as he looked at me deeply, I swear he was far from being homely. I have seen many men in my time! I understood his glance and his astonishment because I was slender and beautiful and delicate as no young girl he had ever seen in all his villages and mountains; of that I can assure you! He began to laugh:

"'So, you are not afraid, eh? But do you know why the gypsy ran away?'

"'No. Why did she flee?'

"'Eh—you must ask her that, yourself; and she may tell you, herself!' Perhaps his courage and daring way of speaking should have angered me because I was accustomed to respect and obedience from common people; however, I was not in the least vexed. My man's bearing seemed to be a part of the woods, the glade and the surrounding Spring.

"'Cu bine!' he said softly and rather regretfully in farewell. And he went away. He followed the little narrow road, weaving among the branches noiselessly, and disappeared.

"This meeting had lasted several minutes. Alone, I walked toward the Cour and I thought. . . Now, I could easily understand that the man with whom I had talked was a robber . . . and if I were not mistaken I even knew his name, if he were really 'the Robber of the Woods.' He was the big devil 'Damian,' who was often talked about in the village and our house.

"Only now, was I afraid, desperately. I began to run, but I soon calmed myself and stopped my mad hurry. I no longer had anything to fear. When I saw Raritza, who was waiting for me at a bend of the road, I acted undisturbed. I began to laugh.

"'God, Duduitza. You don't know how frightened I've been!'

"'Why? Of what were you

[1] *Cojoc—a kind of little, very short overcoat of white leather embroidered in red and black.*
[2] *Itzari—long trousers of white broadcloth, the Rumanian national garb, with the cojoc.*
[3] *Chimir—wide belt of embroidered leather, with many pockets.*

afraid?' I asked, coolly.

"'But do you know who he was?'

"'What about it? Who was he? A robber? What of it?'

"'Yes, Duduitza, it was Damian! He could have killed us!'

"'Why should he kill us? Don't be stupid, and say nothing at home.'

"Raritza was completely amazed at my courage and I, continuing to dream about the strange apparition at the fountain, thought that I really had nothing to be frightened about. In any case such a meeting could not bring terrifying things and death. My man did not have the appearance of a wild beast! On the contrary!

"So you know him, Raritza?'

"'Yes, Duduitza, I know him! Ah—ah—ah—how many robberies he has committed! He has plundered any number of Boyards' Cours! God! He's not afraid of anyone! He is charmed!'

"'How?'

"'He's charmed! No bullet goes near him!'

"'Really? And now what is he doing? Where is he going?'

"'Oh, I believe, Duduitza, that he is going to Navrapesti; they say he has a sweetheart there. . .'

"Hm. . . So the robber—To speak truly to you, I thought about his look and his smile and I felt hurt at this discovery. . . Why was I hurt? I did not know. Now, perhaps I can understand. Now, I understand also why Damian's appearance at the fountain in the light, the flowers and aroma of Spring seemed so glorious to me. . . But at the time, remaining alone, I only mused about mysterious and fantastic things."

So our Domnitza told us about a simple sensation she had experienced in the Spring of the year 1845. She herself had been a smile and a flower of Spring-time. It is the reason her story, in the old armchair facing the fire, was filled with sweet melancholy. She was a smiling ruin, now. And then—since that time Domnitza has left our world also. She too has gone where the Springs of yesteryear, with their flowers, their songs and their fragrance, have fled.

"Poor Nelly! She's had such awful luck with her divorce. The judge gave her all three children"

(*Simplicissimus*, Munich)

The Knight of Death

By

ENRIQUE LOPEZ ALBUJAR

From the Spanish by Robert H. Williams

The author of this grim story was for years a judge in Huánuco, the capital of the province in which the scene is laid, and his knowledge of these modern descendants of the Incas is not based on fancy. There they live, in wretched little huts scattered, he says, like dominoes over the mountain-side. The only impress our civilization has left on them is a form of Christianity which they have warped to fit the molds of their ancient idols, a fierce delight in rifle shooting—and an infinite melancholy which only the benign coca can soothe. For the rest, they are as crafty and cruel in their vengeance as in the days when Pizarro and his little band of conquistadores penetrated to their sacred cities. It seems almost incredible, but this tale is based on actual facts.

THE sun had gone down and night was beginning to cast its shadows over the impressive sadness of the village. Liberato Tucto, squatting at the door of his shanty, was determinedly chewing coca leaves to see if they might help him solve the fate that had befallen his daughter who, despite his vigilance, had been stolen a month before by a young man of the settlement.

During these thirty days his consumption of coca had been greater than usual. He chewed constantly with an Indian's silent, deliberate fury. Every three hours, with a mathematical regularity that needed no timepiece to mark the intervals, he would put his hand into his coca pouch, which, slinging inseparably at his side, seemed to be a source of consolation. He took out little handsful of the sacred leaves, with the delicacy of a jeweler collecting diamond dust, and packed them into the *shipina*[1] which went rapidly in and out of his mouth like a furnace shovel.

As old Tucto sat there wrapped in his striped cloak of sombre colors, a conical woolen cap on his head, his eyes slanting and cold, cheeks of Mongolian prominence, a nose curved and keenly aggressive, his mouth repulsively swollen by the immoderate use of coca, he seemed rather than a man of this day, an Incan idol in the flesh.

Not every chew produced the same effect. Sometimes the coca tasted sweet and then again bitter; a fact which left him disconcerted. It was notorious that Hilario Crispín, the abductor of his daughter, was an Indian of ugly disposition, a great drinker of *chacta* and a shiftless seducer, fond of bad company; in short he was a *mostrenco,* as they term an idle vagabond in that country. To a respectable Indian, this is the worst epithet that can be applied to a person.

Where could the scoundrel have taken his Faustina? What sort of life was she leading? Or had he abandoned her, out of retaliation for the refusal which Tucto, like a sensible man, had given Crispín's father when he had come to ask for her in his son's name?

Old Tucto was absorbed in these

[1] *Small bone spoon in which the Indians prepare the coca leaves for chewing. The lime of the spoon frees the cocaine. They divine the future from the taste of the coca; if sweet, things will turn out to their liking; if bitter, the contrary.*

deep meditations on the thirtieth day after the theft of the missing girl, when out of the shadows of falling night rose a grim figure which dropped in front of the old man a sack which he was carrying on his back and said:

"Old man, I have brought you your daughter so you won't have to look for her anymore, nor go about town saying that a *mostrenco* has run off with her."

And without waiting for a reply the man, who was none other than Hilario Crispín, untied the sack and, with a jerk, emptied its contents, a nauseating, bloody mass, on the ground. It was the hacked body of Tucto's daughter.

With diabolical sarcasm the Indian Crispín, picking up the sack, added mockingly,

"I won't leave you the sack because I may need it again for you if you ever dare cross my path."

With this he abruptly turned away.

But the old man, after the first shock, had succeeded in remaining impassive. He got up and with a calmness inexplicable in any other race, answered:

"It's best for you to take your sack; it is probably stolen and might bring me bad luck. But since you have brought me my daughter, you ought to leave something for the funeral candles. Haven't you a coin or two?"

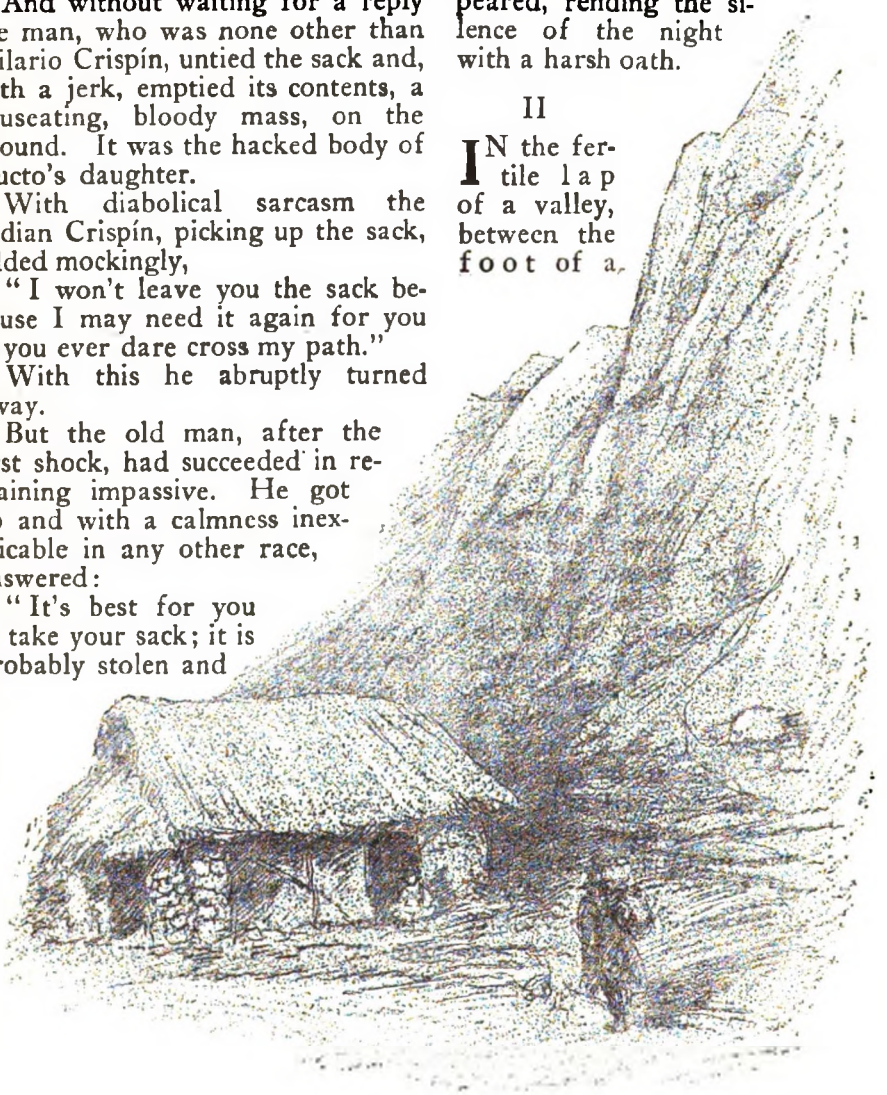
Crispín, who understood the old man's fierce irony, answered without looking back:

"What can a *mostrenco* give you! Would you like a knife in you, you old thief?"

And the Indian disappeared, rending the silence of the night with a harsh oath.

II

IN the fertile lap of a valley, between the foot of a



mountain and the winding course of the turbulent Marañón, lie a hundred disordered and decayed huts, like dominoes on a green card table. It is the village of Pampamarca. The only diversion in the pastoral, half barbarous life of its inhabitants is target shooting which gives them a pretext to get drunk on rum or *chacta* and to use up a great many rifle cartridges, in spite of the difficulties they have to overcome to secure them. They have agents in all the principal towns of the province who supply them with ammunition at the most extravagant prices. When the agent is slow or careless, they come all the way down from their mountain heights themselves. It is then one sees them wandering about Huánuco, a guileless, almost idiotic expression on their faces. They visit all the shops, even the drug stores, where they begin by asking timidly for the standard 44 calibre cartridges and wind up by begging for shells of any description.

It was in this village of huts, this land of gunmen or *illapacos*, that the light of day rose for the first time on Juan Jorge, flower and peer of all sharpshooters. At the age of thirty his fame made one's hair stand on end when his deeds were related, and caused the Indian maidens for ten miles thereabouts to languish in admiration. Moreover, he was also an eminent guitar player and a crooner of Indian tunes capable of melting the haughtiest feminine heart. He dressed like the "white folks," displaying a watch and chain whenever he went down to the larger towns to transact his business—which consisted in eliminating from this miserable world those destined to the honor of receiving squarely between the eyes a bullet from this illustrious *illapaco*.

It must not be thought from this that Juan Jorge was either an unlettered vagabond, or a stupid lout when it came to dealing with genteel persons or elegant young ladies. By no means; Juan Jorge could read and write correctly, since he was nothing less than a pupil of schoolmaster Ruiz. This famous pedagogue, taking advantage of his position as such, on one occasion when he met his former pupil, said to him:

"My boy, I hear that you have become addicted to the lamentable profession of killing people. One of these days you are going to meet your death from a bullet. You ought to reform and become a good citizen."

To this advice Juan Jorge replied:

"I know it, sir, but don't you ever believe that I will die from a bullet; I am going to die with a whole skin. Killing is my trade, just as shoemaking might have been."

The schoolmaster Ruiz, shocked by the reply, said no more on the subject, and walked away, thinking perhaps he was fortunate to come off so lightly with such a strange assassin.

Jorge's fortune consisted in several sections of land, on each of which he had settlers, cattle, plantations and a woman. All this, as he would say in moments of pride, was due to his own industriousness and to his Mauser, the child of his heart, which he kissed every time he finished keeping his word as a reliable *illapaco*.

III

JUAN JORGE was right in attributing his wealth to his own merits, for his fortune and position were the fruit of two gifts: steady nerves and an unfailing eye. Insignificant as these might be to another, he had learned to use them

to develop a good business in a territory where any other industry would have failed through lack of capital, means of transportation, or a thousand and one other reasons.

To be exact, one might more truthfully add that his position was also due to two circumstances: having been born in Pampamarca, which was mere chance, and the fact that he had had a second teacher, Ceferino Huaylas, the William Tell of those districts. This expert, with his teaching and his example, had succeeded in a short time in making Juan Jorge a marvel with the rifle, to the glory and fame of his countrymen.

Ceferino Huaylas was the one who confided to him, after submitting him to infinite tests, the secrets of shooting, and made him learn like a prayer all the rules of a good marksman. Hence it was that Juan Jorge at the age of fifteen could do surprising things with a Mauser. He could bring down a deer on the run at three hundred yards; he could put a hole through a quarter at fifty paces; he could pick off a flower in a girl's hair; he would startle the folks of Chupán on festival nights by shooting out the lights in front of the church and he would even play tricks on his own townsmen by knocking the *iscupuro*[1] out of their hands just as they were about to take a chew. These and an infinite variety of other similar feats were proof of his unerring aim.

The instructor, now in his declining years, viewed with satisfaction and pride all this expertness of his pupil, but without disclosing his feelings for fear of spoiling him. Juan Jorge, eager to ascertain the degree of perfection which he had attained as an *illapaco*, asked him on one occasion:

"What do you think, Ceferino, last night I put out all the lights in the church of Chupán."

The master fretfully replied:

"That's nothing. Until you can put a bullet in a man's eye at a distance of half a mile and in the presence of witnesses, you will not be a good *illapaco*."

To this Juan Jorge answered;

"But that would be easy, uncle. Only today I did something harder; at that distance I made a vulture drop a snake by shattering the end of his beak."

The master, persisting in his opinion, added,

"No; it's different when you are shooting at a man; your hand's always a little bit shaky. The first few men I killed, I hit two or three inches from the spot I was aiming at. For example, I would aim at the mouth, as requested, and I would hit them in the eye or nose. If I had kept that up, I would have lost my reputation."

Juan Jorge listened to these things with the respect and admiration of a true disciple, and after leaving his master, he suffered hours of profound dejection and tortures of anxiety for the infinite perfection of his art. This, which might have seemed strange in an Indian, was not so in the case of Juan Jorge in whose pallid features were visible remote traces of cross-breeding which had left in his blood the instincts of another race, heroic and ambitious.

These critical hours having passed, Juan Jorge again seized his Mauser and practised the most difficult tests that his imagination could devise. His favorite distance was two hundred yards, a distance which he had found adequate for concealment and most convenient for the purpose he sought.

Thus two years passed. At

[1] *Another name for shipina.*

length one day, after having told old Ceferino in detail about his first assassination for pay and the manner in which he accomplished it, Juan Jorge, now a man of twenty, had the satisfaction of hearing his old teacher say:

"A good shot, my boy. I did not begin that well. At what distance did you put a bullet in him?"

"At a half mile, sir. The fellow was chewing coca and I hit him squarely in the mouth."

"And didn't your hand shake?"

"Not a hair's breadth."

"You have earned the two yearlings that you got for the job. But didn't you fetch back the fellow's eyes?"

"No, sir."

"Too bad; they may pursue you. You ought to always remove a dead man's eyes and keep them so they cannot show his family where the *illapaco* may be found. The tongue should be taken out too so that it cannot tell anything; and the heart, if it belongs to a brave man, should be eaten because it gives one more courage. Don't forget this hereafter, boy."

So it was that within a little while Juan Jorge's fame began to spread in a way that made the Indians of the province tremble and at the same time it increased his wealth, making him at the age of thirty an indispensable factor in every electoral contest.

IV

IT was to this personage, this flower and peer of *illapacos*, that old Tucto sent his wife to contract for the killing of the Indian Hilario Crispín whose death was necessary for the repose of his conscience, the satisfaction of the ancestral ghosts and the rejoicing of his Faustina in the other world.

The first thing that Tucto's wife did after greeting the terrible *illapaco*, was to take out a handful of coca leaves and offer it to him with these words:

"This is to sweeten your mouth, my son."

"Thanks, Granny; have a seat."

Juan Jorge accepted the coca and began to chew it slowly, with wandering gaze as if in the grip of solemn and mysterious thought. After several moments had passed he asked:

"What brings you here, Martina?"

"I have come to get you to make away with a wicked man."

"Hum! Your coca isn't very sweet."

"Have some more, then, won't you? I find it very sweet. I have also brought you a drink of *chacta*."

Taking out an old perfume bottle full of *chacta*, she passed it to the *illapaco*.

"Good, we will have a drink."

Both took a good draught with a relish more apparent than real.

"Who is this wicked man, and what has he done, for as you probably know, I never hire myself out except to kill criminals. My Mauser is like the rod of justice."

"It is Hilario Crispín of Patay-Rondos, the one who murdered my Faustina."

"I know him; he's a brave fellow. It's too bad that he murdered your daughter, because he is a strong Indian and not a bad shot with a rifle. His father owns land and cattle. Are you quite sure that he killed your daughter?"

"As sure as I am that we buried her yesterday. He's a mad-dog—that *mostrenco*."

"How much will you pay me for killing him?"

"Liberato told me to offer you

two head of cattle, if necessary."

"That offer doesn't suit me. The fellow is worth four head at the very least."

"You shall have them, my friend. Liberato also said for me to tell you that you must shoot the *mostrenco* ten times, and only the last shot is to be the one to end him."

Juan Jorge jumped to his feet:

"Here! You are asking a good deal. That is something I never have done before."

"You will be well paid. You are a good shot and it will be easy for you."

Juan Jorge sat down again. He spat out a little coca juice and after meditating a long while, finally said with a smile,

"All right; ten, fifteen or even twenty shots if you wish. But I warn you that every shot is going to cost Liberato a fine yearling. Mauser bullets are very scarce now and ought not to be wasted on whims. Let Tucto pay for this notion of his. Besides, in shooting a man so many times I run the risk of damaging my reputation."

"You will get the yearlings, all right, friend. As for the rest, don't worry. I'll make it known that you have used so many shots as a part of the agreement."

Juan Jorge rubbed his hands together, smiled, gave Martina a pat and sealed the pact with these words:

"I'll take till tomorrow to make sure that Hilario Crispín is the assassin of your daughter. If it is true, I will send for the cattle as a sign that I accept the agreement."

V

FOUR days later, the pursuit of Hilario Crispín began. Jorge and Tucto set out on an adventure full of difficulties and perils, in which they had to proceed slowly. With infinite precautions they ascended dangerous precipices, remained hidden for hours at a time among the rocks or rested in damp and gloomy caves, avoiding suspicious encounters, and waiting for nightfall to provide themselves with water from springs or ravines. It was a truly heroic chase, during which one would sleep while the other kept watch, with rifle always cocked and a finger on the trigger. It was worse than a tiger hunt.

The *illapaco*, whom not even his teacher Ceferino could now surpass in foresight, had prepared his Mauser the evening before their departure with flawless precision and meticulous care.

For, besides realizing the risk he was running if he should happen to become careless and get within range of the ferocious and crafty Crispín, Juan Jorge was obsessed by an apprehension which only pride had led him to forego. He had a superstition all his own, that an *illapaco* ran a great risk when he was going to kill a man who would make an odd number in the list of his victims. Perhaps that was why the first victim always made one's hand shake more than others, as the master Ceferino used to say. And Crispín, according to his count, was going to be number seventy-nine. This superstition was due to the fact that on three or four occasions he had been on the point of perishing at the hands of his victim just when he was adding an uneven number to the tale.

For this reason he ventured into the defiles only after completely reconnoitering every feature of the terrain, all the rocks and craigs, everything that might serve as an ambuscade.

In this fashion three days went

by. On the morning of the fourth, Juan Jorge who was growing impatient, found his restlessness increasing as time elapsed. While they were resting beneath the shade of a boulder, he remarked:

"I believe the fellow has gotten clear away or else he must be hidden in some cave and comes out only at night."

"The *mostrenco* is around here somewhere. All murderers and thieves hide in this ravine. Cunce Maille stayed here a whole year and laughed at all the police who tried to find him."

"So much the worse. We will not be able to find Crispín in a month."

"Don't you believe it. The pursuers didn't know how to look; they go back and forth while the one they're after watches them pass. We are in a good place here and I swear to you that before the day is over the *mostrenco* will appear in the ravine or he will come out of one of those caves you see in front of us."

Tucto was right in saying that Crispín was not far away, for hardly had he finished speaking when, from the depths of the ravine, there came in sight a man with a rifle in his right hand, looking cautiously around in all directions, and leading an obstinate sheep which seemed determined not to follow.

"Do you see him?" whispered old Tucto, who had not taken his eyes from the ravine during the whole morning. "Do you see him? It's Crispín, just as I was telling you. . . Take good aim and make sure of him."

On seeing his prey, Juan Jorge's eyes reddened, his nostrils dilated like those of the llama when it scents the wind, and he breathed a deep sigh of satisfaction. He immediately examined his Mauser and, after hastily calculating the distance, answered:

"Yes, I see him. I'll bet he's hungry; otherwise he wouldn't have ventured out of his cave in the daytime. But I am not going to take a shot at him from here; it's hardly a hundred and fifty yards and it might upset all my calculations. Let's go further back."

"But, man, he's going to get away from you!"

"Don't be a fool! If he should see us, I'd put a bullet in him before he could run.

Both of them, then, crawling catlike and with amazing rapidity, withdrew to a rugged parapet of white rocks.

"This is all right, here," murmured Juan Jorge. . . "Exactly two hundred yards, I could swear it."

After removing the safety catch and adjusting the sight of his Mauser he stretched himself out with the precision of an army rifleman. At the same time he said to his companion:

"Watch me, now, old fellow! I'm going to put the first one in his right hand so he can't use his gun any more. Don't you think that's a good idea?"

"Yes, but don't forget that you've got to shoot him ten times. Don't kill him yet."

There was a report, the rifle went hurtling through the air as Crispín gave a howl of pain and a tigerlike jump, clutching furiously at his right hand. He first looked all around him trying to discover whence the shot had come. Picking up his gun with the other hand he started running toward some rocks. He had not gone ten steps, however, when a second shot made him fall and roll back all the distance.

"That one was in his right leg,"

smiled the fierce *illapaco,* "so he couldn't get away. I see that I am going to make my seventy-ninth without any trouble."

With that he again took aim and a shot broke the poor wretch's other leg. The Indian tried to sit up but succeeded only in getting to his knees. In this position he raised his hands heavenward as if begging mercy and then fell over backwards, gasping convulsively, and finally remained motionless.

"You've killed him!"

"Oh, no. I know where I am shooting. He is as much alive as we are. He's pretending to be dead to see if we will leave him there, or if we will be foolish enough to go and examine him, so that he can take us by surprise and knife us. José Illatopa fooled me that way one time and almost laid me open. Let's wait till he moves."

And Juan Jorge lit a cigarette, watching with interest the spirals of smoke.

"Do you notice that, old man? The smoke goes straight up; a sign of good luck."

"Don't smoke, man, Crispín will see you."

"It doesn't matter. He is within speaking distance of my Mauser."

The wounded man, who had feigned death, thinking perhaps that enough time had passed for his assassin to have abandoned him or probably because he could no longer endure the agonizing pain which he was undoubtedly suffering, turned over and began to drag himself towards a cave about fifty steps away.

Juan smiled and again took aim, remarking as he did so:

"This one is for his left hand."

So it was; the left hand was shattered. The trapped Indian, terrified by the sureness and ferocity with which he was being wounded, and convinced that his assailant could be none but the *illapaco* of Pampamarca, from whose Mauser there was no possible escape, threw caution to the winds and began screaming for help and cursing his assassin.

But Juan Jorge who had been following all the Indian's movements with the barrel of his rifle, took advantage of a moment when he had a profile view of his victim and fired for the fifth time, muttering grimly:

"This will stop your noise——"

As if by magic the Indian ceased yelling immediately and clapped his bloody, mutilated hands to his mouth.

Thus the terrible *illapaco* continued wounding him in other parts of the body, until the tenth bullet entering one ear, penetrated his brain.

This satanic exercise had taken an hour's time, an hour of horror, sinister cruelty and inquisitorial exactness over which old Tucto had gloated with delight, and which was for Juan Jorge the crowning achievement of his career as a knight of death.

At last they descended together to where the unfortunate Crispín lay, a human tatter, mangled by ten bullets. With a kick Tucto turned him over on his back, drew forth his knife and dexterously cut out his eyes and tongue.

"These," he said putting the eyes in his *huallqui*[1], "are to keep them from following me. This,"—giving the tongue a fierce tug—"to keep it from telling."

"And I want his heart—" added Juan Jorge. "Cut it out for me, for it belongs to a mighty brave man."

[1] *Coca pouch.*

The Change

By

INA BOUDIER-BAKKER

From the Dutch by Agnes Rix

It is quite out-of-date in these days of triumphant feminism to speak of "consolation for being a woman." But if some few doors are barred to the mother-sex, it, alone, with rarest exceptions, possesses the key to the child mind and heart.

Mrs. Ina Boudier-Bakker, the author of this keen and tender study of a small boy's sorrows, was for a time a school-teacher in her native city of Amsterdam. She made her debut as a writer in 1902 with a volume of short stories called "Machten." A long novel entitled "The Promised Land" followed in 1903. Her finest production is generally considered to be a collection of stories dealing with child-life, "Kinderen," and a two volume novel called "The Little Mirror." She has also written for the stage.

"WHAT else were you going to tell me, Mother?"

"That . . . in the future there will be four of us, instead of three . . . You and Lou . . . will have a father again.

Her voice trembled, though she had it well under control. She seemed with an effort to turn her gaze from the window through which she had been looking, to the young face beside her.

The boy was pale, and sat looking at her in embarrassment. For a moment his breath had been taken by the thought of what was going to happen—the dearest hope and longing of his heart—the vacant place in their home without father—was to be filled. It took him so by surprise that for a little while he was unable to draw any conclusion. He held instinctively to the thought: "That is what I have always longed for—what I wanted—that is wonderful!"

He sighed, and suddenly looked at his mother with a warm impulse toward her to share this tremendous thing. His voice was choked as he said tenderly,

"Mother dear . . ."

And then, all of a sudden, he noticed something unexpected—he saw her look past him as if she had forgotten him, did not hear him—some change had come over her, which without altering the soft round line of her cheek or her deep wide eyes, hurt him.

He said so, with a strange, chill suspicion in his heart.

"You look quite different."

It was not an answer to what, after much preparation, she had just told him, her eldest. It seemed more like a direct attack, an intentional ignoring of her confidence, an accusation. Yet she knew that it was not this which caused her now to blush in the happiness of a woman, forgetful for the moment of her doubts as a mother.

Then, while she looked away from him once more toward the garden, she felt that after all it was difficult to deal with this big boy, who in spite of all his apparent indifference, observed everything.

"Are you glad or sorry?" she asked.

He frowned. And again he felt the painful suspicion that somehow or other she was afraid of him; that she had changed from the ordinary, everyday mother who cut

his bread-and-butter, sewed his clothes, whispered by his bedside at night—so as not to waken Lou—whom he petted when she was in bed with a headache—who had been his comrade. . . This was not his mother. He knew it without thinking it. But his habitual assurance forsook him in this moment and he felt nervous and uncertain, as if the entire world had changed in a flash.

He failed to notice that he had not answered. Only when she had reminded him in an irritated tone, "Charles!" did he falter,

"I . . . don't know. How should I know?"

She sat motionless. It was much more difficult than she had anticipated. She suffered an irrepressible irritation in her childlike mind, which yearned now for her own happiness. Since the death of her husband she had withdrawn, after the first shock, into the sheltering life of a mother-alone. Now a new bloom had burst upon her with overwhelming power, and she rebelled at the shadow which the boy cast thereon, making her feel as if she must apologize for something.

Lou, her youngest, called to her from the garden. She was relieved, and rose immediately and went out to him through the conservatory.

But outside she suddenly knew, as the sun shone warm on her neck and shoulders, that something had come between Charles and her. And the separation proceeded not from his passive resistance, even though she had not expected that from him who had said so often, "I wish that we too had a father." There was something else. It was the sure knowledge that she would never for the sake of her children allow her own happiness to be crossed; that she would not forego that which had come to her life as an unhoped-for gift.

That was it. She realized it in an almost fearful introspection. Had she not always thought, since her husband's death, that for now and all time she wished only to be a mother, a good mother to her fatherless boys? She knelt beside her youngest child, apparently to fix something in connection with his toy wagon, but in reality in search of help from him who accepted her as yet unquestioningly as a child, and did not see her through the awakening sense of her eldest.

Longing for space and freedom Charles had run out into the street. With his hands in his pockets he stamped angrily along, recalling the conversation with his mother—her hesitating approach of the subject, using fine words such as he read in books; and then, suddenly, the news: a father.

Well, there it was. Now he was going to have what he had missed so much in their home and for which he had secretly yearned. His own father had died so long ago that he scarcely remembered him. And Lou had not the slightest recollection, for he was only a baby when it happened. Yet Lou would know that to have a father in the home would be quite different.

A few years ago Piet Jonkers had got a second father. Charles remembered having thought then that the same might happen to him, and how pleasant it would be, and how he had envied Piet.

Now there would always be a man in the house, who would say funny things to make him laugh, and who had been everywhere and could tell him about everything—who, if he wished, could knock him down or lift him up, who knew all the

things there are to be known but which Charles did not yet know—and whom he could always ask questions, about all srots of things. . .

Of course some fathers were different—stupid things that were no good. But this one would not be that kind. Only, now that it had really come it was all so strange, so bewildering, it did not even seem so pleasant. He did not know why, but it seemed to have altered Mother. He had never thought of Mother when he wished for a second father. Did she love this man, in the same way as she had loved Father? No, surely Mother loved only himself and Lou.

A jealous revolt seized him. His most vivid recollection of his father filled his mind: Father, holding him by the hand, stooping over Lou's cradle, making funny faces and noises at little brother and speaking in deep, soft tones.

Loyalty to his own father, which had been overshadowed by his dreams about the second, awoke in him; the man in him rose against the woman who could put another in his father's place. Childlike and unreasoning he did not realize that in his own desire he had already done likewise. But in a whirl of unconscious emotions he was unable to reconcile his mother with the act. His own jealousy and envy and that he felt on behalf of his dead father became one.

Suddenly he turned on his heel—he wanted to go home, as if the only solution could be found there. As he entered the house he heard Lou's voice in the upper hall, and he leaped up the stairs. His little brother was feeding the fish in the aquarium.

"Say, chappie, don't you know they ought to have fresh water before you feed them?" remarked Charles good-humoredly.

"'Course I do," cried the other, in his shrill voice, eager to justify himself. "But you know I can't do it alone, and Mary won't help."

"Well, I will." Charles ran into his room to get the net and the pump. No one knew how much he loved this sanctuary into which he had gathered, bit by bit, all his cherished possessions—his collection of butterflies and beetles and dried plants, his books on history and natural history, a stuffed hawk, photographs of his football club and of his class, of Lou and himself, a few weapons of his father's, pictures of dogs and horses. On the little cupboard which he now opened stood photographs of his father and mother. But he did not look at them, and shut the doors with a bang.

He did not speak a word as he scooped the floundering fish out of the bowl into a smaller one. A large fish jumped out of the net with a splash, sprinkling both the boys. Lou danced and capered with glee, but the older boy scarcely laughed; he pulled a pail from the closet and began to pump out the water. He worked abstractedly.

Should he tell Lou? No, better let Mother break the news. He supposed she had not yet done so. But you never could tell. Lou had a way of keeping things to himself.

His expression was tender as he looked up momentarily at the innocent little fellow, who was absorbed watching the water run off.

"You know Chris and Driel?" said Lou, "whose father had a factory? Well, they're going to live in a village, somewhere, I don't remember where, but it's near a lake. Jolly, isn't it? And he's going to have a boat! He can sail off out of his own garden!"

Charles left the pump dangling in the bowl. Something had occurred to him. What was this new . . . father? Strange that he had not asked about this sooner. He could hardly wait for an answer. He pondered the question as he hastily refilled the basin, saying nothing, while Lou puffed and panted as he brought up pails full of water, and the water running from the faucet drowned all other sounds. As soon as the fish had been plumped into "their own little sea," as Lou called it, he ordered his little brother to clear up the mess, ran downstairs and into the sitting-room where he knew his mother would be at this hour.

She was cutting some bread-and-butter. As he burst into the room he noticed her pensive face bent over her work, and then she looked at him in alarm.

"What is the matter?"

"Nothing. I can come in, can't I?"

Unwillingly and unexpectedly he felt himself growing angry. It was a feeling he had never had toward his mother. He felt he was in the way.

His answer was a challenge.

"I came to ask you what that, that . . . what *he* is?"

She ignored his rudeness, and replied conciliatingly,

"He is a writer, Charles."

"A . . . what?" He almost shrieked in his horror and amazement.

"A writer. Dermot is his name. Anton Dermot. You have heard of him, haven't you?"

"No."

His tone was contrary and disapproving. But in that instant he recollected seeing a book with that name lying on the table in the study of an elder brother of one of his friends; also that this Dermot had given readings last winter. So he thought: "Mother went there, of course."

It shocked him to think that for a long time things had been happening around him which affected him so much, but of which he knew nothing. That for some time already things had not been as usual between him and his mother.

He felt helpless, as if he were fighting unavailingly against an unseen foe, something stronger than himself. So he was a *writer!* One of those persons who write silly stories with nothing to them, that never really happened, that were only pretense. To his sober, unimaginative mind it was contemptible.

Not an officer, not a director, not a physician, a lawyer, a notary, or somebody with a huge office or factory—all this he would have approved. But a writer!

"Oh!" he said. And in that exclamation he vented all his disappointment and unreasoned bitterness. He saw his mother blush down to her neck—he had never seen her color so. "Just like a girl at school," he reflected. "Mimi looks that way when she is scolded."

"He is very clever . . . much more . . . he writes beautifully . . ." she stammered, unable in her indignation to find words.

His face grew calm. His anger abated.

His mother took the part of this . . . person—he could no longer think of him as a father—against *him.* Pained by the discovery, deeply wounded by his sense of loss, he blurted out, wishing to hurt,

"He might as well be a ragpicker!"

"Charles!"

He expected a storm of indignation, which he hoped would clear

the atmosphere—she could sometimes be furious. But that was all she said. And, to his dismay, he saw large tears trickling down her cheeks. For one moment he was dumb. In the next instant he was beside her, throwing his arms around her.

"Don't cry," he whispered, with a man's fear of woman's tears. "Please don't. I won't say such things again. . . "

She sobbed helplessly. "I didn't think you'd be so mean."

He was perplexed, rebellious, and wanted to shout at her, "You don't understand. Not one bit." But, awed by her woe-begone expression he could only say in subdued tones,

"I don't want to be mean. I don't mean that . . . "

"He will be such a good, kind father to you."

He looked away. That no longer mattered. That meant nothing to him now, and could neither pacify nor exasperate him. He only resented that his mother wept because he spoke disparagingly of that man.

"Tomorrow afternoon . . . " She hesitated, then persevered. "At the Van Bruggens you will meet Mr. Dermot. He is a friend of Mr. Van Bruggen."

He did not answer.

"Have you told Lou? " he asked abruptly.

"No, he is such a little fellow . . . "

He stared at her. "He has got to know too, hasn't he? " A desire to protect his little brother surged up in him, and he thought, "Suppose the man is a cad as well as a fool." The mother thought, "He is taking Lou's part *against* me."

"I think it will be better for Lou to know Mr. Dermot before I say anything," she said, "and let them make friends quite naturally."

He nodded. He was confused and tired, just as at other times when his mother was vexed and he had not yet made things up. But this time he knew, with a sense of emptiness, that he would not make it up.

After luncheon, at which the silence was interrupted only by Lou's chatter, the little brother ran up to Charles in the hall.

"Why has Mother been crying? Do you know? "

"No. She hasn't been crying," was the curt reply.

Lou stared at him in astonishment. Charles was his idol, his oracle, everything he said was law to him. But this, this was not *true*.

"But I saw it," he insisted.

Charles looked so severe that Lou dared not say more. He merely stood there nodding his head affirmatively as if he had been wound up by clock-work. Curiosity and fear of the unknown struggled within him as he asserted boldly,

"I suppose I'm not allowed to know."

"Be quiet! "

Charles stamped his foot angrily. It all annoyed him. He could not bear his mother to cry, and it was his fault, too—all because of that man, a good-for-nothing. It was all so wretched, stupid, idiotic, and he always had thought it would be so wonderful and beautiful.

"Get out of the way, there, and stop your questions, sissy! "

Lou turned away meekly, but Charles was so overcome at the scared look on the little fellow's face that he ran after him, and pulling him back from the stairs, said,

"Come along into the garden, and I'll show you a fine caterpillar, a beaut'."

An afternoon at the Van Brug-

gens was generally a pleasant affair, but this time it weighed heavily in anticipation with Charles. He lay tossing in his bed at night, thinking it would probably be worse than he could even imagine, and the same fear seized him when he awoke in the morning. He went about all that day in that curiously silent way which so much reminded his mother of her first husband. Hitherto this had always touched her. But now she recoiled, afraid, offended. She missed the boy's usual attentiveness, his eager desire to help her in small things, his confidential chatter, while he spent the entire morning of this last day of his vacation alone in his room. And she thought sadly and uncomprehendingly how easily a child is lost as soon as a mother asserts her right to her own happiness.

But when she had dressed in the afternoon and entered the parlor where Charles sat reading while he waited for her, her manner was so conciliating, and her tone so clear and affectionate, that the boy wavered in his harsh attitude. He looked at her tensely as she tied Lou's necktie, making jokes the while. She seemed so young. Her youthfulness, her gown which he had not seen before, the soft, warm color of her cheeks and the radiance of her eyes, all made her seem strange and inexpressibly distant. And some instinct seemed to tell him that the affection she displayed toward her boys was not rooted in them. "Mother always looks that way when she is very happy over something."

The Van Bruggen family were gathered on the lawn behind their house, and while the first greetings were being exchanged Charles saw a strange man playing at the far end of the garden with one of the dogs —a tall, strong, laughing man, who came strolling up to the company, as the animal leaped around him.

For one happy instant the blood ebbed from Charles' face. "Was this he? Was this the man?" But the youngest Van Bruggen girl ran to the stranger, and dragged him by the arm while she called to Charles,

"This is our Uncle Bob, from California."

Charles stared at him. He was so filled with disappointment that he forgot to be civil. For a moment he had actually believed the impossible, and thought that this jolly fellow was *the* man, even if he was a writer.

In a few strides the strange uncle was beside him and began to talk like an old friend.

"So you are a friend of Koos? Is that little chap your brother? I saw him hanging on to a pole yesterday at the corner of the street by the car stop. Studying for his ape's degree. I'll tell you what we'll do this afternoon. We boys will all go to the dunes. I've been looking forward to that all along my trip."

The other boys came up, Koos, Charles' friend, and his brother Job, some cousins, and big William, a boy of seventeen who was still in their grade, but he was a neighbor and such a sport that they always took him along.

They went across country from the start. Charles kept close to Uncle Bob, and they raced up the dunes, reaching the top almost at the same moment. He certainly could run. Charles felt proud, and happy, and kindly, all at once. They played the most splendid games, all invented by Uncle Bob, in which Charles took his part with such zest that he seemed at every turn to anticipate what was demanded of him. And when Uncle Bob nodded approvingly it gave him a happy feel-

ing of comradeship as well as a sense of equality. He also discovered, as if it were a new thing, that this uncle knew how to spare William in matters where quick comprehension was required, always allowing him to get the best in all questions of physical achievements. And he thought to himself, "So a fellow may be a sport and yet act like a girl sometimes does, and like Mother . . . "

The confusion rose in him again, but was instantly swallowed up in his enthusiasm about the game. When at last they walked slowly homeward, there was uppermost in his heart that happy contentment which came so rarely and always with difficulty, but which invariably made all smooth before him. Its source was a sincere attachment, to which he surrendered entirely, even willingly. "Uncle Bob would understand," he thought as they walked along. And the idea comforted him, while he listened to tales about California.

"I'd like to go along too," he remarked, gazing earnestly into the eyes of the man.

"Settled." The other returned his glance, and clapped him on the shoulder. "I'll smuggle you on board ship as a piece of baggage."

"And what if they find me?"

"Why, of course, I shall pretend I never saw you before."

"But I'd see that you did know me."

"And we'd both be locked up."

When they turned in at the gate they were laughing like a couple of boys. His mother was seated on the lawn in a group of other guests, and as she saw him she thought how happy and cheerful he looked.

Yet there was an unaccountable pain in her heart as she turned to the tall man who stood behind her, bending his delicate, pale race to hers.

"What is it?"

She beckoned to Charles, who, suddenly fallen from the heights of his elation, came slowly toward her. In one glance he had seen and understood: it was that long sallow stick. Not a bit like Uncle Bob. And he looked at the man despairingly.

"Charles, this is Mr. Dermot," and, turning appealingly to Dermot, "This is my eldest."

Her voice shook, and seemed forced to a high pitch. The boy remarked it and was pained and angered on her account at the tall man with the small beard, whose friendly brown eyes sought his, as he stretched out his hand.

"Well, well."

Charles rejoiced to perceive that this man was far from master of the situation—had nothing more to say than "Well, well." At the same time it hurt. Following close upon Uncle Bob's cordial and easy acquaintance, which had awakened all Charles's friendly feelings, this reserved manner of encounter immediately condemned the man in the boy's estimation.

"Not worth a cent."

He stood there hesitating, not even uttering a word of greeting, while Dermot quietly resumed conversation with his mother.

"After what I have already told you about it, I could now read part of it to you."

"Oh, that would be lovely."

So they were discussing a book, which *he* was writing, of course. Charles hated it. Nevertheless he looked up. His mother's face was beaming, and flushed with pleasure. He felt so embarrassed that he ran away, just as if he had discovered her in some unworthy act. His soul was gripped in a confused struggle

to understand—" his mother was no longer his real, familiar mother—this man had come—and she behaved so that he no longer understood her."

He thought of Mimi, the little girl in his class, who had looked at him in just that way, blushingly and with happiness in her eyes, when he told her about his salamanders. She had seemed to him so attractive that he had purposely continued to talk to her, just to see that look in her face. And now, his mother seemed like that, and he could not bear it.

For the first time, by an instantaneous process of reasoning and instinct, he drew the parallel: woman; and he felt at once hatred and desire.

When he had joined the group of chattering and laughing boys and girls, he stole another look at his mother from the other side of the lawn. Dermot was now seated beside her.

The blood rushed to his head as he thought that his mother was going to be married—like other people were—only with her, though he knew not why, it made him ashamed, and gave him a hateful feeling.

Lou had gone to his mother and stood at her knee, talking boldly in his piping voice to the pale man, who looked down on him with a still smile, and, drawing the little boy affectionately to him, seemed to ask him a question.

Yes, Lou was one of them. Charles bit his lip, and turned quickly away, stung with jealousy and loneliness. He pretended not to hear his mother call him, and walked by her indifferent and stubborn, up to Uncle Bob, with whom he began to talk and laugh.

He was going to show those three that he could get along without them—that so long as Uncle Bob was there he would not even notice them.

The next day was the first school day after the Easter holidays. Charles sat at his desk aloof and stern. He had avoided his friends as they gathered in lively groups, and he had withered Mimi with a look when she passed him the second time so close that he smelled her curly hair, and the ends of her sash brushed his hand. Though he was hurt, he felt some satisfaction at her astonished and pained expression as she looked round at him, and then, with a toss of her head, turned abruptly away to take her seat diagonally in front of him. He laughed almost cynically.

In the next seat was a new boy, who began asking all sorts of questions. Charles made his answers brief, indulging in a growing fretfulness and spleen, until the boy remarked,

"I saw you in the dunes yesterday. Was that your father you were with?"

Charles felt the back of his eyeballs burn. In his mind he saw again Uncle Bob, the cheery, happy comrade, that strong man—and in his bitterness at so great a disappointment, before he knew what he had done, he had pushed Dermot from his place by lying, "Yes."

So alarmed was he by his own act that he rose and went to the other end of the classroom, where he pretended to take part in a conversation among a group of boys until the bell sounded and the lesson began. It was history.

Gradually he calmed down. Gazing at the chart, with unseeing eyes, he pondered.

Whatever had made him tell a lie? He must be crazy. The boy would know him for a braggart and

laugh him to scorn when he saw the real one!

His was a thoroughly honest nature, intolerant of any lie told either in self-protection or for the sake of making a good impression. Yet, somehow he did not care in this case. Not because the other boy would probably never find out. But because of the bitterness which overwhelmed him as he saw everything crumble now that his deepest longing was fulfilled.

There remained to him, after the perplexing emotions of the last two days, only his aversion to Dermot. Childishly and unreasonably he ignored the good-humored kindliness of the man, and resented the loss of his own illusions.

He was angered, too, by causes of which he himself was barely conscious—this second father, favored by his mother above her son, and who had now come to set at naught all those things which he had hitherto regarded as inviolable. He had thought of his mother as a mother only.

All that he could realize was this: that henceforth there would always be a fourth. In the rooms, their rooms, he would be found sitting, he would stroll in the garden, they would meet on the staircase, everywhere, as by right, in all those places where hitherto he had been alone with his mother and Lou. . .

But his room . . . !

He breathed a sigh of relief, as one who finds a door opening out of a dark place. He saw himself seated by the window in his own little room, at the table with his books, safe and alone. And in this vision there came to him for the first time in his young life a sense of something worth while: work, a comfort and a refuge, something which no man could take from him.

He threw back his head with a jerk, so sudden that Mimi involuntarily almost looked around. But she refrained. He saw only the roundness of her cheek turned toward him.

He looked beyond her, at the teacher, and gave his full attention to the lesson, and his eyes shone bright and clear.

An Episode

By

ANDERS EJE

From the Swedish by Eric Lindblom

Anders Eje, the author of this amusing story, was born in Gothenberg, Sweden, in 1879. He was a reporter for many years, and at one time published an illustrated weekly of his own, Wockejournalen. He has traveled extensively, in search of material and atmosphere for his works. He has only recently returned to Sweden from a trip around the world. The first fruit of this trip is a novel of romance and adventure entitled "The King Cobra." "An Episode" is the first of his work to be translated into English.

"An Episode" is one of a series of amusing "Get-Rich-Quick-Wallingford" adventures, which, however, do not always turn out successfully for the hero.

GEORGE KESSER'S father owned a rag mill somewhere in Posen. It wasn't such a wondrously fine mill—the name hardly indicates that it was—but it was a good and serviceable mill which industriously ground out beautiful bank notes for George's papa. One by one the greenbacks crept into a small tin box which was kept in an immense yellow-stained wooden safe, and there they multiplied into a mighty pile which, when it had attained the intended dimensions, was engirdled by a gray rubber band, which George's dad, to the accompaniment of contented puffings and gruntings, kept adjusting and adjusting without end. This task was the greatest pleasure George's father knew—no wonder that he tried to prolong it as much as possible. Then the bundle of notes was carried to the bank, where in a single operation it was transformed into a number of precise figures, written with violet ink in the margin of a large book. The first page in this book was headed, *Salomon Kesser.* Herr Kesser thought that it was the prettiest writing he had ever seen, and the amounts brought forward, commanding the long columns of figures, also were pleasing to behold. They already stood five abreast, these figures. With a feeling of tremulous and anxious joy Herr Kesser thought of the day when there would be six figures close to each other.

Every time he made a deposit in the bank Herr Salomon was in a brilliant humor. At dinner he would say to George:

"If my little laddie only knew what a good and industrious dad he has! He saves one big bill after another, and who do you suppose is going to get all this money at last? Why, papa's little Georgie, of course!"

But papa's little Georgie, who, by the way, was not so little—he was eleven years old—did not at all show that gratitude which he should have felt and demonstrated. On the contrary, he made a wry face and uttered not a word of admiration or emotion. He didn't believe very much in this money, anyway, and, besides its possession seemed so eter-

nally far off that it wasn't such a much to be grateful for! Instead, he almost hated this "capital." Wasn't it to blame for his never having any good times, never being able to take part in any fun which meant the spending of money? His chums had air rifles, bicycles, footballs, and so forth, while he had none of these things. He had even been denied money for a new bean shooter, and the last day he had seen his father sit and snap the elastic on the bundle of bank notes, that same day he had been refused a humble request for fifteen measly pennies with which to buy some "fortune packages"—not the common packages with only colored cards or puzzles or key rings inside, but *real* fortune packages with a guaranty that in "every fifth" package the purchaser might find a twenty-five or fifty cent coin. And that wasn't all. He had also had to listen to a long lecture on economy, industry, the trials of parents, and the like. It was awful!

One day when this, according to George's reasoning, penuriousness became unbearable, he made a quick decision. If they would not give him the money he needed to satisfy his modest desires —well, he would get it himself! It would be the easiest thing in the world. He pondered this matter one glorious summer morning, and the next day he did what thousands of other boys had done before him —ran away from his papa and mamma. But, unlike these thousands of other boys, whom hunger, or fear, or perhaps even the police, soon brought back by the ear as penitent sinners—our George did not come back. Gifted with an incredibly ingenious brain, and above all with a considerable amount of dogged obstinacy, he always found some way out of a tight place.

In the beginning he had a rock-firm faith in his power to achieve success—by which, of course, he meant riches and honor, but especially riches. Whenever he heard about some strange city or country, he thought, "That's the place! I must go there! Only a chap like me knows how to pick up the gold in the streets." And he went, but once in the land of his desires, he invariably experienced the same difficulties and disappointments as always before. There was always some little *aber* which spoiled his clever schemes. Though unwillingly, he had to admit to himself that the trees with the fat money bags on them were hard to shake and that his arms did not possess the strength with which his imagination had endowed them.

The times had been pretty good—sometimes. But, on the other hand, there had been periods in his life which. . . which. . . George preferred to avoid thinking about them. But he had always pulled through and something better had always turned up.

At the age of twenty-five he had married, in Chicago, little Juanna, a girl with Arabian blood in her veins. They had played the same third-class variety houses, he as a magician, she as an "Arabian song and dance," and had found it expedient to unite their fates. Now they would do wonders, thought George.

In Rio the third person in this narrative appears—the impresario Uri Buru. He was of undefinable nationality and possessed a wealth of ideas which beat George's own by a couple of lengths. These two found each other one night in a gin mill. The contact was instant.

They tore down the dark little shanty in which they were sitting and erected a proud palace, ten stories high and with marble terraces over-

looking a blue ocean of happiness. Reclining on soft divans they saw the horizon darkened by mighty ships sailing before the wind and loaded to the gunwales with gold pieces in shining pyramids—all consigned to Messrs. Kesser & Buru Co.

"But," said Uri, "for the moment we shan't do anything. Your ideas and mine must first meet and clarify thoroughly. You understand . . . we put them in the same glass, they mix, but later separate—their different gravity—*comprende?*—and it is going to be a fine color scale—and then we'll let the dear public sip. Believe me, it is going to be a great thing!"

George was not averse to the suggestion that they postpone the execution of their plans. To do nothing for the moment suited him first-rate. Not that he was an idler, but he liked it better to build in his fancy one gigantic sky scraper after another than to labor with hammer and nails in the building of his own modest cottage. In the evenings his confidence was unbounded, but the dark gray of the mornings after reduced his happy assurance by a good seventy-five per cent. And this was a source of much suffering.

The result of Uri's "clarification" process was that they decided to go to Buenos Aires, where the heat was not so intense.

Buenos Aires was entertained first with a spiritualistic seance, which was followed by an exhibition of magic and rapid-fire painting, in which latter art Juanna was some what proficient, and finally came the big number—the lottery night. This was Uri's invention, and he was not a little proud of it, but—sad to say—not even the lottery made a hit. Everything went wrong, the receipts hardly covered the expense of bill posters, hall rent, etc. Buenos Aires failed to show the least appreciation of the earnest efforts of George and Uri. . .

It was the morning after the last unsuccessful attempt.

George, with a gloomy countenance, sat in a corner of the dirty bar of the Hotel Continental and sipped his breakfast whiskey. He was alone and had pulled the kerosene heater close to him, for the walls exuded a cold raw damp which made him shiver. Engaged in a survey of his shattered illusions—and it certainly was not an encouraging survey—he did not—worse luck!—see any immediate prospect of improvement and was moodily wondering what had become of the ten or twelve reserve plans which he always had thought he had up his sleeve. His thoughts drifted back to Posen, to the fat bundles of bank notes and the big bank book. Probably it was his brother Henry who was now snapping the gray rubber band. . .

At this moment a tall, gaunt South American entered the room. He had a *poncho* thrown about his shoulders and was vigorously rubbing his hands while he swore over the cold. George's kerosene stove caught his attention, he gave it a hesitant glance, approached it slowly and placed his fingers close to the circle of light. He cleared his throat as if to say something about the damned weather, but at this instant he met George's eyes and he hurriedly swallowed his *caramba*. There was such untamed savagery, such an unrestrained rage in George's eyes that the stranger, who looked far from a coward, decided it was best to retire.

But then came Uri.

His fat little body rolled unsteadily forward, enclosed in a snuff-brown, entirely too tight over-

coat, the greasy velvet collar of which, always turned up to the ears, served as a well needed support in the neck for his slouch hat. The pale, bloated, unshaven face lay in hard folds, and he consumed an unbelieveable amount of air in slowing up and coming to a full stop.

"Drinking whiskey so early in the morning, you swine!" was his greeting.

No answer.

"Where is the girl?"

Silence.

"Don't you hear me? I am asking, where is Juanna?"

George slowly lifted his head, his eyes boring into Uri, and asked menacingly,

"Have — you — thought — up —anything?"

The ice was broken.

"No, my boy, but I am trying to."

"I feel it in my bones, that an idea, a plan, a scheme, is about to be born in my brain. I am experiencing the turbulent joy of the birth-throes, which is an unfailing sign. I'll take a little whiskey, it is nutritious, the physiologists may say what they damn please."

Uri got his whiskey with an egg-yolk in it and swallowed it at one gulp. Then he started on a violent run between the chairs and tables, which were soon thrown into a wild disorder. He mumbled audibly to himself, added up long sums, and emitted the sonorous sounds of many foreign words. Apparently there were lively goings-on in his brain. Suddenly he broke into a loud guffaw, tore down a poster from the wall and wrote something rapidly on its reverse side with big letters. After having made some changes and scanned his work with satisfaction, he handed the paper to George with a profound bow and a mien which said,

"I think this will hold you for a while!"

George read, his eyes bulged, his jaw dropped, and he fixed on his friend a look which more plainly than words asked,

"Who's crazy—you or me?"

But Uri squawked in high glee.

"What is the idea of this?"

"Oh, you poor simp, can't you see? Look at me and listen. It is this way—"

The rest of it was whispered in an eager staccato. . . Uri making great gestures . . . and the end came in a triumphant,

"—five thousand, maybe ten thousand, cold cash. And Thursday night we'll let her explode. . . We'll get the posters out to-day . . . or still better—we'll send out invitations and distribute them in the better-class houses—it looks more confidential. Well, what do you say now? It will be a riot, I tell you—"

George sat there in silent admiration. The plan seemed great, so simple, yet so wonderfully ingenious.

New rounds of whiskey were ordered, and late into the day George and Uri sat there and worked out the details of Thursday's colossal enterprise.

On Monday, numerous persons in Buenos Aires received in their mail typewritten letters reading as follows,

"*Muy señor mío:*

"It may not be unknown to you that Professor Ricardo S. L. de Nonquerido has been in this city for some time. The newspapers have not neglected to mention this fact. Without doubt you know about some, if not all, of the misfortunes which have ravaged the past life of this gentleman.

"'To be or not to be' is a question which now, since the moral right to commit suicide is made a subject

of debate daily and all over the world, will be the theme of Professor de Nonquerido's reflections. And—he hereby assumes the liberty of asking you, through me, whether or not, from a moral-ethical viewpoint, he has the right to put an end to a life which has brought him nothing but suffering and sorrow.

"The answer to this question will be made on Thursday, the 19th instant, at seven o'clock P. M., at the Sporting Club, by a vote of the discerning and unprejudiced persons to whom this document is addressed. Professor de Nonquerido on this occasion will recount in detail the misfortunes which have befallen him and will then appeal to the unbiased judgment of those present. If the majority of those voting should decide that the professor has the right to rid himself of the burden of life, the event will take place immediately after the vote and under the control of those present.

"Su seguro servidor,
"*Chas. G. Levellan,*
"Secretary."

"N. B. An admission fee of ten pesos will be charged to cover the heavy expenses and the cost of an eventual funeral.

"Vale."

This epistle was accompanied by a black-bordered card, on which were printed some stanzas from Carlos Romagosa's touching poem on suicide—the poem he wrote just before he turned the revolver to his own temple:

"No maldigas el alma que se ausenta,
dejando la memoria del suicido,
nadie sabe que fuerza, que tormenta
la arroja de las plazas de la vida."

Thanks to Uri's abundant experience, these letters in most cases reached the "right people." Some of the recipients flew into a rage at this, to their minds, insolent joke, but the majority considered it original and not so bad. It ought, moreover, to prove a rather exciting show. . . To sit as a member of this extraordinary tribunal, where a decision meant life or death—for such a pleasure one ought to be willing to sacrifice ten pesos.

On Thursday, at seven P. M., the large hall of the Sporting Club was filled to the last seat. Secretary Levellan received the guests at the door in evening dress and white tie, with an expression that seemed as though the death sentence had already been passed.

The platform was draped with black cloth and its floor was covered with a thick dark-red carpet—the audience comprehended, with a shudder, the reason. . . For the rest, there were only an easy chair, and a small table with a water pitcher and a glass.

At exactly a quarter past seven Professor de Nonquerido entered. He was dressed in a black redingote, buttoned all the way up to his chin, a black tie and very narrow, dark-striped trousers. In one hand he held a leather case, the shape of which indicated that it enclosed a revolver. He laid the case on the table, slowly poured a glass of water with which he moistened his lips, and not until then did he turn to the audience with a scarcely perceptible bow.

Then, at last, in the insufficient light, his face could be seen. It was pale, sunken, ravaged. The eyes had dark rings around them and seemed to be lying deep in his head, the mouth had a tired, frozen line of bitterness.

Very slowly he began to talk, in a voice that had a hollow tone. There was a long pause after the introductory words,

"Ladies and gentlemen," — the speaker seemed swayed by a mute, painful emotion, his eyes gazed abstractedly at a non-existent point in space. At last he succeeded in mastering his weakness and resumed,

"Ladies and gentlemen, this will be a recapitulation of my life! But first I must remark, that the picture I am capable of painting will only be a faint shadow of the reality, of the original. The agonies of the soul must be *felt*, not *heard*. There is no language which can place at my disposal the words I require, no color scale exists which possesses the dark shades my brush craves.

"I was born in Paris in 1853. My father was the owner of two large glass factories, which had made him a millionaire and which continued steadily to pour the gold into his coffers. My mother was an angelic being—goodness and mildness personified. Sisters and brothers I had none, but my parents and I, during the early part of my life, formed the happiest trio in the world. No clouds darkened my young life's clear sky.

"Then came the year when I was thirteen—and with it the beginning of my misfortunes.

"One day in my father's studio I chanced to find a so-called Belgian police revolver, the mechanism of which I had seen my father explain one day to some interested friends. Seized by an irresistible desire to handle this weapon, I got possession of it during my father's absence. Revolver in hand I rushed forth into the dim hall to frighten my mother, who was walking in the conservatory but would soon come in to dress for dinner. I hid behind some palms and presently I heard my mother approach. She was humming an old French chanson with a pretty, melodious refrain—oh, how well I remember it! At the moment she passed I rushed out, brandishing the weapon and shouting,

"'Hands up or you die!'

"Then there happened something frightful, something horrible. . .

"A bullet sped forth from the revolver which I held in my hand, and my mother sank down on the rug, bathed in her blood.

"What happened then I can not remember, do not know. But the next day my mother died. I had slain her!" (Pause).

"But this was not enough! My father's health was so impaired by grief over the tragedy that ten months later he had to be interned

in an insane asylum, which he never left alive. At the same time financial difficulties began to beset us, for during my father's illness the business had been mismanaged and enormous sums lost. However, enough was saved from the wreck to enable me to continue my studies and graduate from the university. I buried myself more and more in my work, trying to forget. . . In 1887 I was made a doctor of medicine and in 1890 I was appointed professor of gynecology at the Sorbonne.

But these successes, no matter how great, could not bring me any joy, or even satisfaction. The past —a Gabriel with his sword—stood between me and happiness.

Finally there came a time when I thought everything would be different. It was when *she* who was to be my wife crossed my path. I loved her with all my heart, I adored her, and my happiness was unbounded when she consented to become my wife. We lived together two weeks, during which time the world began to assume another aspect to me. The memory of my misfortunes grew dimmer, my breast filled with the air of life's sweetness —in a word, I began to *live*—"

(P a u s e—then, with f o r c e d voice.)

"On the sixteenth day after our marriage my wife disappeared. She had fled with one of my pupils, a young man whose studies I was paying for, and in a letter which reached me later my wife declared that she would never return to our home.

"This blow brought on a violent illness which confined me to my bed for three months. When I arose I found that the fever had attacked my eyes—I was half-blind, and only with the greatest difficulty was I able to fulfill my duties as professor at the university. My memory also had deteriorated to such a degree that even the simplest problem cost me an enormous effort. However, if you will, financially I was fortunate. My fame as a skillful physician was established long before my illness occurred, and from the high fees which my practice brought me I had already amassed a considerable fortune.

"My increasing bodily feebleness soon forced me to resign my professorship and then I sold my private practice. I hoped a change of scene might benefit me, and began to travel in foreign countries. During the past five years I have traversed a great part of the American as well as the European continent, without ever finding what I was seeking—forgetfulness.

"In Valdivia, Chile, where I resided last, I received the final blow. A cablegram from Paris brought me the information that my entire fortune had been wiped out through a business failure. This was the short and sweet answer to a requisition for money which I had cabled. Four h u n d r e d and eighty-five thousand francs, ladies and gentlemen, lost in a day, an hour. . ."

(Here a profound sigh, calculated as a pyramidal monument to the 485,000 francs).

"In a few words, my position is as follows: Without relatives or friends, financially ruined, unable to work owing to physical feebleness, soul-sick and suffering from extreme insomnia, weighed down by the misfortunes Providence has chosen to send me, and finally, within a short time doomed to total blindness—under these circumstances, have I the right to rid myself of the burden of life—or have I not? Would I, in your judgment, be guilty of an immoral act in committing suicide?"

"These are the questions which I ask that you, after conscientious consideration, be good enough to answer. Although I do not wish to influence your decision, I permit myself to state that my greatest desire is to die."

"Lastly, I shall request Señor Levellan to assist at the voting which will now give an answer to the question."

Professor Nonquerido had finished. He sank into the easy chair, and wiped his white and wrinkled brow with his handkerchief. The revolver still remained in its case on the table, but the life-weary man did not look in that direction.

Secretary Chas. G. Levellan stepped forward, seemingly struggling with a strong inner emotion. In his hand he held a wooden urn which he placed on the floor of the platform.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began with a dry, scarcely audible voice, "ladies and gentlemen, you have all received two marble balls, one black and one white. The former votes for death, the latter for life. A simple majority decides, and in the event of a tie the decision will be considered a vote for *death*. This is Professor Nonquerido's wish. And now, ladies and gentlemen, you will please proceed with the balloting."

Suddenly there was a strong commotion in the audience. The few ladies present left hurriedly, and also some weaker members of the male element. Those remaining, between three and four hundred persons, moved restlessly back and forth, formed groups here and there and argued pro and con. Some looked grave and hesitant, others wore skeptical smiles. No one had as yet complied with the secretary's request that they begin voting.

Just then the first ballot clicked in the urn. A small crowd gathered around the platform; it was the voters clutching the fateful balls in their right hands. During a minute or two there was an intermittent shower of balls through the narrow neck of the urn. Then it stopped.

The professor still sat motionless in his chair, his forehead resting in his hand. The secretary assumed an expectant attitude at the foot of the platform. Finally he stepped forward.

"May I ask the honorable gentlemen if they have concluded their balloting?"

No reply being vouchsafed, he decided that silence meant consent, and explained,

"I shall now proceed to a count of the ballots and I ask for a tally-clerk."

A young man with a weak face and effeminate gestures arose with alacrity from his seat in the first row and stepped forward.

The balls were poured into one of two glass bowls which had been placed on the platform and the secretary transferred then, one by one, slowly and solemnly, to the other bowl, while he counted, in short, authoritative tones.

"Life — death — death — life . . ."

The audience sat in breathless suspense, mouths open, eyes staring. . . It was beginning to look like business!

Some gentlemen kept tally on pieces of paper, others on their left cuffs.

"Death—life—death—death. . ."

Now there were only a few balls left. So far about the same number of ballots had been cast for both alternatives. It was impossible to predict the outcome.

The last ball was recorded.

It was white.

A moment's silence followed. Then Señor Levellan announced,

"Gentlemen, the result of the count shows that 23 votes have been cast *for* and 23 votes *against*. Thus it is a tie. *According to the arrangement, Professor Nonquerido has the right to end his life!*

The professor arose. Over his features flitted an infinitely tired smile.

"Thank you," he said quietly.

He picked up the revolver case, extracted the weapon, cocked it, and placed the muzzle to his temple.

"One," he counted. . .

"Two". . .

The muscles of his face contracted, his lips opened to form the word which would be his last—

Then through the hall rang Señor Levellan's voice,

"Stop!"

His hair on end, beside himself with excitement, the secretary fished in the urn.

"Wait a second," he stammered. There is . . . still . . . another ball here, which has stuck in . . . in . . . a joint."

He shook the vessel violently, and —a small ball rolled out—a white ball!

"A-a-a-a-h!"

An amazed murmur went through the hall, a deep breath of surprise—and reflection. . .

But this calm lasted but a second. Then a hideous noise broke out. The audience stood up, questioning threateningly, scenting suspiciously, crowding clamorously.

A man mounted a chair and in a thundering voice swore that he had seen the secretary monkey with the balls. This settled matters. Like an enormous wave the audience surged up to the platform.

"Thieves! Crooks! Rascals! Cheats!"

Then some one shouted,

"Give us back our funeral donations!"

That was the clue.

"Our money! Our money!" howled three hundred infuriated voices.

They rushed to the ticket office—the cashier was gone.

But some prudent fellows had taken possession of the persons of the professor and the secretary, and the rascals stood well guarded in a corner of the hall, Uri trembling like an aspen leaf, and George with the make-up paint running in colorful rivulets down his face. It was a woeful spectacle!

The end of the story was that Uri found himself compelled to produce the small tin box which contained—damnation!—nearly three thousand beautiful pesos, which the strongest in the crowd divided among themselves. Thereupon the delinquents, with well-directed kicks, were escorted to the exit. There they received a last well-executed *bastonado*, and were allowed to run—as well as they could.

In the hall the old janitor of the Sporting Club was arranging the chairs and extinguishing the lights. When at last he got up on the platform, he saw a shining object on the floor. Aha! The professor's revolver.

Examining the weapon with the eye of a connoisseur, he opened the cartridge magazine. A mild, understanding smile flitted across his wrinkled features as he let the weapon slide down into his capacious pocket. He murmured softly,

"Empty!"

The Silent Man

By

ARCADIE AVERTCHENKO

From the Russian by Scotland Liddell

As a kindly satirist and portrayer of the lighter side of Russian nature, Arcadie Avertchenko stands alone today. His genial spirit wells entirely from within, because there is nothing in his circumstances to foster or produce it. He is one of the group of Russian refugees in Constantinople. He was the editor of a political weekly in Petrograd, "Satirikon," which the Bolshevists tried time after time to suppress. Scotland Liddell, British war-correspondent and translator of this sketch, tells that when he visited Avertchenko in December of 1918 in Petrograd, he found him editing his newspaper with a revolver on his desk.

Before the Revolution the sales of Avertchenko's books in Russia ran into thousands. Several have successfully been translated into German, but this is the first of his work to appear in English.

THERE were so many guests in the country-house that I did not even know the names of most of them. At two o'clock in the morning, after a very noisy day, we were all very tired and we began to talk of sleep. It was then found that eight of us were going to remain for the night, and that there were only four vacant rooms.

The hostess brought one little man to me.

"Maxim Semionovitch will share a room with you," she said.

Naturally, I would have preferred to have had a room to myself, but after a glance at the little stranger I decided that if, under the circumstances, I had to choose one of seven evils, the best thing for me to do was to choose the least.

"Very well," said I.

"You have no objection, have you?" Maxim Semionovitch asked timidly.

"Not the least. Why should I have?"

"Well, you see . . . I'm afraid I am rather a dull companion."

"Why do you think so?"

"I am an elderly, non-talkative, mysterious man inclined to silence, whereas you are a youngster who probably likes to relieve your soul before falling asleep, and to chat about one thing and another."

"On the contrary," said I. "I like silence. I am not a talker either."

"If that's the case—splendid!" exclaimed Maxim Semionovitch, with an accent of relief. "We will suit each other very well."

When we reached our room and started to undress, he said,

"By the way, do you know that there are some people who physically cannot stand silence? That's the reason I questioned you just now. Many people dislike me on that account. 'What is the matter with this fellow?' they say. 'He is as silent as a lamp-post.'"

I smiled.

"Well, you don't need to worry about that when you are with me."

"Oh, thank you! . . . What an agreeable exception!"

He took off one boot, placed it under his arm and assumed an attitude of deep thought. Then with a smile he turned to me.

"I remember a case which occurred to me when I was young. A friend of mine, a student called Orloff, and I took a room together. All went on well. I was silent. One day—two days—always silent. At first he laughed at me and said that I had a bad conscience, then he became nervous and finally he began to abuse me. 'Look here!' he said, 'have you taken an oath that you will never speak? Why are you silent like a corpse?'"

"'Don't worry,' I replied. 'No,' said he, 'but say something.' 'Why? What's the matter?' said I. . . Silence again. One day—two days . . . Then once he got hold of a bottle and said, 'I would like to smash this on your head if only I could extract a human sound from you!' I replied 'That wouldn't be fair.' Then we both remained silent for another three days.

"Once, one night, we were undressing to go to our beds, just as you and I are now, when he threw his boots at me. 'Curse you!' he cried, 'now and forever more! No human being could bear this life. I don't know,' he said, 'whether I am in a coffin or in an isolation cell or where I am. Tomorrow I leave this place altogether!' . . . And what do you think happened?" Maxim Semionovitch laughed quietly. "He fled! . . . On my word of honour he fled!"

"Nervous? Then, indeed, all are nervous. . . If a girl of twenty is cheerful and healthy is she also nervous? . . . I once had a fiancée like that. First she said to me. 'I like you because you are so serious and thoughtful and not a chatterbox.' But later, when I used to call round at her house to see her, she started to say, 'Why are you always silent?' 'What should I talk about?' I asked. 'Have you really nothing to say? What have you been doing today, for instance?' she asked. 'I was at the office,' I told her, 'had my lunch and now I have come to see you.' 'I feel frightened when I am with you,' she said. 'You are always silent.' 'Well, that's my way,' I replied. 'Love me as I am.'

"Nothing doing! . . . When I went to see her one afternoon there was another fellow with her. There he was sitting at her side and talking on and on as if he would never stop. 'I have seen this and that' he was saying. 'I have been here and there. . . And have you seen the latest play? Do you like dancing? . . . What is the meaning of that yellow flower you gave me? Has it a meaning or does it mean nothing at all?' . . . Really, it was astounding the amount of words he was producing, and there she was, listening to him, and bending over towards him! . . . I didn't mind. I sat there and never said a word. The other fellow squinted at me and then the pair of them began to whisper together and to smile.

"I remained silent, and after a time I left. And would you believe it? . . . After two days I went to see her again and who should appear but this very same young fellow. 'What are you doing here?' he cried. 'Why,' said I. . . 'I have come to see Maria Petrovna.' 'Get out at once,' shouted this damned little scoundrel, 'or else,' said he, 'I'll kick your soul out of you!'

"I was just about to argue and to put this ridiculous boy in his place when I heard laughter behind a

screen. 'I don't want you!' she cried. 'You are silent, but so are my wardrobe and arm-chair. I might as well get engaged to my wardrobe. There would be no difference.' What a stupid girl she was! . . . Of course, I left."

I smiled, half asleep, and said. "Y-yes. . . A—funny-story. . . Goo' night. . ."

"Good-night. Sleep well. . . As a rule, men, at least, have some logic. But women sometimes behave in a strange way. Once, in the past—I really must confess—I had a flirtation with a married woman. And, if you please, why did she select me? . . . It's rather laughable. The reason, would you believe it? was that I was very silent and would not talk about our meetings. She bore it just three days and then she complained. 'My God?' she said. 'I would rather have a gossip, a wind-bag or a boaster than you, you funny old tomb-stone. I have kissed and embraced a good lot,' she said, 'but never before have I flirted with an inanimate corpse.' 'Go!' she cried, 'and never let my eyes rest upon you again!' . . And what do you think? She went herself to her husband and told him all about it! . . . There you are!"

"No? Really?" I replied, hardly opening my heavy eyelids. "Well, let's sleep. It must be at least half-past three."

"Is it? It's indeed time to fall asleep."

He took off his other boot without haste, and said,

"Once even a perfect stranger got cross with me. It happened in a railway carriage. We were travelling in the same compartment, and I naturally sat there silent, as I always do. . ."

I shut my eyes and pretended to snore in order to put an end to this silly conversation.

". . . First he asked me, 'Are you travelling far?' 'Yes,' said I. 'What do you mean "Yes"?' he said. . ."

"Krrrrr—Ffffffff . . ." I snored.

"Hmm. . . Is he asleep? . . . He is asleep, is he? . . . Oh, Youth! Youth! The student I lived with did the same. As soon as he lay down he commenced to snore. And then he used to awake in the middle of the night and talk to himself. . . Well, one won't extract much conversation out of me. Ha! Ha!"

I stopped my artificial snoring, raised myself on one elbow and said sarcastically, "You say that you are very silent? I find it difficult to believe you just now."

"Why?"

"Well, you are talking continuously."

"I am only telling you of some instances. There was, for another instance, one case that occurred with the priest about my confession. I went to him and he asked, as usual, 'Have you sinned?' 'Yes, I have.' 'What?' . . . 'Quite a lot.' 'Well, what?' 'All sorts of sins.' Then we were both silent. He was silent, and I was silent, too. Finally . . ."

"Look here! Listen!" I shouted from my bed, sitting up angrily, "Whatever you are going to tell me now about your silence will not be believed. The more you tell me the less I'll believe you."

"Why?" asked my companion in an offended voice, unbuttoning his waistcoat. "I don't think I've given you any reason for doubting my words. Even in my office I once had trouble on account of my silence. The manager came in one day and called me over to his desk. He was obviously in an excellent mood.

'Well,' he enquired. 'What s the news?' 'Nothing,' I said. 'What do you mean "Nothing"?' . . . 'Just that — nothing'. . . 'Look here! What do you mean. . .'

"I am asleep!" I shouted. "Good-night! Good-night! GOOD NIGHT!"

Maxim Semionovitch untied his tie.

"Good-night . . . 'What do you mean?' he said, 'by answering "Nothing." That's not polite, you know' . . . 'What else could I reply to you if there is no news?' I said, 'From nothing there is nothing. Why should I start to talk about something if it is all old?' . . . 'No', said he, 'but there is a certain limit. . . One can be silent all right, but. . .'

Slowly and noiselessly I dropped over a deep precipice, and sleep covered everything like a heavy soft fur coat. . .

. . . A sunbeam pierced through my closed eyelids and forced me to open my eyes. Hearing someone talking, I turned over on my side and saw Semionovitch wrapped in his blanket. He was still speaking slowly, looking up at the ceiling. . .

"'I demand,' she said, 'a divorce because I wanted to marry a living man, not a senseless voiceless image . . . Why don't you speak?'

"'My dear little Lydia,' I said, 'what shall I say?'"

THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

"Our last $10 bill. Hardly enough for cocaine for three days"
(*Simplicissimus*—Munich)

Bérangère's Engagement

By

ANNIE VIVANTI

From the Italian by Arthur Livingston

Annie Vivanti was an "infant prodigy." Her first poems, written in English, were produced when she was ten years old; and her volume of Italian verse, "Lirica," was completed between her fourteenth and seventeenth years. Carducci, the great Italian poet, wrote the preface to the volume, and acted as her literary godfather.

She was born in London in 1873, the daughter of the Italian patriot, Anselmo Vivanti, and Anna Lindau, a member of a well-known literary family of Dusseldorf. She is in perfect possession of four languages—French, English, German and Italian—and has done interesting literary work in each of them. Her favorite vehicles, however, are Italian and English.

A CARD and an invitation from Bérangère! And after a year of silence! I re-read the welcome and affectionate missive:

"Dearest Annie—I know you are in Switzerland again! Where are you spending Christmas? Why not at Montreux, with your own

Bérangère?"

Why not, indeed? Rapidly I ran over, in my mind, the list of people with whom I had solemnly promised to spend this Christmas holiday: Jack in Dublin; Mama at Nervi; Vivian at Glasgow; Barbara at Turin; Sylvia in Rome. Then there were the O'Reilly's—such nice friends, the O'Reillys—in Paris. I could find no other way out of it: as I often do in moments of embarrassment, I decided to toss a coin. Heads, it's with Bérangère! Tails, it's with someone else.

I tossed the coin and it came down tails. "That settles Bérangère!" I concluded. But where would I go then? Obviously, I had settled nothing. So I tried again: "Heads, Montreux; tails, Dublin!" And it came down heads.

"Dearest Bérangère," I wrote at once. "I'll be with you the afternoon of the twenty-fourth. Meet the two o'clock from Berne.

Your affectionate,

ANNIE."

When I came to addressing the postal card, a doubt arose in my mind. Bérangère . . . but Bérangère *what?* I had learned that a year before Bérangère Tarnier had announced her forthcoming marriage to Count Lucien de Lussain-Maldé de Château-Mirval. Had the match fallen through? Or had the announcement gone astray? The point was a delicate one. I seized the dilemma finally by both its horns, and wrote: "Mlle. Bérangère Tarnier, Villa Crespi, Montreux, Suisse." And in due course, on the morning of the day before Christmas, I boarded the Berne-Geneva Express. When I got to Montreux, there in the station was Bérangère to meet the train, waving to me, smiling, and as attractive as ever, with a red silk handkerchief. Bérangère was

always a bit of a socialist, you see.

"First, we'll have tea at the Eden Palace, and then we'll go to my house—Villa Crespi," she proposed. And she led me away toward a big hotel near the station.

Naturally I was keen to settle the great doubt in my mind. Comfortably sunk in one of the big chairs they have around the tea-tables at the Eden, I began: "Tell me, dearie, am I addressing Mademoiselle Tarnier or Madame la Comtesse de Lussain-Maldé de Château-Mirval?"

"Don't you just love Christmas?" Bérangère replied. "Oh, Christmas? . . ." And she went on learnedly and at length about the mystic festival, resurrecting the Star of Bethlehem, and almost putting the Three Wise Men into the Manger. . . "Where did you spend last Christmas dear?"

The question compelled me to set my own thoughts in order a little. "Last Christmas," I answered, "was a very exciting one for me. I spent it tucked away in a London garret, interviewing five or six Sinn Feiners who had just broken jail in Ireland! And you, Bérangère?"

Bérangère began to twist nervously at her Leninesque *mouchoir;* and the red silk finally turned out a mouse—tail, ears and all—which she set jumping expressively from one hand to the other.

"I?" she asked hesitatingly, sparring for time. "I? Let's see! Oh, yes!" And the poor mouse was flattened in one of her hands, while Bérangère's head dropped in a mood I could not quite understand. Was it horror, ecstasy, despair, amusement?

"Tell me all about it!" I encouraged with that tone of authority that women fall back on when a secret is within grasp.

"Listen," Bérangère began.

"I was spending the week end with Aunt Clotilda, at her villa just above Glion, intending to go on for Christmas eve and the following day to my fiancé's family in Geneva. They had planned a sort of reunion for the early dinner; and after that, a reception, where the heir of the Lussain-Maldés was to introduce his future bride—me, in other words—to society. The millionaire branch of the family in Paris was bringing on a 40 H.P. Peugeot for Lucien; and a pearl necklace for me—sixty-eight beans with diamonds in the clasp. In short, a real affair!

"According to plans, I was to leave Glion with Auntie at two o'clock, reaching Geneva at four—afternoon of course. Then, tea, then dinner, then reception, understand? We sent the trunks and things along on the twenty-third, to have nothing to worry about. At one o'clock, Auntie and I left the house to take the cable-car down to the Montreux station.

"But what does Auntie do? Just like her! She slips on the ice at the first curbing. Down she goes, and lies there with her ankle sprained!

"With some help I got her back into the house, and began telephoning around to the doctors. Business of poultices, bandages, smelling salts; and by that time, the two o'clock train was miles and miles away on the road to Geneva. So I called up the Lussain-Maldés at the Château Mirval: 'I will come alone this evening by the nine o'clock!' Protests and exclamations of disappointment at the other end of the telephone! Groans and moans from Auntie's room. More poultices and bandages, with something to reduce fever. And me . . . imagine me! 'Good-bye tea, good-bye dinner. Thank heaven, I'll be

there, late, to be sure, for the reception!'

"I got to the cable in good season; and in fact on reaching the Montreux station, I found I had forty minutes on my hands. It was dark, and it was cold. The waiting room could not have been more gloomy and depressing. Not a passenger was visible. I was as irritated as could be, besides. Auntie, of course, had to tumble just then! And as I thought of the dinner I was missing, and of the mess I had made, I just sat down and cried.

"But it won't do, I suddenly reflected, to appear down there with red and swollen eyes. That thought brought my emotions under control. There was still some ten minutes before train time; so I decided to step into the *Salle de Toilette* to give a final touch to my permanent wave, and a dash of powder to spots that needed it.

"I hurried through the big waiting room and down a corridor till I came to the door marked: *Toilette pour Dames* (*luxe*) 50 *centimes*. I turned the door knob and went in.

"The maid in attendance had her things on ready to go home. She was putting the 'luxe' away, and seemed rather annoyed at my arrival. I ordered hairbrush, scissors, a cake of soap, a box of powder and a towel. As I was preparing to remove my hat, the maid remarked:

"'It's Christmas eve, madame! And the children are sitting up waiting for me to light the Christmas tree.'

"'Yes, of course,' I answered, handing her a tip. 'Don't wait for me! Merry Christmas, and for the little ones, too.' She thanked me effusively, for my hand had fallen on a five franc piece. Curtseying, she left the room.

"I carefully closed the door the maid had left ajar, and turned with interest to my toilette. I inspected my cheeks and nose, putting the powder back where it had come off. My nails were quite to my satisfaction, nor had my eyes reddened as I had feared. Rather I thought that the slight pink of my eyelids tended—you see I can really boast of a white skin, and there's a bronze glint to my hair—to emphasize the Titianesque effect of color that I like to give. My thoughts drifted to the *salon* of Château-Mirval. I imagined myself making my appearance there—the expectancy on the faces of my future relatives who had not yet seen me, the hush that would fall upon all the other guests. Wouldn't Lucien be pleased at the sensation? . . . Finally, I was ready to go out to the platform for the train.

"I snapped my handbag tight, took a last look into the mirror, and stepped to the door.

"I put my hand on the door knob—it would not turn. I pushed—it did not yield. Then I pulled—in vain. I tried to shake it. It was stiff, solid, immovable in its jamb.

"Then, at last, I called. I called: 'Porter! Porter!' I called: 'Hey, there! Hey, there!' I called: 'Help! Help!' I called: 'Police! Police!'

"Nobody answered. Nobody came! It was Christmas eve! All the employés were at home, gathered around their Christmas trees. And I, Bérangère Tarnier, the future Comtesse de Lussain-Maldé de Château-Mirval, was caught in a *Toilette pour dames, luxe,* 50 *centimes!*

"Suddenly, from a distance, came the shrill whistle of an engine, the distant rumble of a train; and the nine o'clock came shortly crashing, grinding, creaking into the station of

Montreux. A flash of hope for a moment gleamed in on my desperation. Someone would probably get off. . . A woman might choose to invest 50 centimes in a beauty box. . . . Nothing of the kind. Nobody got off, nobody came.

"Then frankly I lost control of myself. I screamed, I shrieked, I kicked at the door. I pounded till my knuckles were bruised. I slammed the closet doors. But through this uproar another shrill whistle cut its way. The train for Geneva was pulling out of the station and leaving me behind.

"An engagement party without the fiancée!

"I fell silent then, a strange icy calm coming over me! I sat down on the only chair in the place and tried to think clearly about the fix I was in. The next train for Geneva left, I remembered, at two A. M. There was one in the opposite direction, however, arriving at Montreux at 12:28. 'Lucien,' I reflected, 'will know that something is wrong. He will come on to look for me. He will telephone Auntie and learn that I left home. He will ask the ticket agent—but I did not buy my ticket at Montreux! I got it the day before at Glion! Well, he will ask the station agent. The station agent will remember me. He saw me in the station just after I arrived. He was a tall young fellow, well built, handsome even—with light hair and mustache. I remember the mustache, because, when he saw me, he started twirling it in his fingers. That's it! That's it! The station agent will tell Lucien he saw me. They will look for me, find me, liberate me!'

"But it was then 9:10, and the return train did not arrive till 12:28! No, there was little hope in all that line of thinking! I bit my nails in rage. Then I sat back in the chair again, trying to devise ways and means of passing the time.

"I looked at everything in the room; a table, a wash stand, a cake of soap; a closet; a towel; a beauty-box, opened and thrown away. I counted the nails and screws in the furnishings. There was absolutely nothing to read, except two letters in English on the door of the closet. Then I fled from this empty exterior world, taking refuge in my thoughts—thoughts of my future with Lucien; of the reception, now, that I was missing; of Christmas eve—wondering just how many trees would be lighted up throughout the world. And how slowly, how mortally, mortally slowly, the hours passed! Every so often I would renew my efforts to attract attention—calling, screaming. In that marble white silence my voice had a resonance that gradually filled me with terror. I finished by backing my chair into a corner, to be sure no one was standing behind me.

"Then I thought of Mamma; and my memory drifted to the prayers of my childhood. I repeated them all one by one. A song of those days came into my mind, Napoleon écolier:

A genoux á genoux au milieu de la classe,
L'enfant mutin,
Dont l'esprit est de feu pour l'algèbre, et de glace
Pour le latin. . .

"But as I sang, the old terror came over me again, and I felt on the point of fainting; till a reflection of self-pity came to fill me with a tearful brooding that gave way in turn to rage. 'I will burst a blood vessel; and to-morrow, they will find me dead here, dead, in this tragic and ridiculous *toilette pour dames, luxe, 50 centimes!*'

"Ten o'clock, at last! Eleven o'clock—ages later, it seemed! Twelve o'clock! And at 12:28 the train from Geneva would be arriving . . . with Lucien! The thought roused me to new efforts again. I decided to scream and scream, every five seconds, till the train came in. And I did scream and scream. In the intervals I could hear the echoes of my cries dying out down the corridor.

"Suddenly, however, a footstep! Footsteps! I listened intently for a second; then I called again. The footsteps halted; then they began again, coming nearer. I screamed a third time, and a voice answered:

"'Hello! Hello! Where are you?'

"'Here! Here!'

"'Where? Where?'

"'Here! *Toilette pour dames, luxe, 50 centimes!*'

"And with that I sank, virtually unconscious, to the chair.

"There was a prolonged twisting of the door knob, at last the door opened, and my savior appeared on the threshold. It was the station agent!

"He looked at me in blank astonishment:

"'*Mais qu'est-ce qui arrive? Qu'est-ce qui arrive?*'

"'*Qu'est-ce qui arrive!*' I mimicked in a paroxysm of anger. 'It "arrives" that I was to leave on the nine o'clock for Geneva, for my engagement party! And I have been here, four hours, four hours, in this hole, shouting, crying, screaming, dying, dying . . .!'

"'*Mais, madame, mais madame!* . . . How terrible!'

"'How disgusting! How stupid! How incompetent!' His light mustache quivered under the lash of my fury! 'I will sue the company! I will sue the government! I will sue you! I will sue you, do you hear! What right have you to shut a woman up in a place like this, on Christmas eve, on Christmas eve!'

"And now I was weeping, sobbing hysterically. . . .

"'*Mais madame, madame,* I am desolated . . . madame, please! Explain! I don't understand!'

"I could not speak. I simply pointed to the door knob, indicating that it would not work.

"'But *madame,*' the station agent protested, 'the catch works perfectly.'

"'Perfectly, eh?' I nodded sarcastically, 'perfectly!' I had risen, and to accentuate my utter contempt for him and his door knob, I turned my back on him! 'Perfectly!'

"'See for yourself,' he rejoined, turning the knob back and forth.

"'See for *yourself*!' I retorted, brushing his hand off the knob, slamming the door to with all the violence I could, and looking up triumphantly. I was twisting at the knob, and to be sure, it did not work!

"The man seemed impressed, seized the knob himself. It was stiff and rigid. He pulled, pushed and twisted. The lock would not yield. Suddenly something seemed to occur to him. Pale, his eyes flashing, he turned upon me.

"'Do you realize what you have done, woman? You have locked the two of us in here now!'

"I flared up with a sense of outrage:

"'Get out of here at once, you wretch! Leave me alone, instantly!' My tone was that of a woman's command, a command that the wise obey—instantly!

"The man shrugged his shoulders:

"'Show me how, and I shall

be delighted to accommodate you!'

"My rage passed all limits again.

"'Monster! Traitor! Villain! Leave this room, leave this room! Help! Police! Oh! Oh! Oh!' . . . I was sobbing again.

"The man seemed not to be minding me. He was examining the lock, twisting at it, bearing his weight upon it, trying to rattle it loose. With determination gathering on his face, he threw his whole weight against the door. Then he pulled it toward him. But again it proved stiff, solid, immovable in its jamb. The comment passed through my mind that if Lucien ever put so much energy into an effort like that, his slender, delicate, aristocratic figure would need to stay in bed for a week.

"However, the door would not budge. The station agent looked around at me, for a second. Then he threw his hat to the floor, seized the nearby table by the leg—again the enormous strength of the man impressed me—and hurled it with all his might against the door. The table collapsed into kindling; but the door stood there as before, a long white scar on the varnishing alone testifying to the force and the futility of the blow.

"My fellow prisoner now turned and rested, his hands in his pockets, and his back to the door. His eyes glanced around the room, looking for a window that was not there. They came back angrily to the battered door, then finally to me. I had sunk again into the solitary chair, an island of refuge, it seemed to me, in that ocean of desolation ten feet square. At my feet lay the broken table. I had ceased protesting and sobbing now. The herculean strength of the man had quite terrified me.

"After some time, my demeanor of tamed despair seemed to soften him a little.

"'I am sorry, on your account, especially,' he remarked in a voice I considered almost human. 'I understand your situation; and how my presence makes it worse.'

"I lowered my head without answering. To tell the truth, I did not think so, myself. To have another human being in my prison was some comfort at least. For one thing, I need no longer be afraid of strange presences behind my back. I might perhaps have feared the man himself; but he seemed a kindly, good-natured fellow. Actually, I was not suspicious of him at all. He was young and good looking. From the vigor of his exertions, his hair had fallen down over his face, and thick golden locks hung loose over his forehead. I noticed his chin particularly, a strong square chin, with a dimple in the centre that somehow suggested a touch of gentleness in the resoluteness and firmness of the character his features as a whole revealed. Now Lucien's chin, you know, had never satisfied me. There was just a tinge of recession to it. I had concluded I should find him very susceptible to women!

"The station agent continued with his back to the wall. After some minutes he drew his hands from his pockets and folded his arms. And in this position he stood for another long time. I ventured to raise my eyes to his face. It had taken on a sullen, bitter scowl.

"'And now . . .?' I asked.

"'And now,' he replied, 'the Geneva express will be coming in, and I will not be on the job . . .'

"'And they will look for you . . .' I suggested.

"'They will look for me,' he rejoined ironically, 'but not here.'

"'And they will look for me,

too,' I observed, with a gasp of pain, my thoughts flashing back for an instant to Lucien and the party I had spoiled.

"'Who? Who will look for you?'

"'My fiancé,' I replied, lowering my head. 'He expected me on the nine o'clock in Geneva. He has probably taken the first train to come and find me.'

"'And not finding you,' the young man observed, 'he will ask for the station agent. The station agent will be among the missing too. . . A pretty mess, when the cleaners come in the morning and find us here!'

"I trembled. I had not thought of that before. 'Oh,' I exclaimed. 'Oh! Oh! Count Lucien de Lussain-Maldé is a real Othello.'

"At this remark of mine, the station agent threw back his head and began to laugh softly. And he laughed and laughed more loudly, till finally I grew irritated. Instinctively I rose, with the idea of leaving the fellow's presence. . . But, alas! the door . . . the door . . . !

"Again a whistle sounded in the distance. . . . The Geneva express, the 12:28, was coming in. The station agent stopped laughing and smothered an exclamation. Crashing, grinding, creaking, the train drew into the station. A sigh from the brakes told us it had stopped.

"We stood, for a time, holding our breaths and listening. The thick concrete walls of the station let no other sound pass than the harsh asthmatic pant of the engine. No footsteps, no voices! The station agent finally raised his hands to his mouth and gave a long, sustained whistle. There was no answer. He whistled again, and again, and again. Silence! Finally I thought I would try my voice: 'Help!' I called. 'Lucien!' And I continued the appeal, alternating 'Helps' with 'Luciens.' To my great mortification, I observed that the man was laughing so at these 'Luciens,' that when he tried to whistle again, he could not get his lips in position.

"A bell rang. There was a faint whistle from the tracks, followed by a subdued and gradually deepening rumble. This faded away. The train was gone again.

"We looked at each other in a sort of stupor.

"'So now . . . ?' I queried downheartedly.

"The man did not reply.

"'How long will we have to stay here?' I resumed finally.

"'The maid comes in at seven.'

"'Mercy on us!' I exclaimed desperately; and sinking my face in my hands, I began to weep.

"'Won't you take off your hat and try to get some sleep?' he suggested considerately.

"I took off my hat; and then in doubt as to where I should lay it, I thought of the washstand. I stepped forward, and my eyes went instinctively to the mirror. I would offer a pale haggard face to Lucien, when he came to rescue me!

"How the time passed after that I do not know. I remember looking at my watch every two or three hours, finding each time that ten minutes had passed. I thought of Aunt Clotilda and her sprained ankle. I thought of Lucien wandering frantically about the station.

"As I afterwards learned, I was mistaken in this. Lucien actually did come by the 12:28; and at the time, he was going up the mountain (the last car had left of course) on foot. Two reporters from the Geneva papers had come with him. They had been invited to the recep-

tion to report the affair; and, scenting a good story when I failed to appear, had insisted on seeing the business through. They eventually reached my aunt's house, after a terrible climb in the night only to waken the poor woman and frighten her out of her wits.

"The station agent and I sat it out, in our prison."

Bérangère fell silent.

"Well?" I queried.

"Well!" Bérangère replied, setting the mouse to jumping again from one hand to the other.

"How did it all turn out? How did you get through the night?"

"Oh, I don't know . . . it got cold, after a while, and we had to stamp up and down to keep warm. And we talked. I told him all about Lucien; and he told me all about his family—his father, it seems, is a prominent physician down in Chamonix; and the boy himself is an engineer, learning the railroad business from the bottom up. He told me about a sister of his—'with hair as bright and golden as a lighted candle!' I thought, looking at the boy himself, that his own 'hair was as bright and golden as a lighted candle!'

"Finally the talk drifted to literature and music. He had been in Spain and in Germany before the war. He had read 'So Spake Zarathustra,' and he liked the symphonies of Mahler.

"I sang him '*A genoux, à genoux, au milieu de la classe,*' and he reciprocated with selections—baritone—from Wagner. He was doing a bar or so from the 'Tristan' when the door knob suddenly began to turn and twist. The door flew open, and there stood the maid.

"'What!' I exclaimed. 'Is it seven already?'"

And again Bérangère fell silent.

"Well?" I asked again.

"Well!" she answered. "I took the cable back home to tell Aunt Clotilda all about it; and in the afternoon I went on to Château-Mirval. The Countess received me with icy courtesy, and informed me that Lucien was sick in bed and could see no one—that he would communicate with me later, by letter. Whereupon she handed me a bundle of blue-penciled newspapers.

"The penciling was hardly necessary. The headlines spoke plainly enough. In the *Lausanne Gazette* I could read about the *Adventure of a Fiancée;* in the *Geneva Journal* about the *Good Fortune of a Station Agent;* in *La Suisse* . . . Oh, never mind about *La Suisse* . . .

"But Lucien never wrote to me . . . However . . . I'm not so sorry . . . Aunt Clotilda gave me a necklace with eighty-six pearls. As for the Peugeot, I don't miss that much either. . . You see, I have a pass, for all the trains. . .

"But don't you think we had better be going? . . ." she added, undoing the mouse into a plain red flag again, "I expect a guest for dinner... a handsome fellow, secretary to the Minister of Railways, who has a square chin with a dimple in the middle, and 'hair as bright and golden as a lighted candle.'"

The Four Winds

SIR CHRISTOPHER WREN lies buried under the choir-gallery of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. His epitaph reads: "If you seek his monument, look around you." It may seem inauspicious to be talking of epitaphs in our maiden number. But perhaps some slight word of explanation, some formulation of purpose will not be amiss to justify our *raison d'être* in the already overcrowded field of fiction magazines. This explanation is best found on our Contents page. We plan to offer in "World Fiction" the most interesting and significant imaginative literature of the best authors of this our generation the world over, all brought together in one composite picture. We shall leave it to you to say whether our plan is good; we ourselves affirm that it is different.

We believe that the comprehension and understanding necessary among peoples to outbalance momentary passions and temporary conflicts of interests can best come about through a mutual appreciation of their literatures. One gets a better-focused, clearer because selected—and though it may seem paradoxical, truer—picture of the soul and aspirations of a nation from its literature than from a first-hand knowledge of its inhabitants. So often one can't see the forest for the trees. Nobody doubts that England's prestige rests far more on Shakespeare than on her fleet or factories; the latter may disappear, the former cannot. Proof evident of this we have in the case of Spain: Spain has no fleet and few factories; there can be no arguments about her present decadence; but within the pages of *Don Quijote de la Mancha* lives for the world the Spain that one cannot but admire and respect, the Spain that should—and if she gets on her feet again, will—exist.

But far from us the idea of urging upon our readers the necessity or expediency of loving our neighbors. In our bright lexicon there is no such word as teaching, nor have we any idea of saying, like the Frenchwoman to her husband at the première of one of Tolstoi's dramas in Paris when the Franco-Russian alliance was being engineered, "No, I don't understand it either, but we must applaud. They're our allies." We just want to give you in "World Fiction" stories that you will enjoy, whose only claim on your time lies in their own intrinsic interest. All we hope is that some time as you read them you may say, "Now, what do you know about that! It might have happened right around the corner from Main Street." Or, "Well, well, those Croats certainly know how to spin a good yarn." That's all.

ONE striking feature of present-day French literature is the number of "little groups" of young writers that pop up over night. The members of each of these profess to be utterly and irreconcilably different from all the others, but it is extremely difficult for the outsider to distinguish between them. In each one there is a

tiny nucleus of real talent about which clusters a number of "me, too's" and would-be intellectuals whose claim to fame usually rests upon some personal eccentricity. The first movement of a "little group" upon taking its place in the sun is to found a magazine all for itself. As may be imagined, names are growing scarce. The latest addition to the ranks is "The Hard-Boiled Egg." It will need to be to survive!

EVERY South American is a poet until he can prove the contrary. And some very good ones there are, too. It must be the climate, for Rubén Darío, the Nicaraguan poet, warned Roosevelt, "professor of energy" as he called him, that his America had had poets in the ancient days of Netzahualcoyotl, whoever he may have been. Two of the most interesting figures in South American poetry today are women, Juana de Ibarbourou of the Argentine, and Lucilla Godoy of Chile, who writes under the *nom de plume* of Gabriela Mistral. Both of them are young, and both of them, though very different, "tell their souls" with a frankness and vehemence that we are more accustomed to think of as masculine. The former's work is a rich, sensuous fabric, which glows with a passionate joy of life and living; a tragedy shot through Gabriela Mistral's life just as it seemed the world was opening for her. All her work breathes an almost corroding sadness and despair, relieved, in a measure, by her fierce tenderness for all who suffer. Her first volume of collected verse is now being published by subscription in New York, under the title "Desolación."

"JUGEND" of Munich offers this illuminating course in Comparative Literature:

A German novel is a book in which two people want each other in the first chapter, but do not get each other until the last chapter.

A French novel is a book in which two people get each other right in the first chapter, and from then on to the last chapter don't want each other any more.

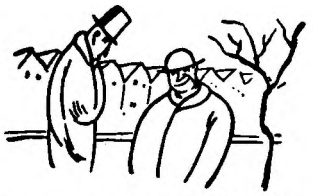
An American novel is a book in which two people want each other at the start, get each other, and then want each other clear through to the end.

A Russian novel, however, is one in which two people neither want each other nor get each other, and about this 450 profoundly melancholy pages are written.

"Bill's shed looks pretty bad."

"Yep, he told me yesterday it wasn't fit to keep tools in any longer, so he's going to rent it out as a summer cottage."

(*Kaspar*, Christiania.)



"I suppose you think I'm a perfect fool!"

"None of us are perfect, my dear friend."

(*Strix*, Stockholm.)

IN the last year or so there has been an extraordinary revival of interest in the Don Juan theme. It is not hard to recall offhand half a dozen or more recent European books with this arch-deceiver as the central figure: Rostand's posthumous drama "La derniere nuit de Don Juan," Bataille's "L'homme a la rose," (which lived and died—quickly—on the New York stage under the title of "Don Juan") and Marcel Prevost's newest novel "Les Don Juanes," in France; Martínez Sierra's "Don Juan, Español," Azorín's "La muerte de Don Juan," and the Quintero brothers' "Don Juan, buena persona," in Spain. Can this be further proof of the "scrapping of all moral codes" which is popularly supposed to be one of the war's most pernicious after effects?

Some of these works try to justify Don Juan, and show that he wasn't such a bad fellow after all; others make him old, ridiculous and futile; Prevost insists that there is nothing so Don Juan-ish as a woman at forty. But none of them can vie in dramatic intensity with the original drama on this theme, "El burlador de Sevilla," of Tirso de Molina, written in the 17th century. It deals with the very grave problem of sin and repentance, and the man who is eternally condemned because of an excess of confidence. Here we have Don Juan young, dashing and reckless, who can't resist a pretty face no matter where he sees it or whom it belongs to, nor stick to it once he's won it. He would seem to operate on the principle that "the reward of the spirit that tries, is not the goal but the exercise." He stops at nothing to get the girl first, and to get away afterwards. He violates very nearly every law of friendship, loyalty and respect. At that he's not all bad; he doesn't for a minute doubt that there's going to be a Reparations Commission waiting for him in the next world, and he intends—some day—to repent and settle down, but he keeps putting it off, and putting it off, and then one fine morning he finds himself dead and it's too late. The spectators probably shuddered ecstatically as one of Don Juan's many victims led him down to Hell, agreed that he had got just what he deserved, and then rushed out and imitated him.

From then on, through Molière, Byron and Zorrilla, this personage has exercised great fascination over writers of widely differing character. Which would seem to demonstrate that there is something eternally human in Don Juan, something we all understand and, in a certain measure, admire.