

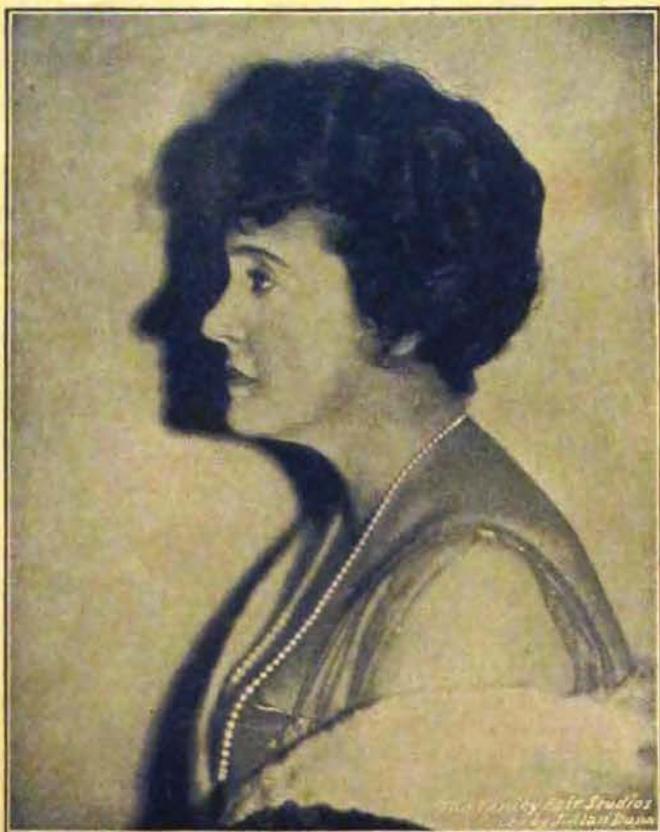
A New Blasco Ibañez Story

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NOVEMBER 1922  
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# WORLD FICTION

*Today's Best Stories from All the World*

HARRIET V. WISHNIEFF, *Editor*

HARALD TOKSVIG, *Associate Editor*

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*"Open in the name of the Law."*

—A Wedding Serenade, page 13

# WORLD FICTION

Today's Best Stories From All The World

## A Wedding Serenade

By

VICENTE BLASCO IBÁÑEZ

From the Spanish by Arthur Livingston



Vicente Blasco Ibáñez was born in 1867 in Valencia. He studied law, as does nearly every young Spaniard, and at an early age entered politics. He advocated a republic for Spain instead of the existent monarchy, and his life was often in danger as a result of the feuds to which his beliefs gave rise. His literary career began with two volumes of short stories describing the life of the people of his region. In 1897 he produced what is perhaps his best novel, "The Cabin." Other works followed in rapid succession, many of them, like "The Fruit of the Vine," "The Cathedral," "Blood and Sand," attacking national vices. In 1912 he made his epic trip to South America where he launched a great colonization scheme. A financial panic and the War brought this venture to an end. He returned to Europe in 1914 and offered his services to France in the interests of propaganda. "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" brought him recognition throughout the Allied world, especially in the United States, where he is as widely read as the most popular native writers.

### I

A SLEEPY Spanish town of the Valencian *ribera*—Benimuslín. White walls and dark roofs, perching above a sea of olive trees and vineyards. A church belfry with green tiles. An old Moorish fortress with crumbling, time-worn battlements against the dazzling blue sky. Benimuslín! A village like all the villages of Spain—backward, dull, unchanging, picturesque—the habitat of prejudice and tradition, of burning passions and undying hatreds. Simple folk, indifferent to the great world and its doings, absorbed in their own loves and spites and ambitions. Benimuslín—the home of Marieta, of Toni *el Desgarrat*, of *tío Sento*—and a few hundred others like them.

### II

TIO SENTO, "Uncle" Sento, had announced his intentions. He was getting married for the second time.

To understand the commotion this piece of news occasioned in Benimuslín, you must know that the widower *tío Sento* was the leading citizen, the biggest tax-payer in the locality; and further that his bride-to-be was Marieta, the village beauty, but the daughter of a teamster. Her dowry? A bewitching dark face; dimples; a pair of black eyes sparkling like gems under long lashes, and rolls of thick shining hair, held against her temples by gaudy pins.

Now Benimuslín could not recover from its surprise, and its anger. Everyone said the same thing.

A man his age marrying a chit of a girl like that! What was the world coming to? There was *tío* Sento, owner of half the real estate in town, with a hundred skins of wine in his cellar and five mules in his barn! And who was to get all that? A piece of rubbish from the sidewalks—Marieta, the teamster's daughter, who had stolen for a living as a little thing, and now grown up, was glad to do house-work for the meals there were in it! And now about *siñá* Tomasa, *tío* Sento's first wife? She had brought him the big house in the *Calle Mayor*, and her farm lands. She had even fitted up the bedroom with all that furniture she had been so proud of, when she was alive. Would she not turn over in her grave to think of it going to a waif of the streets to whom she had so often given a meal in the kitchen, out of pure Christian charity?

Fifty-six years old, and marrying for love! Was the old fool a regular satyr? See the way he danced time to every word she said, a silly smile on his face, like a young fellow in love for the first time.

All Benimuslín agreed that *tío* Sento had lost his mind. The Sunday when the bans were read in church, there was almost a riot. Some of the men folks of *siñá* Tomasa's family were there. And how they cursed, after mass was over! Talk about your thieves, sir! Tomasa willed all that property to her husband, very well! But she understood that he would never forget her, that he would always be faithful to her memory. And what was the old rascal doing? Passing it all over to another woman—and a young one like that! And he fifty-six! No, there was no justice on earth if such things went on! Sue him, to get the dowry back? Lots of good that would do! The courts

were not to be trusted these days, as Don Vicente, the rector said. If Don Carlos were in power, then . . . perhaps!

So those who considered themselves directly injured by the proposed match grumbled at the cafés in the square; and so everybody grumbled, not excluding the girls of the wealthier families, who would willingly have tendered their fair young hands to that old rooster, notwithstanding his paunch and the hard little eyes under enormous brows that contained—his enemies said—half a bushel of hair.

The whole town knew, moreover, that Marieta had a sweetheart. Toni *el Desgarrat*, Toni "Rags" in other words, had been a vagrant like her as a little boy; and now, a loafer about the wine-shops, he still loved her "with the best of intentions." In fact, the two good-for-nothings had been postponing marriage only until "Rags" should develop a taste for work and leave the company he was keeping. For Toni's boon companion and bosom friend was Dimoni, a clarinet player from a neighboring town who came in to see him at least once a week, to celebrate a grand spree in some tavern and then sleep it off afterwards in somebody's haystack.

The relatives of *siñá* Tomasa suddenly took a liking to "Rags." In the town loafer they saw a possible avenger of their wrongs. And other people too, people of the better sort, people who had never stooped to speak to him in their lives, now sought him out in his favorite drinking place.

"How's this, *Desgarrat*?" they asked banteringly. "They say Marieta's getting married!"

"Rags" hitched about on his stool stroked the flashy blanket he had thrown across his knees, transferred

his cigarette to the other corner of his mouth, and gazed for a moment at the glass of red wine in front of him.

Finally he shrugged his shoulders.

"So they say! . . . Well, we'll see about it, *recordons!* The old man had better not brag till he comes home with the bacon."

That is why everybody was sure something exciting would soon be happening. For *tío Sento* was all a man himself, a man among the best of them. He had his say around election time. He had a "pull" with the Governor at Valencia. He had been mayor several times. More than once, in the open square he had raised his heavy cane and beaten bigger fellows than he was, just because he found them in his way.

He would take no nonsense from *Toni el Desgarrat*, the whole town was sure of that, and Benimuslín looked forward to an interesting time.

### III

**T**IO SENTO, indeed, never did things half way. That was obvious when the day for signing the marriage contract came. Since his bride lacked a dowry, he gave her one himself—three hundred *onzas* gold, if you please, not counting the wedding dress, the rings, the combs, and the furniture that had belonged to *siñá Tomasa*! The girls of the village flocked in company to Marieta's place—a wretched shack, with a cart in the front yard and three underfed nags in the stable, where her father, the teamster lived, out beyond the last house on the road to Valencia. And holding hands, or their arms about each other's waists, they walked around the big table in the front room, where all her wedding pres-

ents were heaped up on display.

Holy Mother, how many pretty things! Towels, tablecloths, handkerchiefs, bandanas, underclothing, skirts, silk and linens, worked with monograms and arabesques, and arranged in piles, according to sizes, that almost reached the ceiling! All the friends and the dependents of *tío Sento* were remembering the happy pair. Among dishes, and silver-plated knives and forks, and the porcelain holy-water fonts for the bridal chamber, were two handsome candlesticks from the Marquis—the *cacique*, the political boss of the District—the greatest man in Spain, *tío Sento* called him—for whom, moreover, he was ever ready to wield his cane or level his shotgun, when it came to returning the Marquis as Deputy to Parliament.

On a shelf, in the most conspicuous place in the room, were the bride's jewels, pearl earrings in the shape of bunches of grapes, a number of brooches with complicated pendants, gold side combs, three gold hair pins for her hair, and that set of bracelets, earrings, and necklace, so much talked of in Benimuslín, for which *siñá Tomasa* had paid fourteen doubloons at a big store in the capital.

Talk about your luck! But Marieta blushed modestly at all the jealous congratulations heaped upon her for her great catch; while her mother, a sickly over-worked and now aged peasant woman, wept great tears of pure joy, and the teamster trotted effusively back and forth in the trail of *tío Sento*, finding no words humble enough and grateful enough for the munificence of his future son-in-law.

The contract was to be read and signed at the teamster's house that night. Don Julian, the notary, accompanied by his secretary, drove

up about sundown in his two-wheeled cart, a portable writing set sticking out of his pocket, and a roll of stamped official paper under his arm.

A special table, lighted by a four-armed candlestick, had been set up in the kitchen, and the notary entered in triumph. What a learned, what an impressive representative of the law! Don Julian read his texts in dialect, peppering the high-flown legal phrases with side remarks of his own. Just try to keep your face straight in the presence of that joker, who looked like a priest with his long black coat and his puffy, clean-shaven face! And what were those glasses for, if he always wore them high up on his forehead?

As the notary dictated and dictated, his clerk wrote and wrote, the pen scratching noisily on the rough stamped paper. Meanwhile the priest, and friends of the two families were coming in. The wedding presents had been removed from the table in the front room, and in their places, cakes and sweetmeats had appeared, tarts and bitter almonds, and bottle after bottle of cordials—rose and maraschino.

"Ahem! Ahem! Ahem!" Don Julian cleared his throat several times, rose from his seat, smoothed the flaps of his long coat, pulled it down in front by the lapels, and picked up the pages of writing in front of him. Grains of sand, from

the fresh pages, dropped upon the table.

What a case he was! When he came to the bridegroom's name he twisted his face into a grotesque scowl that *tío* Sento was the first to applaud with a great burst of laughter. When he came to Marieta's, he made a deep bow in imitation of an old-fashioned gallant in the ballroom, and again everybody laughed. But when he began on the terms of the contract—doubloons, vineyards, houses, fields, horses, mules—avarice and jealousy darkened those

rustic faces. *Tío* Sento was the only one to smile—satisfied that all those people should know how rich and powerful he was, and how handsomely he was treating his chosen woman. Marieta's parents were unable to restrain their tears. Generous was no name for it. And their neighbors nodded assent. Yes, you could trust your daughter to a

man like that, and be sure of yourself!

After the formalities of signing were over, the refreshments were passed around. Don Julian paraded the best of his well-known stock of jests and stories, maliciously nudging Don Vicente, the priest, in the ribs, and facetiously planning with that austere ascetic a terrible debauch for the wedding day.

At eleven o'clock everything was over. The priest went home scandalized at his own remissness in having stayed awake so late. The may-



or left with him. At last *tio* Sento rose with the notary and the secretary. He had invited them to pass the remainder of the night at his house.

The road beyond Marieta's cottage was dark, dark as the open country on a moonless night is dark. Above the houses toward the town the stars were sparkling in the deep blue of the sky. Some dogs were barking in the barnyards. The village itself was sound asleep.

The notary and his companions picked their way cautiously onward, to avoid stumbling over the stones in those unknown roads. "*Ave Maria purissima!*" called a hoarse voice in the distance. "Eleven o'clock—and all is well!" The *sereno*, the night watchman, was going his rounds.

Don Julian felt a sense of uneasiness creeping over him in that inky darkness. He thought he saw suspicious signs of life at the corner of the street leading down toward Marieta's house. Someone seemed to be watching her door.

"Look out, look out!"

There was an explosion, followed by a rasping, hissing sound. From the corner a thick stream of fire seemed to dart outward through the air, wriggling, twisting, in rapid flight, while the notary's hair stood on end.

A rocket, a rocket! There was

a joke for you! The notary flattened against the door of a house, his assistant groveling in terror at his feet. The ball of fire struck the wall above his head, rebounded to the other side of the street, then from the house there back again, emitting a shrill whistle on each leg of its journey, till finally it exploded with a deafening bang.

*Tio* Sento had stopped unperturbed in the middle of the street.

"*Redeu!* By God! I know who did that! You filthy jail-bird!"

And shaking his heavy cane, he made for the corner, certain that around it he would find *el Desgarrat* with all the gang of his first wife's relatives.

#### IV

THE bells of Benimuslín had been ringing since break of day.

The news of *tio* Sento's approaching wedding had reached the limits of the district, and from every hand

friends and relatives were coming in, some riding their work horses with gay colored blankets for saddle cloths, others in wagons, their families perched on stools along the cart sides.

*Tio* Sento's house, where no one had had a moment's rest for near on a week, was a center of noisy bustling activity. The best women cooks in the neighborhood for miles around had been marshalled for the glad occasion, and were going



to and fro in kitchen and yard, their sleeves rolled up, their skirts caught up behind, showing the white petticoats underneath. Piles and piles of faggots had been heaped up within easy reach of the fires. The village butcher was slaughtering hens in the back yard, where the ground was literally carpeted with feathers. *Tia Pascuala*, the old servant in the house, with the skill of a surgeon, was opening chickens, extracting the livers, hearts and gizzards to make the tastiest sauces and tidbits of the feast. What a thing it was to have money!

All the arriving guests, poor farmers for the most part, condemned year in year out to musty sardines and salty codfish, could feel their mouths water at the prospect of one whole day of abundant cheer.

Such an array of eatables had never been seen in all the history of Benimuslín. Copper pots, sooty on the outside, but shiny within, full of rice and chicken, were bubbling over the fire. In one corner was a pile of fresh bread as big as a cord of wood. There was pan after pan of mountain snails stewing on the big stove. A huge tin box of spices was sitting in the cupboard. Wine-skins were being brought up by the dozen from the cellars—the large ones with red wine for the meal, the smaller filled with that white liquid fire from *tio Sento's* famous "corner barrel," that had proved too much for the strongest

drinkers in the district. As for sweets to throw to the children after the ceremony—they were there by the basketful—almonds, cinnamon drops, balls of sugar and starch as hard as bullets, and as *tio Sento* gleefully surveyed the animated scene, he thought with cruel anticipation of the lumps those missiles would raise on the heads of the youngsters who would be on hand for the scramble.

Yes, things were getting along fine! Everything was ready. Everybody was turning out. Even *Dimoni*, the clarinet player, had come in before time—for *tio Sento*, sparing no expense to make the day a grand one, had ordered that *Dimoni* be kept well supplied with drink; for, as everyone knew, he played much better when several sheets to the wind.

The bells of the church stopped ringing. The time for the ceremony was at hand. The

nuptial procession marched to the home of the bride, the women in their best full-skirted dresses, the men in their gala cloaks with long blue capes, and in high starched collars that chafed their ears. From *Marieta's* home they started back toward the church. First came a troop of boys capering and turning handsprings around *Dimoni*, who was playing with his head thrown back and his instrument up in the air as if it were a prolongation of his nose and through it he were sniffing



at the sky. Next came the bridal couple, *tío Sento* in a new velvet hat, a longsleeved coat, too tight about the waist, embroidered stockings and brand new sandals; Marieta — oh Marieta! *Reina y señora*, how pretty she looked! A real lady from Valencia could not have done better. She had on an expensive lace mantilla, a Manila shawl with long fringes, a silk skirt puffed out by four or five petticoats, a pearl rosary in her hand, a huge plaque of gold for a brooch, and in her ears the splendid pearls that *siñá Tomasa* had worn in her time.

The whole town was waiting in front of the church—even some of *siñá Tomasa's* relatives, who, carried away by their curiosity, had come along in spite of the clan's decision to boycott the ceremony. They kept in the background, however, standing on tiptoe to look on as the parade marched by.

"Thief! Thief! Ten times a thief!" One of the offended family had spied *siñá Tomasa's* earrings in the ears of the bride. But *tío Sento* only smiled with what seemed to be satisfaction. And the company entered the church.

The spectators who remained outside turned their eyes toward the tavern across the square. *Dimoni*, the clarinet player, had made off in that direction, as if the church organ were offering him an unwelcome competition. But who had joined him there? *Toni el Desgarrat*—"Rags," and some of his rowdy friends! The lot of them went to one of the tables, and sat there exchanging winks and smiles. All the undesirables in the town! Something was on foot. And the women began to whisper and talk mysteriously.

But look! They were coming out of the church again! *Dimoni* got up from his table on the sidewalk and

went back across the Square, striding up the Royal March! All the ragamuffins in Christendom seemed to have come to life from some where and gathered around the entrance. "Almonds! Almonds! Give us our candy."

"Almonds, eh? Candy, eh?" *Tío Sento* himself began the fusillade, and following his example, all the wedding guests. The hard sweets bounded off the harder heads of the urchins, and the scramble started in the dust. The bombardment continued all the way along the street, as the bride and groom were escorted towards their home.

In front of the tavern, Marieta lowered her head and her face grew pale. *Toni el Desgarrat* was sitting there. *Tío Sento* saw him and smiled in triumph. In answer "Rags" contented himself with an indecent gesture. How spiteful of him, the girl thought, to bring that touch of bitterness into her day of pride!

At the old homestead of *siñá Tomasa*, now *tío Sento's* house, hot chocolate was waiting. "But careful not to eat too much—it's only an hour till dinner time!" *Don Julian*, the notary, had raised his voice of counsel, but the throng had rushed upon the refreshments, and in no time the table in the great hall, with room for more than a hundred chairs, had been stripped as clean as a bare floor.

Marieta, meanwhile, had gone up to the bridal chamber, the bedroom famous for its expensive grandeur, of which *siñá Tomasa* had been so proud. She was removing her wedding gowns for something lighter. Soon she came back downstairs in a cool muslin dress, her brown arms bare, and the golden pins gleaming in her bright hair. The notary was chatting with the priest, who had

just arrived. The guests had gone out into the yard, where they tended to gather toward the kitchen to watch the last preparations for the great banquet. Dimoni was playing his clarinet to the limit of his lung-power. The mob of urchins was shouting and capering outside and scrambling for the handfuls of almonds that were thrown out.

"Not even Belshazzar had such a feast," was the priest's comment as he took his seat at table, and the notary, not to be outdone in erudition, referred to the wedding banquet of a fellow named Camacho, that he had read about in some book or other. For the notary did not know for sure whether Cervantes was a Deputy in Parliament or a prophet in the Bible. For the less distinguished guests there were other tables in the yard. With these Dimoni had taken his place, and he was sending the waiter time after time to fill his glass with red wine.

All eyes were fastened on the large pots, in which quarters of chicken were almost as numerous as the grains of rice in the sauce that covered them. And for once in their lives those peasants were eating like *señores* — not fishing in a common pot, but each with a plate and a glass of his own, and a napkin into the bargain. Rustic courtesy, meanwhile, was at its best. "Do try this second joint," friend would cry to friend over the length of the table, and the viand would be forwarded from hand to hand till it reached its destination. Then a bow and a smile of acknowledgment—as though each one did not already have in his plate a piece just like the one he was being offered.

Marieta, sitting at her husband's side, was eating with scant appetite. Her face was pale, and painful thoughts kept flitting in wrinkles

across her brow. Nervously she kept her eyes on the door, as if Toni *el Desgarrat* might appear there at any moment. That rascal was capable of anything. How bitterly he had reproached her that night when she had bidden him good-bye forever! She would have reason to remember him—and repent of her selfishness in marrying for money! So he had said. But in spite of her fear, she felt a certain satisfaction in the *Desgarrat's* jealousy. He loved her! And it was pleasant to think of that—now that he was lost beyond recall.

The meal was beginning to brighten. By the time the stews were gone, and the roasts were vanishing down those voracious throats, rough jests and practical jokes were enlivening the festival. Some of the guests were warming to the wine, and their loosened tongues were venturing on witticisms at the expense of bride and bridegroom that brought roars of satisfied laughter from *tío Sento* and blushes of embarrassment to Marieta's brown face.

At dessert, Marieta arose, took a plate in her hand and began to go around the table. Pin-money for the bride! *Pera agulletes!* She made her appeal in her babyish voice. And doubloons, half doubloons, gold coins of every denomination, began to drop into it, especially from the relatives of the groom, who wanted him to remember them in his will.

Only two pesetas came from the priest, with the excuse that the church could do no more in such days of liberalism.

At the end of her round, Marieta poured the coins from the plate into her pocket with a clinking of metal that was a delightful thing to hear.

And now the banquet had become a banquet indeed. Everyone was

talking at the same time. People on the outside had come up to the windows to watch the merry throng.

"*Bomba! Bombaaa!*"

At this signal for a toast, the company fell silent for a moment. The wag of the company rose unsteadily to his feet:

"A toast to the bride,  
A toast to the groom,  
Invite me next time—if there's  
room!"

And the company, as though the labored joke had not been old in the days of their grandfathers, roared their applause.

And thereupon everyone in turn to his feet, with a couplet, a jest, at the expense of the "happy couple," jests that rapidly degenerated in tone, till the priest thought it best to take flight upstairs where the women had gathered in a separate parlor.

Then someone, in a moment of uncontrollable joy, thought of smashing his glass on the table. This was the signal for a general bombardment. The guests broke all the dishes on the floor, then began to throw bits of bread, cakes, almonds, lozenges, and finally fragments of china at *tío Sento*.

"Enough of this, enough I say," the bridegroom called when the joke had gone too far. "Enough of this."

But the men were hot with wine and the joy of combat. They redoubled their assault. The priest and the women came hurrying down the stairs in great alarm, protesting at such frenzied gayer.

Quiet was finally restored; but they had no more than sat down again when the women began to jump up, screaming that somebody was pinching them on the ankles. It was the children who had slipped in, hunting for the remains of the battle under the table. Little devils!

"Out of here! Out, I say," roared *tío Sento*.

"What a good time!"

## V

ABOUT ten o'clock the guests from the outlying districts began to drive off, singing at the top of their voices and wishing the couple a happy future. Later the townspeople went out into the dark streets, the women steering their tottering husbands along the uneven sidewalks. The notary, who for some time had been sound asleep in a corner, his glasses on the tip of his nose for once, was awakened by his secretary and dragged out through the front door. Only the near relatives of the two families were left.

"Good-bye, my child," Marieta's mother was crying. "*Adiós!*" One would have thought, from her apparent sorrow, that the child was on her way to the grave.

Not so the teamster! With more than enough wine to his portion, he was in a jocular mood, and kept protesting at his wife's gloom. "You didn't fare so badly, when I carried you off, did you, old girl?" Finally he tore her loose from her daughter, and dragged her still weeping toward the door.

*Tía Pascuala*, the servant, went off to her garret room. The special waiters and cooks, hired for the occasion, had already gone home. The house fell silent. *Tío Sento* and Marieta were alone, seated in the disordered banquet room which was still brightly lighted by the many candles.

They sat for a long time in silence—*tío Sento* admiring his conquest. How pretty she looked in her muslin dress, nestling in the big chair. And how small! "What a fate to be tied forever to that old fool!" Marieta was thinking, as the image

of Toni *el Desgarrat* hung fixedly before her mind.

A bell struck in the distance.

"Eleven o'clock," said *tío Sento*. He rose from his chair, put out the candles in the banquet room, and with a single light in his hand observed:

"It is time to go to bed."

They had just entered the great bedroom, when *tío Sento* stopped.

The whole neighborhood seemed suddenly to turn into a pandemonium of noise, as though the call for the Last Judgment had suddenly descended upon Benimuslin. A terrible beating of tin cans, a wild rattling of hundreds of cow-bells, a beating of boards and sticks, a fusillade of pebbles against the side of the house, and a flare of rocket after rocket up from the ground under the very windows of the bedroom.

The meaning of it all flashed through *tío Sento's* mind.

"Yes, I know who is at the bottom of this! If it weren't for jail, I'd settle that fellow in a jiffy!"

Marieta, who had first been frightened by the infernal uproar, now burst into tears. Her friends had warned her. "You are marrying a widower, so of course there'll be a serenade!"

And a serenade it was indeed! After the first burst of noise came suggestive couplets followed by applause and laughter, songs sung to the tune of a clarinet, with references to the age, the prowess, and the grotesqueness of the bridegroom, allusions to the past of Marieta, predictions as to her future fidelity to her decrepit husband! A hoarse voice that Marieta well recognized boasted of past relations with the bride.

"You swine! You curs!" *tío Sento* roared, and he stamped up and down the bedroom, beating the

air with his fists as if he were trying to kill that withering sarcasm on the wing.

A morbid curiosity came over him. He must see who the jail-birds were to take such liberties with him. He blew out the candle, and peered out into the street from under a corner of the curtain.

The whole village seemed crowded into the front yard. A score or more of torches blazed along the sidewalk, throwing everything into a livid glow. But in the front line stood Toni *el Desgarrat* and all the relatives of *siña Tomasa*. And among them, among them, Dimoni, the clarinet player, the man, who all that day had been enjoying the hospitality of *tío Sento's* house! Even now, probably, he had in his pocket the two dollars he had received at eight o'clock! The traitor! The indecent wretch! He was probably the author of most of those couplets!

*Tío Sento* felt the work of a lifetime slipping through his fingers. Was he not the leading man in town? Yet there they all were, watching his disgrace, enjoying it, taking liberties with him, because he had seen fit to marry a pretty girl. And his blood boiled within him, the blood of the tried *cacique*, trained to ruling a political district and accustomed to having his will obeyed.

There was another burst of noise with pans and rattles and cow-bells.

Then "Rags" bawled another couplet on Beauty and the Beast following it with a funeral dirge on *tío Sento's* readiness for the grave.

"Gori, Gori, Gori!" chanted the multitude, taking up this word from the lament of the dead that Toni had used for a refrain.

The rascal, meanwhile, had spied *tío Sento's* face at the window. He picked something up from the

ground and came forward into the yard. It was a pair of huge horns fastened to the end of a stick. He held it up toward the window. Other men advanced carrying a coffin, and in it an effigy, with grotesque eyebrows yards long.

Blind with rage and humiliation, *tio Sento* drew back. He felt his way along the wall of the dark room, found his shotgun and went back to the window. He raised the curtain, and then the sash. Almost without aiming he fired, first one barrel, and then the other.

There was a great surge in the throng, then a mighty shout of terror and anger. The torches went out. There were sounds of flight in all directions. Then cries:

"Assassin! Murder! Sento did it! Murder! Thief! Kill him! Kill him!"

*Tio Sento*, however, did not hear. He was standing in the middle of the room, the smoking gun in his hands, quite beside himself, unable

to collect his thoughts. Marieta had collapsed in terror on the floor.

"Now will you shut up? Now will you shut up?" he kept murmuring.

There came a sound of tramping feet, and a loud knock at the door.

"Open, in the name of the law!"

*Tio Sento* came out of his stupor. The door was thrown open. A squad of policemen came into the room, their hobnails grating on the polished floor.

As *tio Sento* went out into the yard between two officers he saw a body lying on the ground. It was *Toni el Desgarrat* riddled like a sieve. Not a slug had gone to waste.

*Toni's* friends gathered round with drawn knives, among them *Dimoni*, who kept striking out at *tio Sento* with his clarinet.

But the officers held the mob off. *Tio Sento* walked along between them, sunk anew in his stupor.

"What a wedding night!" he muttered. "*Bonica nit de novios!*"



# The Flat Town

By  
JAMES BOYD

*An American Story*



*James Boyd's knowledge of life was acquired during his experience as a reporter in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; his command of descriptive language, as a real estate agent in North Carolina.*

*He is a graduate of Princeton, 1910, and of Trinity College, Cambridge. He was with the Army Ambulance Service during the War, and began to write in 1920. He has been a contributor to Century, Scribner's, Harper's, and other notable American magazines.*

*Mr. Boyd's artistic purpose is to present his material in such a way as to make the reader a participant in the final effect, thus establishing the necessary collaboration between author and reader. Galsworthy in a recent study of American literature spoke of Boyd as one of its most promising figures.*

**I**N the middle of the vast, sombre plain, Central Junction stuck up, rigid and incongruous. The town seemed to have been dropped into the heart of the gray, motionless seas from the blue, unwinking sky. Its prim uniformity was, however, Kansan rather than celestial; all streets were straight, parallel and equidistant; all stores had flat roofs and pressed-brick fronts; all houses, concrete walks and golden oak front doors; all churches, magenta stained-glass windows and fret-sawed porticos.

The citizens of Central Junction were uniform. They could not be distinguished from the citizens of any small town, nor even from each other. Nothing marked the individual save imperceptibly fine shades of relative obscurity. Central Junction had no drunks, no Catholics, no negroes, no beauty, and no brains, and it contemplated all these deficiencies with equal complacency.

Of this primitive tribal village, Mr. Wilmer Scabes was head man. He had lived there all his life. It was, he often said, good enough for

him. And neither he, with a webbed hand spread impressively on his slack paunch, nor his ring of moon-faced auditors caught any glimmer of the dreadful implication.

His life moved in a fixed orbit between his chocolate-colored residence and his rectangular grocery. Though he held no office, the heavy power of his righteousness controlled the town. On his solemn daily round he often paused to dispense weather remarks and aphorisms among such citizens as crossed his churning bows, then passed on, a stately caravel freighted with great thoughts, and left their shallow minds churning like midges in his wake. At such times his formless face and body radiated a faint and heatless effulgence as does the firefly by day. And like the firefly's, the emanation was purely mechanical.

Small wonder that twenty years' leadership of Central Junction's uncolored life had made his graciousness both conscious and perfunctory. Not that Mr. Scabes was discontent; on the contrary, he was buoyed by the knowledge of his rectitude, a

knowledge as precise as his monthly statement of bills receivable. If there were greater happiness than this, he often told himself, he had not heard of it. And yet his light blue eyes, even in the midst of weighty affairs, would sometimes leave the speaker's face and gaze disconsolately afar. They narrowed and brightened with a flash of unguessed fire, as though seeking new horizons. Their lustre swiftly faded as they met nothing but the flat town and the flat plain beyond.

They wandered even now as Mr. Scabes stood on the street discussing the new water-works with Mr. Podginson, the mayor. He heard Mr. Podginson's dry, windy voice:

"Men to put up the reservoir tank came today. Don't like their looks; hard young fellers; ain't done nothing out of the way yet, but I expect they will."

He heard no more, though he was just conscious of the continued vibration of Mr. Podginson's chin-whiskers and of his melancholy reiteration, "wa'er-works—wa'er-works" like the harsh cry of some persistent and idiotic fowl. Mr. Scabes was not listening, not even thinking. He was just slipping away for an instant from Mr. Podginson, from town affairs, from his own level life of fifty years. He did this often of late and it worried him. A man at his age, a leading citizen, should settle down. All his people had been well thought of; all except that woman his grandfather had married, Jacqueline, her

name was, heathenish or papish.

"Here they come now," Mr. Podginson was prodding him with a meagre elbow.

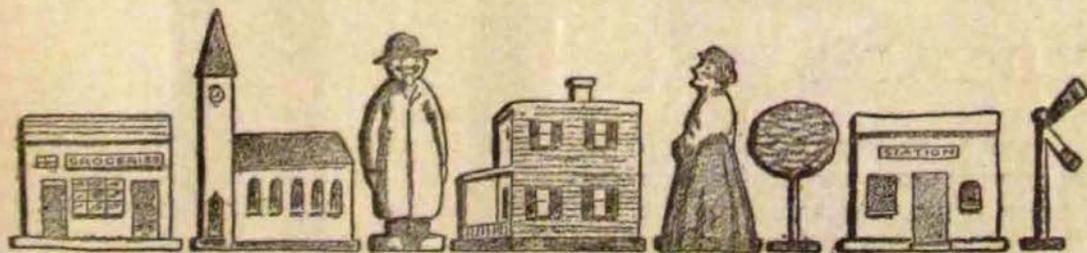
"Who? Oh! Ah!"

Three youths in jumpers lounged with calculated unconsciousness along the sidewalk. Each had a cap of extreme design raked over one eye and a cigarette cocked in the corner of a saturnine mouth. As they passed, one indicated Mr. Podginson by a nod and murmured, "Uncle Joshua" in an explanatory tone. Mr. Podginson turned on them a cold and outraged eye and encountered three dry grins.

It was clear that these youths boded Central Junction no good.

And yet at first their behavior was passably restrained. Wilmer Scabes, as in duty bound, stepped out daily to watch their progress. Each morning he took up a position at a dignified distance and gazed upon them with a mien which he conceived to be benevolently austere. They gathered their material, plates, beams, kegs of rivets and tackle on the ground in admirable professional silence marred only by an unnecessarily aggressive technique in expectation. They watched the local concrete man pour the footings with sombre, fixed stares, offensive chiefly in what they might leave unexpressed.

But as the superstructure rose and they with it, their spirits rose as well. And they were not spirits of a sort which commended themselves



to Wilmer Scabes. Sitting in his grocery, he could hear the hammering of rivets, the crash of I-beams and occasional shouts. As the work proceeded, the character of these shouts became clear. They were oaths and scandalous epithets. They rang through the drowsy grocery, more resonant, more impious, more shameless each day that the three hard young men mounted nearer Heaven. And, looking out of the window, Mr. Scabes saw that every word fell plummeting like an obscene bird of prey upon the shrinking town. Housewives passed, grim virtue on their blanched, adamant faces, and an alert ear cocked to the skies for the three youths' strange blasphemies. Two church members, their bulging eyes upcast, stood transfixed at the sound of familiar words in unbelievable juxtaposition. Horace, the grocery boy, shut off the engine of the delivery car and listened with a scared grin. Mr. Scabes cleared his resounding throat ominously and cast on Horace a baleful look. The grin vanished, Horace cranked her fervently and drove off.

The character of the three erecting men was manifest. Mr. Scabes gave up visiting the water tower. A man in his position could not afford to stand in the presence of evil. The waterworks for which he had striven had long since become distasteful and he should have been glad of a reason to dismiss them. He was disturbed to find, however, that instead of welcoming the chance to do so he now felt a horrid attraction towards the scene of this loud and forbidden dialogue. Though powerfully reinforced by his sense of moral rectitude, he missed his daily visit more and more. He even found degrading solace in the fact that entire escape from contamina-

tion was impossible. For there was in Central Junction no haven from the pervasive and ringing indecencies of the three youths poised above it. They penetrated the utmost recesses of Central Junction and of Mr. Scabes' grocery.

At the Wednesday prayer meeting he pressed his brow against the back of the pew in front of him and fixed his eyes on the intricate vermicelli pattern of the red carpet. He was framing his thoughts in ponderous phrases. Standing up, he regarded through half-closed lids the rows of black backs inclined in prayer, then lifted a sonorous voice to supplicate that the godless strangers now in their midst might be led into paths of grace. He sat down to the approving rustle of bombazine. A hymn followed: "Rescue the Perishing." He was the leader of the singing. In preparation he drew his chin into his white bow tie and expanded his gills like a cobra about to strike. Then in a ringing baritone of great power, he hit the first note with deadly accuracy and swung the docile congregation into the tune.

On his way home, he passed the three unregenerates, propped negligently against the drug-store, whistling a vulgar melody through their teeth. The swing of their music quickened his unwilling steps. In the quiet side street the whistling sounded faint and died away. He walked more slowly, rejoicing that he had never used his own voice save in the service of the Lord.

The sinful trio were now a charge upon his conscience. He tended the grocery absently, his well-lobed ears on wait for the next impiety to float in through the door. The toll grew; not a corroding syllable was forgotten. Worse than the actuality were the shouts and snatches of song whose words were lost in a gust of

wind or a clash of steel. Upon such obscurities the anxious Mr. Scabes spent hours of horrid conjecture.

The tower mounted higher. The three hard youths, swinging between prairie-sea and sky like demi-gods, cast off magnificently all restraint. The sober tat-tat of their pneumatic riveters gave place to barbarous rhythms of their own design; they executed double shuffles on the precarious footways; they halooed unspeakable indecencies to each other across the void; they joined uproariously in songs of coarse mirth.

The sheet steel sections of the tank itself, like huge black orange peels, were hoisted up and riveted together. Within this ringing bowl the three celestial scalawags abandoned themselves to song.

They sang, "She's a Rose with a Broken Stem," and other tender ballads. They sang, most scandalously, "Pull For the Shore, Sailor," with a double syncopated accompaniment of pneumatic jacks. They sang, "The Captain Went Below" and the lurid, "Hot Boy." And then at the close of day they executed a voluntary or fanfare on the riveters, followed by a long, harmonious "O-o-o-o-h" which fixed the attention of the pavid and expectant town.

"O-o-o-o-h" they sang, "She-e-e ripped and she snorted and she rolled on the floor——" and right on through to the outrageous and unspeakable climax. They ended with a defiant, "tat-tiddy-tat-tat—tat-tat" of the hammers and quit work.

As the days went on, this unvarying evening song became for Mr. Scabes a sort of diabolic angelus. When the hour approached he stopped work and anxiously took a post of vantage. Then came the long "O-o-o-o-h." He pursed his lips, but his eyes were bright. Across the street, Mr. Podginson raised his

distracted whiskers to the sky. Throughout the town, indoors and out, the citizens remained with rigid faces and straining eyes till the last dreadful note died away.

One evening as the familiar final "tat-tiddy-tat-tat" sounded, Mr. Scabes, at the grocery door, was swaying toe and heel to the rhythm. He became conscious of Mr. Podginson's astonished eye and hastily withdrew. He had made himself ridiculous and even under suspicion before Mr. Podginson. He would be much better occupied in bringing the three pagan mechanics to a conviction of sin than in shuffling his feet to their flaunting song. He would sternly check this insult to Central Junction, too long endured; he would show them there was one place where ribaldry could not lift its head. And he would place himself in the right light with Mr. Podginson.

At four o'clock next afternoon when, high above the town, Satan's chorus was swelling to full power, Wilmer Scabes approached the watertank with Mr. Podginson and a group of sober citizens by his side. His gaze struggled up through the flooding din to the tiny figures at its source.

"Young men!" he called in precise and ringing accents. They roared on, oblivious. He raised his voice. His words were smothered by the chattering jacks and the riveters' gross song. The position was ridiculous. Waving his fellow-citizens to keep their places, he began, as majestically as possible to climb the tall ladder to the tank.

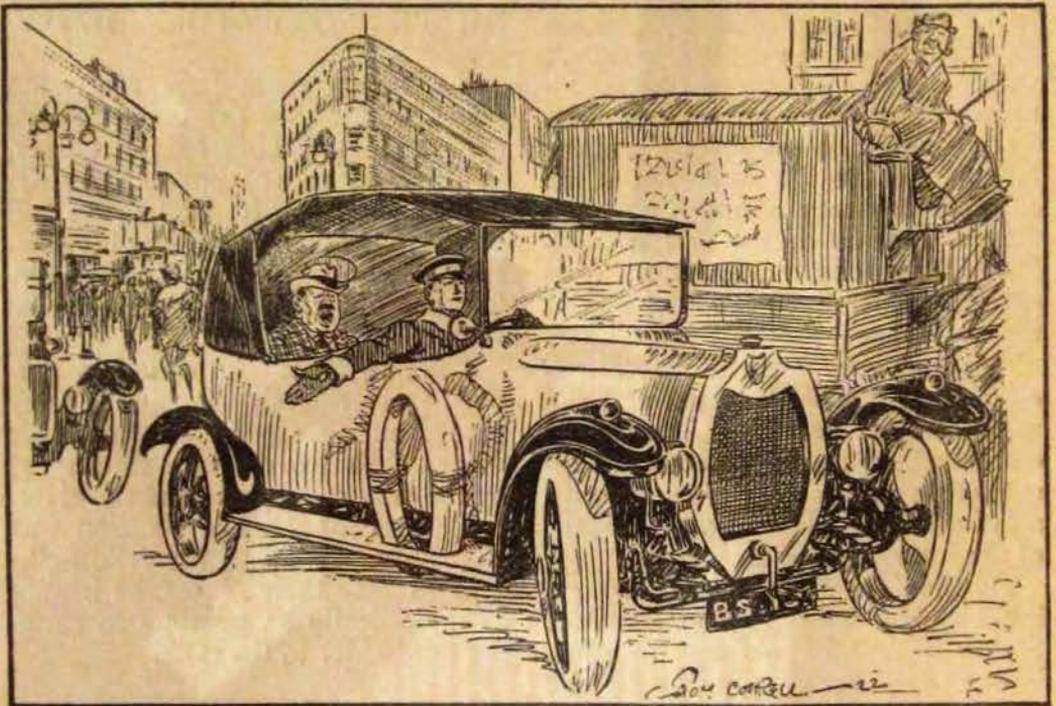
The group at the base of the tower saw, against the sunset, the black and shapeless figure of Mr. Scabes slowly ascending the long steel web. As he mounted through the volume

of harmony, his steps quickened until they were in time, and in time to a melody of no righteous import. He was seen to gain the summit. The music stopped. They saw six large, mechanics' hands reach down and haul him to safety. Mr. Scabes sat there silent, breathless no doubt. They saw the three pariahs steady him on his perch familiarly and point across the plain into the blazing West where the Arkansas River lay, then eastward to the Ozarks, hid from the groundlings under the shoulder of the world. They saw Mr. Scabes stand up, holding by their arms and swing the compass round till his flat, old face glowed again

in the flaming western fire. Waiting below, they felt the swift advance of twilight and the earth-creeping evening chill. And still Mr. Scabes did not speak, only stared into the heart of the distant prairie light. At last they saw the four heads come together. The message was being given. Then upon their upturned faces descended a long "O-o-o-o-o-o-h, she-e-e ripped and she snorted and she rolled on the floor——"

They looked to see the apostle turn and strike the singers down. Instead he only sat there rapt and radiant, gazing into the eye of the sinking sun, gently swinging his heels in rhythm.

OWNER OF NEW CAR (on first trip):



—Keep both thi' 'ands on yon wheel, lad; ah'll tell thi' when it's rainin'.

(The Bystander, London)

# A False Confession

By  
PAUL BOURGET

From the French by Virginia Watson



Paul Bourget was born in Amiens in 1852. From his father, a professor of mathematics, he received a thorough scientific training. When but twenty he published his first volume of verse. At the same time he was making a name for himself in the field of literary journalism, and in 1883 he published a volume of critical studies of authors of the day, entitled "Essays in Contemporary Psychology." The novel, however, was the form of literary expression that especially interested Bourget, and he has produced work of the highest order in this field. He reacted from the naturalism of Zola and Balzac, and found his guidance and inspiration in Stendhal. It was the processes of the mind and heart that interested him, not the environment. He is particularly known for his penetrating studies in feminine psychology. He is a member of the French Academy and an Officer of the Legion of Honor.

"WELL, Mr. Magistrate, what do you say to this?"

And Maître Cantelme, as he entered the room of his friend, Judge Pingré, pulled out of his pocket two thousand franc notes and shook them with an ironic gesture before the magistrate's face.

"You have recovered your money?" the latter questioned in his phlegmatic manner. "So it wasn't stolen from you after all?"

"Yes, indeed, it was stolen from me," the notary replied, "but it was returned to me by a . . ."

"A . . .?" insisted Pingré "then it was not your junior clerk?"

"It was my junior clerk . . . I was right in suspecting him, you see, and you were wrong in defending him. An old notary can be cleverer than a criminal court judge. Ha! Ha!"

And a smile of pride lighted up his mouth and his eyes that soon was chased away by an expression of sadness.

Anthème Cantelme was a man of fifty years, thick-set and square like a true Auvergnat, with large feat-

ures that revealed a not too remote peasant origin. His bearing and positive manner betrayed also the bourgeois who has grown up and been nourished in long-established surroundings. These surroundings were his office. He had lived there even as a small child, his father having been employed there as chief clerk. He had been a clerk himself; then, having married the daughter of his employer, he had very naturally inherited the business. He had taken his profession seriously, and to confirm the fact that one of the young men employed in his office could have committed a theft was very painful to him. After having for a moment triumphed in one of those professional rivalries such as exist between friends of allied professions, he gave way to a more generous feeling.

"All the same," he added, "I should have preferred you to be right."

"I didn't say to you that little Gervais Moreuil was not guilty," the judge corrected.

The notary's old school friend

was only a half Auvergnat. His father, of Provençal origin, who had come to Clermont as a professor of the faculty, had married there. He had died there and his widow remained in the city. Their son Honorat had himself married a girl of Riom, a relative of the Cantelmes. He had let himself be appointed magistrate in the ancient city of Limagne on account of his wife and his mother. He had lost them, one after the other, but on account of his relations he had remained in Riom, which he never intended to leave. His southern origin showed in his brown eyes, in his black hair, scarcely grizzled, and in something inexpressible, something finer, more alive in his profile and in his build. The look of the room where this dialogue had taken place showed that this son of a Toulonnais and of a mountain daughter of the Midi cherished a peculiar love for his mother's country. Shelves of wood along the walls held an enormous collection of minerals, the fruit of his many geological expeditions. This museum, with the labels carefully glued on all the stones, revealed method carried to meticulousness, and the tone in which he corrected the assertion of his visitor had that dryness which the habitude of pronouncing judicial decisions gives.

"I told you," he insisted, "that when you tried to incriminate that boy you were arguing from insufficient data which required a more careful examination. The moment that he restores the money everything has changed. But how did you get this confession from him after he had denied the theft so obstinately? Did you see him again?"

"Not him. His mother. You remember that after the disappearance of the two thousand francs

Moreuil did not come back to the office, giving sickness as a pretext. At least, I thought that it was a pretext. It was one more reason for me to suspect him . . ."

"And for me to doubt," interrupted the judge. "That sudden absence, it was much too *maladroit* . . . Let us consider the facts again: You leave your study to escort a client to the street. You leave your keys in a drawer of your desk in which you have just shut up two packages of bank notes which this client had brought. Your second clerk is alone, busy in the adjoining room. He is quite familiar with the business your client had with you. He knows that you must have received this money. He does not hear you go out! He enters your study to hand you the papers he has been copying. You are not there. He goes to put these papers on the desk. He notices the bunch of keys, you imagine. He opens the drawer. He is tempted. He takes two notes of a thousand francs out of the ten which are in the two bundles. You see him, five minutes later, pass by you on the sidewalk where you are still talking. He shows no sign of agitation. That all points to a thief. But he can't help knowing that he will be suspected. Yet he no longer acts like a thief when he does not come back, under the childish pretext of a feigned illness. That would amount to giving himself away at once . . ."

"Just so," replied the notary, "and he would certainly have come back . . . but, it so happens, the illness was not feigned. I told you about my visit to question him. I told you that I found him in bed looking frightfully ill. It may be it was from the emotion caused by my visit, the fear of being discovered and convicted in spite of his denials.

No. He was really ill. Doctor Pacotte came from Clermont. He diagnosed it as typhoid. That night the poor boy—I pity him in spite of his crime—was delirious for two hours, and in his delirium he denounced himself. ‘Thief! Thief!’ he cried, ‘I have stolen . . . two thousand francs . . . the drawer! . . . there were twenty notes. There are eighteen left . . . prison! . . . the court! . . . the guillotine! . . .’ These were the words he never stopped repeating, and he went through the scene of the theft before his poor mother who was nursing him. What an experience after he had had the effrontery to call her that he might swear to me his innocence before her! You recall this?”

“So it was a farce,” said Pingré. “Was he counting on the regard we all have for Madame Moreuil?”

“And which she deserves, you will see. In the face of this confession, all the more indisputable as it was completely involuntary, she did not hesitate. This morning her son fell asleep. A neighbor offered to look after him. The good woman took advantage of this to come to me at once to bring me these two notes, and to beg me when Gervais recovers—if he recovers—not to denounce him. That would be impossible, of course, since she has made restitution. I could promise her to keep the matter an absolute secret. I have kept it, at your advice, from my wife and son. As for you! . . . A magistrate is a confessor. So now the affair is over—or nearly. There is one more thing to be done. Shall I keep this boy in my office?”

“I shan’t persuade you to,” said the judge.

“Yet when you advised me not to prefer a charge against him, what arguments did you use? That I

would ruin his future, if he were innocent and if the real culprit were not discovered, on account of the suspicion which would always attach to him. And you added, ‘If he is guilty, it is a first offence. His conduct has been irreproachable up to now. He may repent and become an honest man!’ ”

“Doubtless,” replied Pingré quickly. “One fact was unknown to me then, one which you have just given me, his meanness, duly confirmed this time; to get his mother to cover his theft. You pictured him to me, on the contrary, as a devoted son, anxious to get on as quickly as possible in order to give his mother more comforts. That was your explanation of his theft. To your knowledge, he had before this dabbled in stocks through a comrade employed in the Riomoise branch of the Grand Comptoir. You imagined that he had let himself be tempted by some stock that was on the point of going up, and that he had taken the two thousand francs with the idea that a final effort would make it possible for him to purchase the practice at Volvie which is about to be sold. My advice was based on this hypothesis. But the swindler who, the moment he is caught, has the audacity, as you say, to make his mother intervene for him is an arrant rascal . . . No, no, don’t keep him. If I were in your place I would even make my silence conditional on his choosing a profession where he won’t have funds to handle.”

“You are right,” said the notary after a moment . . . “For his mother’s sake I will find an excuse for his leaving the office which won’t excite remarks . . . But he won’t be easy to replace! That very afternoon, before he committed the theft, he was finishing up the work

of the head clerk, filing papers which the other had left when he went off to amuse himself in the café."

"Those diligent hypocrites are the worst," said the judge. "You'd better be glad that he is unmasked. Next autumn your son will have finished his legal studies. You can give him Gervais Moreuil's place. And above all, no sentimentality about this young brigand who has not even the merit of a confession to his credit. He was talking in his delirium. Profit by this occasion to insist that Edmund must not fail in his examinations, since you will have need of him before you expected."

## II

**F**ORTY-EIGHT hours after this conversation the two friends met again in the judge's same study. When the notary arrived he found him studying, pencil in hand, a large map painted in different colors, which represented the geological section of the department, between the chain of the Puy and that of the Forez. The paper was striped with marks of the corrections made by the mineralogist judge on the boundaries of the different formations. He received his friend, tapping with his finger on one underlined spot, with the phrase:

"And they didn't recognize the volcanic pliocene there!"

Then he laughed heartily. "I beg your pardon, Arthème. I was talking Hebrew to you; but for a man whose business is the taking of evidence, this which goes back for thousands and thousands of years, is absorbing. One is surer of it than of human testimony."

"I bring you a proof of that," said the notary. "This time I have come to prefer a charge. I have

quite made up my mind."

"Against whom and for what? Gervais Moreuil's mother has made restitution . . ."

"She *did* make restitution," Canteleme corrected him. "Seeing me so good-natured, she and her son doubtless have been thinking things over. They thought that I was simply a fool. In short, I saw that woman land at my house this morning completely changed, as aggressive and insolent as she was humble day before yesterday. She is the accomplice of her rascal of a son, that's all . . ."

"Madame Moreuil? But you told me yourself . . ."

"I never knew her before this morning. She came into my

study with a face that I call 'black.' I thought that her son was worse. 'On the contrary, he is much better,' she replied to my question. She told me that his delirium had fallen with his fever, that the boy had recovered his senses, that he had asked her what had happened about the theft committed in the office, and if the guilty one had been discovered. She was astounded—I am giving you her testimony. He insisted. She told him that he had confessed all in his delirium. Then—these are still her words—he showed an extraordinary emotion. He affirmed that he had not the slightest recollection of the words he had pronounced . . . Then followed a preposterous story. He demanded a priest; received the communion and, then alone with his mother, swore to her, the wafer scarcely off his tongue, that he had



had nothing to do with this theft, that he had placed his papers on my desk without even seeing that the keys were in the drawer. 'He begged me to come and swear to his innocence,' his mother concluded, 'and I have come.'"

"And you said to her?"

"Oh, very simple. While she was reciting to me this astonishing story I was thinking, 'You are regretting that you restored the two thousand francs to me in a moment of panic.' I knew the way to verify her sincerity; offer to give back to her those two thousand francs while not hiding from her the fact that I continued to believe her son guilty."

"And Madame Moreuil, did she take the two thousand francs?"

"Yes, indeed. And with what an air. 'This money belongs to us, monsieur,' she said. 'I took it from my poor savings and brought it to you without hesitating when I thought we owed it to you. I take it back without hesitation, now that you owe it to us.' In the face of such impudence I was seized with anger. I said to her, 'Very well, madame. You take back your money. I take back my liberty. I shall place this case in the hands of justice.' She seemed quite moved, then, pulling herself together, 'As you will, monsieur.' And then she left, counting evidently on my kindness, on my old affection for her son, on my fear of a scandal touching the personnel of my office. She is mistaken. Oh, how right you were day before yesterday when you called this young Moreuil a fearful hypocrite. There was reason for it, you see."

"So it is no longer to his friend Pingré that Maître Cantelme has come to talk, but to the magistrate. Now let us make out this charge in due and proper form."

Clearing his desk of all the mineralogical documents, he prepared paper and a pen, and said to the notary, motioning him to an arm chair:

"Sit down there, I am going to dictate the document to you."

Cantelme sat down and the judge began to walk up and down the room while he reflected. Then, stopping in front of the desk.

"All the same, it's a little queer that this woman should have accepted the money, knowing her son was guilty."

"That's all she came for," said Cantelme.

"That may be, but with the idea that you would believe her when she would say to you: 'My son spoke in a delirium. He was out of his head and his confession doesn't count.' You don't believe her? If she was fooling you, what should she do? She should play the role just as the person you had imagined would act, innocent and proud, one whom suspicion would revolt. Instead of that, there was her claim set forth in a haughty manner, the taking back of the money even at the risk of a trial, the dignity of her departure."

"You might say the cynicism."

"Madame Moreuil a cynic! . . . Well, anything may happen, since little Gervais Moreuil, the son of poor Moreuil, such a good man, has stolen. By the by, were there any other witnesses of this confession? You told me that Doctor Pacotte was called in."

"The crisis was that night. I don't know whether Pacotte was there or not . . . But I can't spend my morning pondering on the sincerity or insincerity of Madame Moreuil. I have too much work at the office, with only two clerks. Credit her, if you like, with good faith

and believe that she is the dupe of her son. I don't think so, and I want an indictment. What do I write?"

"What I am going to dictate to you."

When the document had been written the judge took it and began to read it half under his breath, laying weight in spite of himself on the words, "Against one unknown."

"Sign here," he concluded. "All right. I will do what is necessary. I haven't been out this morning. Wait for me. I will walk home with you."

### III.

**M**AÎTRE CANTELME lived in an old mansion like many to be found in Riom, built of black stones of Volvic, with high windows with inner shutters. Above the carved door the professional signs took on the appearance of a coat of arms. The ground floor was reserved for the office; the apartments of the first floor for the living quarters. Those of the second floor were used by the daughter of the notary whose husband was an engineer in the North, when she came, with her children, to spend the holidays in Riom. When he came to his doorstep, the judge, instead of leaving his friend, accompanied him into his study, as if to continue the conversation. Doubtless, he had another idea in his head, because he had scarcely entered the room, the scene of the theft of the two thousand francs, than he asked, pointing to the desk,

"In which drawer did you lock the package of bank notes the other day before you escorted your client out of the room to the street?"

"In the top one to the right," said the notary, "but why?"

"Then it would be possible to

see through the window that the keys were in the drawer," the judge replied. "Was that window"—and he pointed to it—"open or shut?"

"I do not remember," said Cantelme.

"Let's see, it was last Tuesday. It was very fine weather that day. But, fearing the humidity on account of rheumatism, you had lighted the fire, as to-day?"

"Without a doubt."

"You must have been too warm, and as that is a west window and sunny at that hour, you must have opened it to give you air."

"Probably. What are you driving at?"

"Could one climb up easily from the garden?" continued Pingré, as if determined not to reply directly to his friend. Then, going to verify this himself, "The sill is high, but burglars are good gymnasts . . . But, how did he get into the garden? Through the house? There is a bell at the door which overlooks the corridor. It would have been heard . . . From the outside? There is the rampart. That's impossible. It's perpendicular . . . Well, good-by, my friend. Will you allow me to go into your garden for a moment?"

"To measure the distance from the parapet to the boulevard?" said the notary, laughing. "The law is in possession, you have every right; but, truly, when one has a real confession, it is lost time to search for something else."

Then, pointing to the heap of documents:

"I won't accompany you. You will excuse me?"

"Everyone to his last," said the judge.

He went into the garden, a long terrace planted with enormous elms,

which he was familiar with, having so often sat there to enjoy the air during the fine mild evenings of the Auvergne summers. He continued to pursue an idea that grew more and more distinct, for he walked without hesitation towards an arbor, or rather a summer-house, in which the chairs destined to be used in July were kept in the rainy season. The door closed simply with a latch. Pingré opened it, noticing that the hasp was only half caught on the catch, a detail which indicated haste. One of the seats inside was separ-



ated from the others set in a row at the back. It had fallen to the ground; another sign that the person who had last been in the summer-house had been in a hurry. It was a wooden stool, very light and easy to handle. Pingré set it up again, and with his handkerchief took the exact measurements of its feet. Then he returned to the lower-floor window of the notary's study. There he made sure that a man of his height by drawing himself up a little, could see the desk where Cantelme now sat, busy looking over his papers. Standing on a stool of the height of the one which Pingré had just examined, reaching the sill was, if not easy, at least possible with a little effort. Once on the sill, if the window were open, to jump into the room would be only play. When he had got this far in his imagination, the judge was astonished to find himself repeating below his breath his question of a short while before:

"But how could one get into the

garden? From the outside it is impossible, in broad daylight, over a wall six feet high. . . . Through the house, still more impossible."

He took into consideration the door which opened out on the terrace. It was at the end of a corridor which was between the office and Cantelme's study. From this corridor a spiral staircase went up to the next floor. All this was separated from the entrance vestibule by a door with a bell. It will be remembered that Pingré had taken this in at once. He thought of it now again.

"The thief could not have entered or gone out without the clerk's hearing him. And Moreuil was there . . . unless . . . But no, why would Moreuil have an accomplice? If he is up to stealing, he has stolen alone, as Cantelme believes . . . All the same, that confession, the communion, that revolt of the mother, risking the lawsuit! The restitution settled everything . . . that is if . . . No. Her attitude was genuine . . . Genuine? . . . Yes, with her. On his side there is still the confession . . . That must count, a confession. Cantelme says well; it is a fact, *the fact*. It is as if we had seen that boy open the drawer and take the notes. To hunt for anything else is to lose one's time. Let us stick to the confession and let us charge him with the crime before the proper authorities."

As he was about to leave the garden he lifted up his head mechanically, to look at a little turret at one of the angles of the ancient mansion which was one of its peculiarities. He noticed that between one of the slits of this sort of a watch tower he himself was being watched, by someone who at once drew back. This movement was a very quick one but not quick enough to prevent

Pingré from recognizing in the face pressed against the old greenish pane that of Edmund Cantelme, his godson and the son of the notary, the law student home for his Easter vacation. This round room was used as a library. The boy was in it. Nothing more natural than this glance into the garden between two intervals of reading. But by an automatic play of his thoughts, the image of the young man looking at him and then disappearing so quickly inserted itself in the web of the judge's reasoning.

"Why did he go away instead of opening the window and speaking to me? Is he afraid of me?"

In this question was already a suspicion, still indistinct, which grew more definite when the judge at last left the house. It was in the morning, and Cantelme's servant, whose wife was the concierge, was just finishing sweeping the vestibule and the pavement. He had been busy at this work when the notary and the judge had crossed the threshold twenty minutes earlier.

"Monsieur Edmund has come in, hasn't he?" Pingré asked him.

"A quarter of an hour ago," the man replied.

"At the same time as Monsieur Cantelme?" asked the judge, following instinctively an examination of which, however, he did not see the end.

"Just after you both," said the servant.

A question on the judge's lips, on the direction from which he had come, was not spoken. He looked down the street to the left, where he and his friend had been walking a few minutes before. He saw a new picture in his mind: the young man seeing the silhouettes of his godfather and his father, and walking more slowly. Why? Still guided

by instinct and, by irresistible steps from hypothesis to hypothesis, to an unverified supposition, Pingré added another:

"Why? Because he was afraid, as when at the window . . . Fear of what? Fear of me."

One by one, several minor facts, unnoticed at the time, came back to the magistrate's memory; certain reserves of Edmund since his return to Riom; his emaciation, his paleness, signs of fatigue which his indulgent mother had attributed to too great assiduity to his studies; finally during these last days, and especially since the theft, a strange embarrassment, the sudden cessation of his visits to his godfather. When at school he had shown a pretty talent for drawing, which he had given up, or nearly, for years, and for which his infatuation had returned. With the pretext of making some sketches, at first in the suburbs, then of an ancient and celebrated church, that of Mozat, a suburb of Riom, he had disappeared during the morning and a part of the afternoon. These indications fitted in so well with the ideas which had flashed into the mind of the judge, that he brought them together, in spite of himself, into a construction at which he was immediately horrified. He liked to say of himself with a kind of proud good-nature: "I am only a criminal court magistrate, but I am one from the top of my head to the soles of my feet. I think as a judge; I feel as a judge; I breathe as a judge; I collect as a judge." This was to justify through his profession his mania of mineralogy. "Down to bed-rock, everywhere and always, that is my motto," he would say. In a leap of intuition, he saw Edmund in Paris, tempted by gambling and losing a big sum which he had

promised to pay, or contracting debts for a mistress, leaving for his vacation, with the longing for this woman and the terror of a debt to confess; then this same Edmund in the garden, in front of his father's study, seeing the keys in the drawer. The notary had the habit when he received sums of money of shutting them in his desk if he were busy. Not till evening then did he put them in a safe. The son knew of this habit.

"I am dreaming," the judge said to himself, as he shook his head now growing gray, in order to exorcise this nightmare. "Edmund a thief? No! No! No! And the confession of the other, the confession, the confession," he kept repeating; "what shall I do about it?"

Now other pictures came to him: the sick man in his bed, imitating the scene of the theft before his frightened mother, then his retraction so impressive that it had convinced this woman. Because to admit, as did Cantelme, that Madame Moreuil had been acting a part in her second visit—to this also Pingré said no, and again no. His curiosity was so strongly aroused that he now hastened his step to get home the sooner and to put in at once the notary's charge. He could then proceed to an immediate examination, and learn . . . . But if the young man were innocent? What a drama this inquiry would be for him and for his mother! Seated before the bit of paper on which the notary had written his denunciation, a sudden scruple seized the judge. He sat there immovable, asking himself if he couldn't find some means of unravelling this enigma before letting it go too far. Gervais Moreuil pretended not to remember the confession which had slipped out during his delirium? Was such

forgetfulness possible? This question brought another in its train of general application: is it possible that one in delirium can accuse himself wrongly of an act of which in his lucid moments he sees himself suspected?

"I must consult a doctor," thought Pingré, "but which?" And the familiar exclamation of the Auvergnese peasants with whom he talked in his walks came to his lips: "Of course! Pacotte."

## IV.

A TRAIN left at half past ten. The judge had twelve minutes to reach the station. At eleven o'clock he was at Clermont, walking with the brisk step of a mountaineer, towards Rue du Port, where the old practitioner lived. Though he had passed his eightieth year, he was still active, due to a hygiene that had become proverbial in the city. His feet shod in heavy boots with a triple sole which he always wore, even in the house, his long thin torso clad in a coat of brown cloth with velvet revers, which was his uniform, his small mobile head of a bald eagle emerging from a white stock wound twice below the soft points of his shirt collar, his sharp eyes behind his great round spectacles—this fantastic personage was just finishing his frugal noonday repast when Pingré entered.

"I see that you have come," he said to the judge, "to kill two birds with one stone: it is lecture day at the Academy of Clermont, and you profit by that to consult Doctor Pacotte. If you would eat as he does you would not have need of him."

And he pointed to the dish of macaroni which, with his two boiled eggs, dry biscuits or dried fruit,

made up his almost daily menu. His greeting into which he had put a flavor of chaffing good humor, was mitigated by his piercing glance, still more inquisitive when Pingré had replied:

"To be sure. There is a meeting at the Academy . . . I had forgotten it."

Then, laughing, himself:

"I haven't eaten much more than you to-day."

And in the same tone of jovial cordiality:

"It is not as a patient that I have rung at your door. I have had to come to Clermont on a business of slight importance. As you say, the



idea came to me to kill two birds with one stone. I wanted to consult you about a piece of work which I intend to communicate to your very academy."

Pacotte's eyes flashed with astonishment, which the judge did not fail to see. He had all at once realized that the doctor, whether directly or indirectly, was familiar with the Gervais Moreuil's case, and that he belonged to the old school which practices the religion of the secret confessional. There was no doubt but that he attributed the presence of his visitor to the real cause. No doubt either but that he would meet the question regarding the words pronounced before him by his patient with the most complete silence. This awoke suddenly in the magistrate his own professional pride. He too had a secret to keep, since the case had not been opened, and he had not summoned Pacotte

either as witness or as expert. And at the same time he had a victory to win—to make that mouth speak that in repose was so tightly closed. He had, with that curious agility of imagination belonging to the police, immediately discovered the way. The allusion to the Academy of Clermont, of which both he and the old doctor were members, had shown him.

"Yes," he continued, "a paper on evidence."

Pacotte's pupils had become as dull as the ground-glass window-panes, which this lover of hygiene used to temper the light in his dining room in order to spare his sight.

"Good," he remarked simply. "It is the turn of you youngsters to collaborate in our Bulletin . . . I have just finished," he continued. "Excuse me."

He went into his bedroom without closing the door, and Pingré could hear him brushing his teeth with the conscientiousness he gave to all the minor details of his health. When he came back, he said:

"Eight times a day, morning, evening, before and after each of the three meals . . . And you see."

He opened his mouth in a smile which showed a set of teeth intact despite his years.

"Chewing is half of digestion," he added sententiously, then opening another door with a ceremonious gesture:

"Come into my study for your consultation. Miette will bring you coffee, real coffee, mocha like Voltaire's."

And when the servant, with her Auvergnese bandeau, only a little less aged than her master, had put down on a stand the cups containing the precious beverage, in the study

whose high windows looked out on a cold and sombre garden, he said:

"Just smell this aroma, smell it, smell it. It isn't either chicory or beans. This coffee has not lost any of its caffeine . . . My recipe? I have it roasted in the stove, as do the Turks, and not in one of your roasters in which you can't regulate the degrees of heat . . . I do not offer you anything to smoke. Between nicotine and Doctor Pacotte there is a mortal antipathy . . . Sugar? Cane sugar, of course. Pure, eh? I will give you the address of the grocer at Nantes . . . Are you comfortable now, as the English say? Good! Now tell me your business. Although I don't see very clearly what light a doctor can throw upon a subject upon which he is incompetent . . ."

Then, looking Pingré in the face, he said:

"You are familiar with the Hippocratic oath? We haven't even the right to break it and to bear witness when there is a question of a criminal operation to be punished, if we have gained our knowledge as a physician."

"I know that," said the judge, "but my paper is on the *critique* of testimony, and I am now making a study of the kind of individuals whom you call in your psychology, I believe, *auto-accusers*."

"Auto-accusation?" replied Pacotte, drinking his coffee slowly. "That is very simple: a morbid person conceives certain melancholy ideas, of ruin, vague persecution, of poisoning, of dishonor. Let him consider himself the cause of his own unhappiness, and he comes to the point of imaginary culpability."

"But how may one know if this culpability is imaginary?"

"How can one know that a madman is a madman?" said the

doctor. "By sending him to us."

"Then the testimony of an auto-accuser does not count with you?"

"No, since he is a sick man, speaking in a kind of dream."

"But Lady Macbeth," said the judge; "she, too, talked in a dream, yet she spoke the truth."

A look of reserve passed over Pacotte's face and a glance which signified: "All you want in the scientific and literary field, my dear Pingré, all you want, but no further, you know."

He put down his cup and walked over to the bookcase. He took out a volume whose calf binding dated from the Restoration, and fingering its pages, said:

"Let us study this text a bit. . . . It astonishes you that a physician should have a copy of Shakespeare? You see, in our profession everything is useful . . . Good; here we are:

*Act V. Scene 1—Dunsinane. A Room in the Castle. Lady Macbeth, a Waiting Gentlewoman, the Doctor.*

*Doctor . . . Infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge  
their secrets.*

What a splendid statement, and which proves the infallible divination of genius! *Infected*—notice that word. An auto-accuser is nothing else than that: a brain intoxicated by infectious microbes and which functions badly."

"Yet Lady Macbeth . . ." the judge insisted.

"Well? Lady Macbeth is a sick person who sees on her hand a non-existing spot of blood."

"On account of a crime."

"So be it. But don't let us go any further."

After a moment of silence Pacotte again looked directly at the judge, and emphasizing his words, said:

"If I had the right to speak in an action brought against Lady Macbeth, and had not attended her, I should say: 'These phrases spoken in an attack of delirium prove one thing only—that a deed has been done which has made a violent impression on her. Confessions made in this state of mental disorder should be accepted merely as information regarding the patient's preoccupations.' . . . Insist on this point in your paper, if you wish it to be scientific. It is through facts, and objectively, that evidence should be checked up."

"But in the case of Lady Macbeth," Pingré insisted, "what would you call the objective verification?"

"That which bears on the circumstances first of all. Was the crime of which she is accused committed under the circumstances which make it seem probable that she took part in it? Was it in harmony with her character to have taken part in it? Here is where heredity, education, circumstances, age, and the past come in. Does she know that she is suspected? If no, the confession in delirium takes on a enormous value. Because then the obsession emerges from the very depth of her thought. If she does, the confession may become a presumption of innocence. It is the proof that she cannot bear the shame of this accusation."

"It seems to me," objected the judge, "that then she ought to protest, exactly the contrary."

"And what do you make of delirium?" the doctor asked. "It is a cloudy conglomeration of phantoms which envelop the sick person. He no longer distinguishes between them and himself; he becomes these phantoms. When he learns that he is suspected he pictures vividly to himself the consequences of these

suspicions: he sees himself arrested, tried, condemned. It is no longer possible to disassociate his real personality from that which his accusers attack, and he confesses the crime which he has not committed. Do you remember the witch who was burned during the Middle Ages in Clermont, about whom our confrère André read us such an interesting paper at the Academy? She confessed her presence at a witches' Sabbath which could not have been anything but an hallucination. That meant burning alive. She knew that, but she was delirious and confessed to an act which she had never committed, and which caused her death. . . . The case is very complete. You may say that she retracted later. Yes, but how? Declaring that she had never made this confession. Torture couldn't wring a confession out of her the second time. At this, you will recall, the ancient chronicler was indignant. He did not know that this total forgetfulness is the rule after delirium. When the waiting gentlewoman asked Lady Macbeth next morning: 'How did the Queen sleep?' she certainly replied, 'Very well.'"

"But would not this forgetfulness have been simulated?"

"Scarcely possible. Simulations of this kind presuppose scientific knowledge of mental diseases. It is, however, possible, and I return to my principle: the objective search, that of character first of all. A deceiver does not deceive only once."

"Nevertheless, characters do change. There is such a thing as a first crime."

"Certainly," said Pacotte. "It is your business to make an objective search for what astronomers call 'a disturbant,' the star which produces a deviation in the orbit of another star. Then"—he laughed

his silent little laugh—"you need diagnosis. But diagnosis is intelligence in co-ordinating details. When a man tells you that he has the feeling that his finger is dead, cramps in the calves of his legs, trouble in keeping himself warm, these slight signs do not mean anything to you. To me they reveal nephritis just as surely as if I had cut my good man up and seen with my eyes his kidney, red, hardened and inflamed."

"But," he concluded, looking at the clock, "it is past noon. I must take my siesta. You know that I lie down for an hour at this time every day, without sleeping. At two o'clock I shall be at the lecture at the Academy. Shall I see you there?"

"No," said Pingré; "I must return to Riom as soon as possible to finish up an investigation."

"That's good," said Pacotte. "You are like me. You think of the anxiety of your accused just as I think of that of my patients. I never keep them waiting. Well, good-by. I must make a search in these old books"—and he pointed with his old, wrinkled hand to his book-cases—"to see if I can't find some good texts for your paper. I have there the two volumes of Esquirol, of 1838—and the *Medical-Philosophical Treatise* of Pinel, of 1808. They were not written yesterday, but those men were clinicians, and the clinic does not go out of date. That is where it differs from theories. Good-by, good-bye. I wish you a successful investigation, *rapid and just.*"

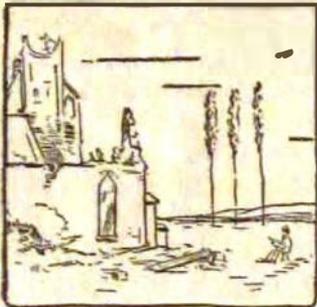
## V

"THE dear, good man!" thought the judge, half an hour later, in the train which was carrying him back to

Riom. "I made him talk all the same," he thought with a singular satisfaction. "All that he told me about Lady Macbeth he was telling me about Gervais Moreuil. And his last words: *successful investigation, rapid and just*, what can they mean if not that he does not consider him guilty, and that the confessions of his delirium simply prove the shock which his master's accusation produced?" And Pingré continued to repeat to himself: "He does not believe him guilty! He is a fine clinician and has insight . . . I hadn't been there a minute before he knew the reason of my visit. Still when he talks about confessions which are not confessions, what is that if not a theory, and the most arbitrary kind of one?"

He felt a growing antagonism against an affirmation so upsetting to his mental habits. "But let us accept his theory," he concluded, "and let us procede according to his method, objectively, and think of the circumstances, as he says." He tried to apply his mind to this analysis. He saw again in imagination the study of the notary, the desk, the drawer, then the window, the garden terrace and, by an inevitable association of ideas, Edmund. The suspicion that awoke so suddenly in him at the disappearance of the young man now came back to him. Was it possible, however, that with a character which he, his godfather, had always found so loyal, this boy could have robbed his father? But the "disturbant"? What method should he adopt to bring the truth to light? Should he make inquiries about Edmund's relations in Paris? Why not about Moreuil's speculations on the exchange? In spite of his affections, his desires, even of his resistance to the physician's suggestion, the in-

stinct of the judicial bloodhound was leading the judge on the right scent. It was necessary to act quickly. This evening, to-morrow morning at the latest, Cantelme would come back to ask him how far he had got with his indictment. But why not communicate his suspicions about Edmund to Cantelme himself, who could make a search of his son's room? Yes, but by what right could he, merely for an impression still very vague, inflict such sorrow, such an insult on a father? And then they might not find the bank notes even if Edmund had stolen them. If he had to pay a pressing gambling debt, or content a grasping mistress, as soon as he had the money it would have been sent away. It was easy to verify this.



for this week. If Edmund's name is there and he has sent a registered letter, that will be further proof."

This project had one advantage, that it meant immediate action, the only relief in crises of wearing uncertainty. The judge decided on it. When he got out of the train he went straight to the post office. In the Rue Grenier, in front of the post office, he stopped . . . He did not enter. A sort of professional scruple again seized and paralyzed him.

"Until the case has been entered I have not the right to act as the examining magistrate. To ask the postmaster for this information is to ask him to do something illegal."

"I'll go by the post office," said Pingré to himself, "and I'll ask the postmaster to let me see the record of registered matter

It meant, moreover—but was Pingré conscious of this in the back of his mind?—that it would awaken the curiosity of the postmaster, whom he knew to be perspicacious and something of a detective. It meant the risk that when he had gone, those searching eyes would also consult the records of the registered mail, and that they might come across the name of Edmund Cantelme coupled with the name of some woman living in the Latin Quarter. This shrinking from a mere possibility showed the judge how much he loved his god-son, this and the change of his ideas, which now made him set out toward the street in which the Moreuils lived. Wasn't it better, at least for the present, to put aside this suspicion about his godson, which rested only on an hypothesis, and first to run down the indisputable fact of the clerk's avowal? If Pacotte did not believe in the absolute veracity of this confession, he did not deny its importance. He admitted it was an indication, but of what? Of excitement to be explained equally by revolt and remorse. All the same he had an investigation to make on this point. How? By insisting that the mother question her son once more. As Pingré neared the widow's house he, who was usually so determined in his conduct as a judge, felt that for a second time he was incapable of going to the limit of his intention. It was too hard. The unfortunate woman must be suffering so. Again he stopped, as a moment before on the steps of the post office.

"The 'disturbant,'" he thought. "Pacotte was right. We are all influenced by them. It is the deviation of the star, but if the deviation makes the line of the orbit swerve, it does not destroy it. As I know Edmund, even supposing he should

have taken the two thousand francs, he is none the less a good-hearted boy. If he were guilty and knew that his father was suspecting Moreuil, he couldn't bear it. But if he is guilty he must realize that his father is trying to find his two thousand francs, and consequently, that he is suspecting someone . . . Or perhaps he thought that Cantelme would have put the two bundles of bank notes in his safe before going upstairs for dinner, and that he would not count them. Once in the safe, and mixed with the others, when would he notice the deficit? Not for several days, perhaps several weeks—too late. He would have to put the missing sum down to profit and loss, as they say. Yes, that was the secret of Edmund's calmness . . . His calmness? While waiting, he shuns us all. He is afraid. Let him learn that an innocent person will be accused — and his honour will awaken if he is guilty. From that line no 'disturbant' will make him deviate . . . But is he guilty? I shall read it in his eyes as soon as I talk to him—because I am going to talk to him."

And already he was on the way through the suburb, past the old church of Mozat, the ruins of a Benedictine abbey where are to be found the famous reliquaries of St. Calmin and St. Austremont. Twenty minutes' walk, and he was in front of the portico, with its twelfth-century arch. He was disappointed not to find the young man drawing there. Were those sketching hours in the venerable Riom sanctuary only an alibi? Pingré walked all round the church. Still nothing. He entered. The Roman capitals of the interior might have tempted the student's pencil . . . Edmund Cantelme was there, copying one of the

strangest of them, which represented naked men riding goats. The sound of the newcomer's steps on the pavement made him lift his head, and he recognized his godfather. He grew pale, then blushed, so violently that it was only too much in keeping with his retreat from the window a few hours before. He had received a shock. The judge also; this pallor and those blushes were the evidence. But he wanted to doubt still longer. Moreover, the evidence was not enough. The proof was needed.

"I did not know I should find you," he began. "Let's see your drawing." And, in a kindly tone, he said. "But, it's not bad at all. You are right to love this solid Roman Auvergnat . . . They have spoiled this church a little by covering the central nave with a Gothic vaulting. What artists those unknown architects of the middle ages were! It is here, or to Ennezat that I walk when I want to district my thoughts from real worries. To-day I have a big one. Do you guess what it is?"

"No," said the young man, bending again over his sketch. But his hand trembled a little and broke the point of his pencil on the paper.

"What? Your father hasn't told you?"

"What?" Edmund asked.

"About what happened last Tuesday. He was robbed, in his study, at half past five in the afternoon. A client brought him twenty thousand francs in two packages of one thousand franc notes pinned together. He put these packages in the right-hand drawer of his desk and went out with his client, forgetting that he had left the keys in the drawer. They talked for some time, and walked a hundred steps along the street, for a quarter of an hour,

perhaps. Your father came back, took up the bank notes to put them in the safe. He had counted them with his client. He counted them again, almost by chance, absent-mindedly. There were only eighteen. Now there was only one person who had been into the room, one person only . . ."

"Who?"

"The second clerk."

"Gervais Moreuil?" asked Edmund in a choking voice. "Is he suspected?"

"He is not suspected," the judge corrected; "he is known to be guilty. He had stayed in the office alone, I tell you, after his comrades had left, to file some documents. While your father and his client were talking in the street he entered the study to put those documents on the desk. Then when he left the house he did not stop to tell your father that he had finished his work. And we know that he had gambled on the Exchange. If he had not fallen ill at once with typhoid fever, he would be in prison already."

"In prison?" repeated the student, who no longer pretended to be drawing.

"Yes, your father's charge against him is in my hands. I am holding it only on account of that fever, in order to spare the invalid an emotion which might be fatal to him and to his poor mother. But when he has recovered—Law comes first, doesn't it? Would you believe it? At my age, after so many years of this, I ought to be hardened to emotions of this sort. Well, I'm not. I am miserable, yes, miserable, I do not exaggerate, at the thought that a young man, well born, well educated, son of an irreproachable father, whom I have known since he was that high, and so nice, with a mother like his, could have sunk so

low as to commit such a deed as burglary! It is a theft which doesn't even call for courage in danger. . . . And there's a boy lost. Condemned, that is the end of everything for him. Acquitted—anything is possible with a jury—means that he will have benefited by a bit of a doubt, but which will always leave something disgraceful sticking to him. He would have to leave Rome, give up his profession. How many such catastrophes have I seen in my professional life! This one, however, is too sad. It has thrown me into such a melancholy state that I was trying to escape from it by coming to Mozart. And then I ran across you, and you see! . . . I was wrong to talk to you. I have increased my sadness. . . . Well, good-by, my boy. I'll go on to Tournel. Mineralogy is my other remedy. I shall certainly find some interesting scoriae at the bottom of the volcano of Banniére."

## VI

"SO he is the guilty one!" the judge said to himself as he started on the walk he had just announced his intention of taking. "No longer any doubt. How he trembled when he saw me! And when I spoke of Moreuil how his face changed! All the same it was a proof that he has remained the sensitive boy I have known. His fault is an accident. Pacotte was right: in his life there is a 'disturbant.' Which is it, gambling, love? . . . Whatever it may be, why did he not confess at once? It was so simple . . . No, no, Monsieur Pingré, it was not so simple. I have just verified this by Moreuil; the impulsive confession does not count. It is the intended confession which is of value. Why? Because it is in harmony with the character.

That is the confession which wipes out the fault. It proves repentance.

Will Edmund repent? . . . Going the way I am, I make his return to Riom and his father easier. He saw me set off for Tournouel, and he will not be afraid of meeting me . . . His father? It will be hard for him to speak to his father. They have never understood each other very well, while I . . . Ah! if he were my son, he would never have committed such an action as that. 'I know my son,' how many times has he squelched me with that phrase when I was not of his way of thinking in regard to Edmund! All the same, his is such a splendid heart and he doesn't deserve this trouble . . . What time is it? Half past three . . . If Edmund had his bicycle he could be at Riom now. But did he have it? I should have noticed that, but I was only thinking of studying him. Monsieur Pingré, a good judge should have an eye for everything."

He did not make haste to return, obeying the curious law which compels us in certain anxieties to hold back the moment that we *shall know* the truth. It was as if by his absence he were giving his godson a little time for the awakening of his conscience. It was six o'clock and night was falling when he turned the key in the lock of his apartment. With a weary step he went into his study. Standing in front of the window, Edmund Cantelme was waiting for him! The judge gave a start at seeing him, and the emotion of this moment awakened in him again the deepest sources of tenderness.

"It is I, godfather," Edmund said simply in a choking voice.

"Well, my child!" . . . replied Pingré, not finishing his sentence. His voice, too, failed, and he started to look for the matches, saying in

order to get hold of himself, "You can't see here at all. Why didn't you ask for a lamp?"

"No, godfather, no light," the young man replied. "No light . . . Listen to me first . . . I have something to say to you." And then after a moment of silence: "Something very serious. It was I who stole the two thousand franc notes which my father lost. I have just put them on his desk, in full view, in an envelope. He must have found them by now. He will take back his charge . . . But I did not write anything on the envelope and didn't put anything in the envelope except the notes. He will take back his charge, but he may continue to suspect Gervais Moreuil . . . You, too, perhaps would have done the same if I hadn't confessed. Papa must know the truth. He must for the honor of this boy, for his future," and with a firm tone, "for my honor also. It is the only way by which I can repair the wrong I have done him. But, godfather, there is one thing I have not the strength to endure, an explanation with my father. You will tell him how it is, godfather. I beg you, I beseech you."

He joined his hands in a despairing gesture which the judge cut short by drawing him to him.

"Oh, godfather, how kind you are! *You* understand me. You will tell my father that I am ready to do anything to make up for it, but that if he doesn't want me to leave his house he must not talk to me. My mother, too—that will be hard. But she loves me so much . . . Papa loves me, too. I know it, I know it," he continued. "Only . . . But if he talks to me he will say words which will make me leave home . . . Oh, godfather, promise that you will persuade him not to talk to me. If

you love me, promise, promise . . ."

"Sit down," said Pingré, who was trembling also. In addition to the drama of the young man's remorse, he perceived another, one of those latent tragedies which family life too often develops, the irreducible and unhappy misunderstanding of two beings of the same blood who have never shown themselves to each other as they really are. He was only too aware that the father was jealous of his son's affection for his godfather . . . But he must know what "disturbant"—to use again Pacotte's words—had made the other deviate. "Yes," he insisted, "sit down!" Then, searching among the papers for the one on which the notary had written his denunciation, he tore it up in tiny pieces, saying to the young man who looked at him in amazement:

"That was the accusing document, the one I was to hand to the prosecuting attorney. Moreuil has nothing more to fear. Now, if you want me to do what you have asked me to, you must answer me. Have you gambled in Paris?"

"Never, godfather."

"Then you took the money for a woman?"

"Yes."

"It was she, then, who led you to do it, saying, 'Your father is a notary. Notaries are rich?'"

"No, godfather, no, no," interrupted the student. "She has nothing to do with it all."

"Nothing? She asked you for money."

"No, godfather."

"But you say that you stole for her! Once more and don't lie or . . . Answer, you live with her in Paris?"

"No, godfather . . . Oh! it is a simple story enough but one that has made me suffer so. My friend

is in business. I met her at the theatre. I spoke to her. She is a dress-maker. I saw her again. I fell in love with her, and I think she loves me. But she is a coquette. She has a good deal of admiration. She is ambitious, too. There is some one richer than I who is interested in her. Up to now she has held off, but at the end of the month she has a big bill falling due, one of exactly two thousand francs. I was afraid that when I went back she would say to me, 'You and I love each other, my dear, but one must live, you know.' After I left for my holidays I could think of nothing but that. A hundred times, godfather, I have been on the point of telling you my story and borrowing two thousand francs from you. And then I drew back, thinking, 'He'll tell it all to my father, and they won't let me go back to Paris.' I was in the garden the other afternoon, eating my heart out. I happened to pass in front of the window of papa's study. It was half open, the room was empty, the keys in the drawer . . . Then . . ."

He stopped. The shame of this memory was too great.

"Then," said the judge, "you ran to get one of the wooden chairs from the garden-house, to raise you up to the sill. It was for that reason that, seeing me go and come between the garden-house and that window, you were afraid, wasn't it?" . . . And even at the moment when pity shook his heart he felt a slight professional satisfaction in verifying the correctness of his deductions.

He walked for a few moments up and down the room, then stopping in front of the armchair in which Edmund was seated, he said solemnly:

"I will do what you ask. Yes, I

will make your father agree never to talk to you about your fault, but you will write a letter which I shall dictate and swear to me on your honor—on your new-found honor—that you will act according to what is written in that letter. That will be for me the proof—the only proof—and I will not admit any other, you hear me, that you will be yourself again. When I have dictated this letter to you, if you find the undertaking too hard, we will tear it up. But I won't have anything more to do with it. I shall do my duty in telling your father, and you will settle with him."

"Dictate, godfather," the young man said, taking a sheet of paper with a firm hand.

"What is the name of this woman?" asked the judge.

"Charlotte Dardenne."

"Write, Mademoiselle Dardenne."

"But?" Edmund asked, his pen in the air.

"Mademoiselle Dardenne," the godfather repeated in a tone so imperious that the godson obeyed this time.

"You will find enclosed the two thousand franc notes which you need to meet the bill of which you spoke to me. I am sending them by registered mail with a blank receipt. Do not trouble to reply to me. My father has decided to keep me in his office, to take the place of a clerk whom he is losing.

I shall not return to Paris.

"I beg to remain,

"Yours truly,

"Sign . . . Now the address. Here is an envelope."

Once more the pen of the guilty youth was suspended in air.

"Shall I tear up the letter?" asked the judge, extending his hand to take the sheet.

"No, godfather," said the young man.

"I will seal the letter and send it," Pingré said, "with the notes. You will repay me this money later . . . Lift up your head, boy. You are an honest man for the rest of your life. Go home now, and dine as if nothing had happened. I will see your father this evening after dinner; either he will come here, as is likely, to announce to me the restitution of the money, or I shall go to him. I shall be able to find the words which will induce him not to talk to you."

"And Moreuil?" said the young man.

"Your father can't take him back. You must not come in contact with him. It would be too painful for you. But we will find a place for him. I will make it my business. Go, now; good-by, my child. We must not be sentimental. It is not healthy, and it is health which you need"—he pointed to the letter—"not to weaken."

"I shall not weaken," said Edmund. "I feel too great a relief in being free and having confessed."

# Flies—And A Wasp

By

H. GRANVILLE-BARKER

*An English Sketch*



*Among the best known of English actors, dramatists and producers is Harley Granville-Barker, born in London in 1877 and remotely of Italian ancestry. It was he who first presented Shaw to the theatre-goers of London, acting many Shavian roles himself. He became definitely associated with the repertory movement, and the Court and Savoy Theatres under the Vedreene-Barker management played no small part in the history of the London stage a few years back. He visited the United States in 1915, with his company. His own plays have been very significant in the history of the English drama. His work has sensitiveness, restraint, and remarkable mastery of form.*

THE flies are a great nuisance this autumn. When the sun warms the window of my workroom they swarm on it, buzzing and dancing, a perfect orchestra, a perfect ballet of them. I find Scrubb's Cloudy Ammonia a specific. Make little pools of it all about, and they will fall in and—if one may judge of a fly's feelings—they do not suffer very long. A flop, a few twists, a wallow, a little kicking, and it is all over. They cannot, of course, read the legend on the bottle standing near; "Try it in your bath," or the irony might be accounted torture.

And at least one is more merciful than Nature; man for all his wickedness is apt to be. The wasps have fine sport amongst them. I watched one yellow gentleman for a whole morning. He bagged twenty at least. In he would fly with his deeper, angrier, aeroplane buzz, and set to work without delay. He'd charge at his little black prey on the window frame, miss once or twice, but at the third try for certain knock the chap down, falling with him and

on him, so it seemed. I saw no fly escape after that. The wasp clasps it close, rolls over and over with it, curving his queer jointed body for a stronger grip. Once the fly gets to know it is beaten, the wasp takes his time. He rights himself and adjusts his victim comfortably. Then he proceeds with the utmost precision to mutilate. He breaks off a leg, snips off a wing, finally, by a neat stroke, the little brown head falls. Then he sails away with the corpse, out of the window. He carries it, no doubt, home to Mrs. Wasp and all the little wasps; I am sure he is an excellent husband and father.

The particular sportsman that I watched for a morning was constant to a few square inches of window pane and of sill, which was quite covered in the end with the *dissecta membra* of flies; a queerly pathetic sight. For they don't look, these little scraps and ends, like the limbs of creatures so lately alive. It is as if, rather, a fly family had emptied its hall cupboard of sticks, hats and mackintoshes, as if there had been looting in fly-town.

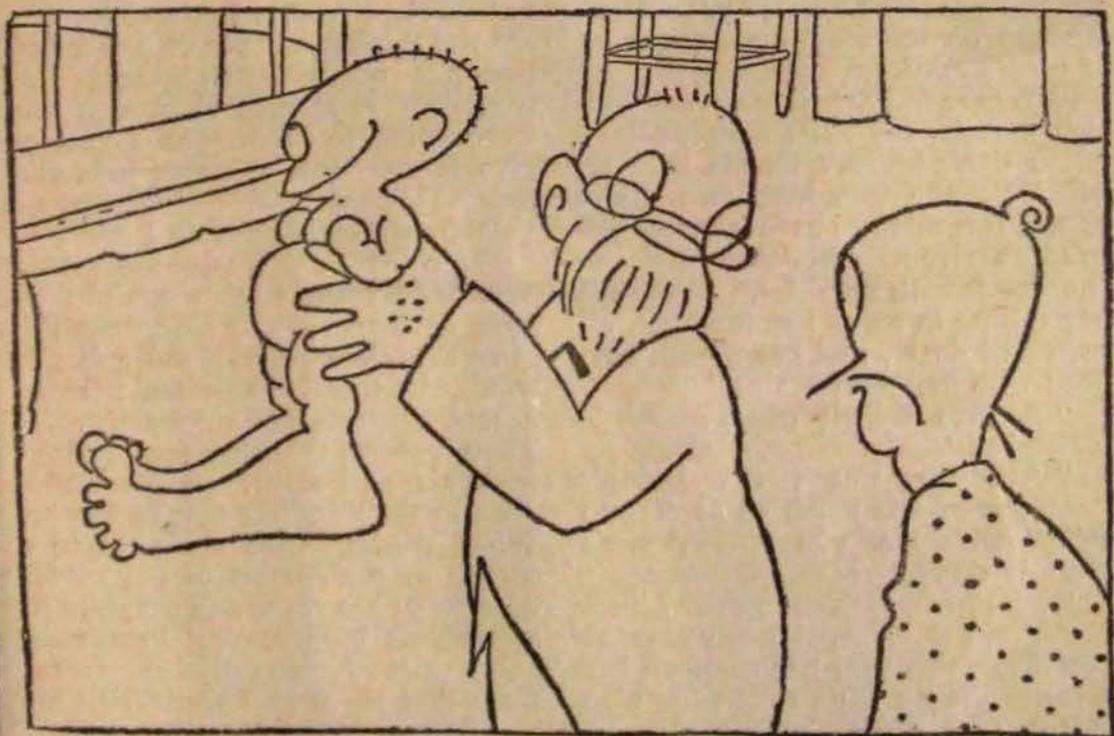
I will confess that, as I wanted to be rid of the flies and the wasp was doing me such good service, I watched him, if with disgust, yet with approval. But at the end of the morning a foolish sentimentality attacked me. Such an ugly, so callous a brute, so busy! The clever, careful mangling of the delicate little creatures was too revolting! And I felt a call to deal out poetic justice. I had gone to the window to make a few more ammonia pools. There was my hunter dismembering his twentieth fly. I watched him for half a minute, then gave him a direct dose from the bottle.

He didn't die easily. The fly was already dead. I had done it no good. I hadn't intended to. Pity

and disgust both, as I stood then with poised bottle, had given place to the intoxication of power. A very slight surge of it truly, devoting one wasp to destruction! But my victim (mine now!) put such force into his struggles, contorted himself so demoniacally, that for the second or two he seemed morally to assume gigantic proportions, and I measured myself up to godhead to match him. I was Moloch or Bel or one of the other Baalim. And he in his grotesque death agony looked like—it suddenly came home—a savage cartoon of a great Prussian soldier being gassed. I know one thing. If there's any God feels as I did for those few seconds, he certainly ought not to be worshipped.

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THE FUNCTION CREATES THE ORGAN



—Oh, Doctor, what feet! How do you account for them?

—He comes of a family of football players.

(Bagaria in *El Sol*, Madrid)

# Yanoulé's Broken Heart

By

GUELFO CIVININI

From the Italian by Ethel Mather Bagg



*Guelfo Civinini was born in Leghorn in 1873. At a very early age he made his debut in journalism on the old newspaper "La Riforma." In 1907 he became for a time the editor of the famous Corriere della Sera. He has also been foreign correspondent for some of the best Italian newspapers. He has travelled extensively in Europe and in Northern Africa. During the War he was correspondent first in Libya, and then at the Italian front, where, despite the fact that he was a journalist, he took part in many battles and was decorated for bravery. He has now abandoned journalism and is giving his time completely to his literary production. He is the author of several volumes of verse, three novels, and a number of plays.*

"WHERE'S Yanoulé? Isn't she here?"

Remo Sanna looked around eagerly as he stepped from his car on entering the garden of the Villa Bice.

"Where has my little savage hidden herself, my little fiancée?"

"I don't know," Donna Bice replied. "She was here two hours ago, a few minutes before your telegram arrived. Probably she's in the woods with the dogs. We'll see her falling in on us any moment, all torn and dusty, and her mouth covered with mulberry stains."

"Always a little gypsy? Little Yanoulé?"

"Always. But . . . I don't know; even too much so at certain moments. Do you know, she's already fourteen?"

"I know. Has she grown?"

"Yes, I think so. In any case, as you'll see, this year has changed her a lot. She's a little taller, but also thinner; or if not exactly thinner, she's slighter, more . . . supple. Yes, there's already the little woman budding."

"Dear little thing! I still see her with those thin straight active legs . . ."

"Oh! not so thin any more . . . Do you think it was possible to make her put on long stockings? A tragedy. It seemed as though she were going to be ill. So I had to give it up. But I assure you, it's indecent."

"She's a child, Donna Bice."

"A child . . . Yes. Yes. But a strange child. She's a child as long as there is sunshine, and she can rove about in the sun and the wind, with towzled hair, and her two beasts, possessed of the devil . . . Then it seems that she is intoxicated with air and light. But towards evening she's not like that any more. When twilight falls she goes to a corner of the garden or sits at the window of her room and the child of a moment before, the disheveled, noisy girl is already far away from that silent and absorbed little creature who does not reply when she is spoken to."

"She's probably tired from playing so much."

"No. It's something else. It's the child who is already thinking of new things. There are little signs that show . . . closing of the eyelids, an unconscious gesture, pulling down her skirt over her naked knees or trying to adjust her hair on the nape of her neck. Sudden tender outbursts . . . unusual impatience . . . certain ironical outbursts and sudden silences . . . and then deep melancholy concentrated in her expression . . . A strange disquieting type, dear Sanno."

"Perhaps you exaggerate. All children around fourteen are like that. The chrysalis is forming its wings."

"Yes, I know. I know. But she differently, more than the others. To me, at least . . . And in fact . . ."

Donna Bice interrupted herself with a little tender, sad smile.

"Yes?"

"You know . . . I fear her father. She resembles him so much. Too much. She adores him. An adoration born of unlimited admiration. He is her model for all men. Do you know that when he is away and he writes to her she doesn't even want me to read his letters?"

"Really? A strange child!"

"However there is another whom she admires almost as much as her father . . . And that is you; you, like Giorgio, are a man surrounded by a halo of . . . yes, in short, like Giorgio . . ."

"Oh, Donna Bice . . ."

"Yes, indeed . . . one of those delightful people quite unsuited to be the husband of a little quiet woman like me . . . And moreover, you have your great heroic reputation . . . You are the man of the tent under the stars, who has ascended equatorial rivers, who has

lived among savages, who has brought her from the East this little gypsy name of which she is so proud . . . Oh, my poor little Yanoulé! I also can call her only by that name, now. It's very sweet, the name of your little gypsy, but it makes me tremble for her. I fear so much that she will be Yanoulé in life instead of little Jane."

They had reached the porch covered with crimson rambler roses.

"Reassure yourself, Donna Bice. Yanoulé will be perfect. What you have given her will make her proud of herself; Giorgio has added what she needs to be gay."

"May it be thus, friend of mine!"

She rang the bell.

"Don't you want to go upstairs? Aren't you tired?"

"Not at all, Donna Bice. I've been barely half an hour in the car on an excellent road, not even a speck of dust."

"Then would you like some tea?"

"Yes, indeed, thank you."

The servant was waiting for orders.

"Bring the tea John . . . Do you know where Yanoulé is?"

"The Signorina came in just a minute ago from the orchard. She asked if there were any visitors and when she heard that Signor Sanna was here, she ran off to her room . . . She was all covered with mud. She looked as though she had fallen into a bog. She called Serafina to help her dress."

"All right . . . tell her to hurry."

Then turning to Remo Sanna.

"She is dressing up for you, the little coquette . . ."

"For me! I'm sorry," Sanno said, laughing. "I would have liked to see her looking like a



gypsy."

"I told you. The sun has already set. Now comes the little woman of twilight."

Remo Sanna went out into the garden and called up to the windows of the first floor:

"Yanoulé! Yanoulé!"

One of the shutters opened and an astonished little pale face with two big deep black eyes appeared in the opening.

"Good day . . . or rather good evening . . . Excuse me . . . Welcome back . . . I'm coming right away!"

And she disappeared.

"Yanoulé! Little gypsy!"

Is this the way you greet your fiancé?" Sanna called out, laughing. "Well, then, no ring!"

There was no reply for a moment. Then in a rapid burst of laughter she called out: "Really? You remembered? I'm coming! I'm coming at once. No, no, Serafina, how stupid, not like that!"

Sounds of much confusion and the noise of broken glass.

"What is it?" Donna Bice called out. "What have you broken?"

Silence. Then Serafina called out timidly:

"Signora, the powder box"

Donna Bice, smiled, shaking her head and repeated to Sanna.

"The little coquette."

Sanna, turning toward



the window, said: "Shame! Gypsies don't powder."

Yanoulé replied from the room:

"Certainly they powder . . . with the dust from the streets . . . But our streets are too clean, and . . . No, Serafina. The lilac one . . . Signor Remo!"

"Yes?"

"Thanks for your postcard . . . It came from Syria, didn't it?"

"It did."

"Oh! Don't pull so . . . Is Syria beautiful?"

"Yes, very."

"Who knows how many . . . Yanoulés . . ."

"No, none. There aren't any."

"Really? Is that so? H'm!"

"Shame on you!" murmured the mother.

"She's delicious," murmured Remo Sanna.

"There! I'm ready! I'm coming down!" called out the little gay voice.

Remo Sanna and Donna Bice re-entered the veranda.

"What did you bring her, Sanna? A ring?"

"Oh, a trifle. A little Syrian ring. Just nothing."

"You are very kind."

"I promised it to her last year. Am I not her old fiancé?"

"Sanna, Sanna! You are never old; you men are all alike."

"As fiancé of a child, however, you will admit . . . Winter and spring . . ."

A barking of dogs interrupted them. Yanoulé approached running, with Blitz and Rodomonte on a leash. They were jumping all over her, biting her legs, the long, straight legs with small, shapely ankles, incased in the black stockings, in the hated long stockings, under the short skirt of a little girl. She came panting, not pale any

more, but with her smiling face suffused with pink and with a dash of powder left under one eye. The dogs growled at the stranger. Yanoulé gave Blitz, the greyhound, a kick, crying out:

"Quiet, beasts! He's a friend."

She greeted Remo Sanna with a strong handshake, saying:

"Welcome home!"

Remo Sanna gazed silently for a moment at the graceful, slim and straight little person who stood in front of him and who was looking up at him with her deep, bright eyes full of joy and curiosity under her puckered brow. Yes, there was something changed; the face, which had become pale again seemed to be thinner and foreshadowed the woman of tomorrow. But today she was still the child, the little wild Yanoulé, the gypsy who had combed her hair in a hurry, the little make-believe fiancée, who could still be kissed on her tawny hair by this man of thirty-nine. He bent over her to kiss her on the forehead, pressing the little hands in his and murmuring: "Dear, dear little Yanoulé."

Remo Sanna had now been a guest at the Villa Bice for a week. Giorgio Lanzi had returned and had forced his friend to remain. The autumn days passed quickly and happily, in motoring and long, friendly chats in the garden. Yanoulé would burst in upon them with her dogs, like a meteor, panting and red in the face, when she was tired of roving through the grove of chestnut trees hunting chipmunks.

"Good evening, Father! Good evening, Mother! Good evening, Signor You!"

She never called him either Signor Remo, or Signor Sanna, but just "Signor You . . ."

She would go into the house and

re-appear, all tidy, with her hair done up, long stockings, shoes shined, a few dashes of powder carelessly left under her eyes and in her ears.

One evening when she stayed in her room longer than usual, Remo noticed that she had attempted to manicure her nails, and when she got up later, tottering with sleep, to go to bed, he bent over her and kissed the nails which were too red. Yanoulé made a face at him and ran away.

One evening after returning to the Villa Bice with the Lanzi and the child from a long drive, which had been prolonged for three hours by a blowout in the mountains, Remo Sanna said goodnight to his hosts and retired to his room. He lit the light and stood before the mirror, where he remained looking at himself carefully. After a minute's examination he murmured:

"Winter and Spring."

Turning around, he added: "No. Nothing could be more stupid."

He walked up and down the room with furrowed brow.

"Worse than stupid! Wretched."

The severity of the word shocked him—into a laugh.

"No. Only stupid. Nevertheless, I must leave."

He reflected some more and repeated: "Go away, and at once." He searched in his pocket and brought out a carnation all crushed and faded.

"My poor dear little one!"

He attempted to smile again, but could not. He sat down in front of the desk, rested his head on his arms and chewed the stalk of the faded carnation, trying to understand something about himself and what had happened to him.

It was on the way back from the mountains. The chauffeur had re-

paired the damage, the motor had started up again. Giorgio, in front, was driving. He sat behind with Donna Bice and Yanoulé in between. It was dark and cold. They had had to take out the rugs and cover themselves. Then Yanoulé said she was sleepy.

"Lean against my shoulder, little one, and sleep."

She had rested her head on him and closed her eyes. But she did not sleep. After a while he leaned over to look at her: her eyes were wide open and bright, too bright. She was crying in silence. He had felt the little heaving of veiled sobs against his arm. The car was running along noisily on the hard road.

"What is the matter, Yanoulé?" he murmured to her quietly, surprised and moved. She had not answered. She had nestled closer to him, had felt for his hand, had squeezed it tight, tight . . . Why? Why?

"What is the matter?" he had asked again. And she had squeezed his hand even more, as though begging him not to make himself heard. He did not know what to think. A sudden bewilderment, a sweet emotion, sorrowful, indefinable had come over him. He had endeavored to withdraw his hand; it was restrained as in a little vice: and he felt so moved, so stunned, so bewildered, that suddenly he noticed that he also was weeping. So for two hours, during all the drive back, his hand of forty years had remained prisoner of that little hand of spring. When they had almost reached the house he had felt that hand withdraw itself; then again seek his and place in it something—that carnation. . .

"Did you sleep well, Yanoulé?" her father asked her on descending from the car.

"Yes, very," she had answered, in a sleepy voice. She started towards her room swaying her head as though she were still tottering with sleep.

"It's incredible! It's incredible!" Remo Sanna now murmured, walking up and down the room, nervous and restless. "If I didn't have this carnation here, I would think I'd been dreaming . . . It's absurd! Inconceivable!"

He passed in front of the mirror; stopped again, looked for an instant at his face, marked by the wind of the sea and the desert; for an instant, he imagined the pale face of Yanoulé beside his; and he burst out laughing.

"No, it is too grotesque!" And he repeated: "I must leave."

At that moment he heard a slight rustling behind the windows. His room was on the ground floor and looked out on the garden. He ran to the window and tore it open. He saw a white form disappearing behind the veranda among the clusters of rambler roses.

"Yanoulé!" he called under his breath, his heart beating wildly.

No one replied. But the rambler roses opened up and the white form which was barely to be seen in the dark dropped to the ground. He thought she had fallen, leaped over the window-sill and ran to her. No, she was only crouching there to hide herself.

"Yanoulé!" he murmured. "What are you doing here? Why aren't you in bed? . . . Come, get up!"

Yanoulé did not reply; she remained on the ground, looking up at him, chewing a hanging twig, her black eyes mirroring the stars, and seeming darker and more lovely in the luminous pallor of the little face.

"Get up!" he repeated. He

offered her his hand. Yanoulé rose.

"Why did you go out?"

She shook her shoulders and blew away a leaf which had remained between her lips. "I always go out . . . I come to see the dogs . . ." she replied, looking absently at her left hand and playing with the gold circlet on her finger.

Remo Sanna was silent for a moment. Mechanically he placed a hand on her hair, caressing it and murmured: "Come, come, child . . . You must cure yourself."

"Of what?" she questioned, stupefied, raising her forehead under the caress, looking at him with eyes in which tears and smiles were trembling. "Why cure myself? Is it an illness?"

Remo Sanna did not know how to reply. A great melancholy suddenly descended on his heart; an immense pity for himself and for that queer little creature, all aglow with her innocent ardor.

"I was waiting for you . . . You returned . . . That's all," Yanoulé said quietly, looking elsewhere, adjusting her hair on the nape of her neck.

"You were waiting for me? Why?"

"You know," the child replied, gravely.

Remo felt two tears on his cheeks. He took both of Yanoulé's hands in his and without well knowing what he was saying, asked her:

"Why . . . do you think so much of me?"

"So much," the little voice replied without trembling.

"Oh poor, poor little Yanoulé! But it's absurd," burst out Remo Sanna, attempting to smile.

"Why?" the child said reflecting. "Don't I like Father very much?"

And you are like Father. Only, you are not Father . . ."

They remained looking at each other in silence. Then Yanoulé withdrew a step, stretched out her hand to Remo Sanna and murmured, laughing:

"Good night, child! Why do you cry? It's foolish!"

Once more becoming a little elf she made a face at him. An infinite tenderness, sorrowful, grieved, overcame Remo Sanna. He held the little hand for a moment, then took Yanoulé's head in his two hands and bent over to kiss her hair as was his custom. But Yanoulé lifted up her face and he felt her damp, fragrant mouth pass lightly over his arid lips . . .

One second. He opened his eyes again, stunned. Yanoulé was already far away. He was alone, in the dark garden, under the innumerable stars of that quiet autumn evening, holding in his heart the thrill of that absurd and divine hour.

He left the next day. He gave as an excuse his last journey about which the Geographical Society was urging him to write. And as Giorgio and Donna Bice seemed sad at his sudden departure, he promised to return; just so as to be able to hurry away. Yanoulé told him good-bye gaily, pulling his mustaches, and ran away with the dogs.

Two days later a letter of thanks arrived from him. Then nothing more for two weeks. One evening, the Lanzi were seated at dinner and another letter arrived. Giorgio opened it, and glanced through it: "Oh! oh! what news!" he suddenly exclaimed, "Remo Sanna is going to be married."

"Really" said Donna Bice, "Who is he marrying?"

"He doesn't say . . . Here, you read it."

He held out the letter to his wife and continued to peel a pear.

"What a surprise!" Donna Bice said, having read the letter. "But it's natural. He must be tired of that wandering life."

The discussion ceased. No one had noticed Yanoulé, who had left the table and thrown herself into an armchair.

"What's the matter, Yanoulé? Are you tired? You are a little pale this evening."

"I'm sleepy," the child answered quietly. "I'm cold, too."

"Really, it's beginning to be cold. And it looks as though a big storm were coming," said Donna Bice. "Go off to bed, dear."

"Yes, Mamma."

She arose and in a sleepy voice said good-night and went up to her room. Two hours later all in the Villa Bice slept, except Yanoulé, the little deserted fiancée. Her eyes were staring in the dark of her room which every moment the lightning lit up with vivid flashes. She was not crying; she was lying there, her head buried in the pillows, immovable, breathing heavily, and with great open fixed eyes, darker than the shadows of night, her long eyelashes hardly moving at the flashes of lightning. A burst of rain whipped the shutters violently. The foliage of the trees fluttered wildly in front of the pane. A window burst open. More vivid, blinding flashes broke the darkness, followed by a crash. The storm beat down on the lonely villa, on the trees in the garden, with a great noise of roaring, of hissing and howling.

Yanoulé sat up in bed, slipped from under the covers, remained immobile for a moment, straight and

supple in her nightgown, then began cautiously and lightly to move about the room which was lit up every second by the rapid lightning. She took a shawl from the cloakstand, wrapped herself in it, looked at the little ring on her finger, kissed it, opened the door and disappeared.

The storm was raging more and more violently. Yanoulé was already outside of the Villa—outside of the garden. She had climbed over the fence with her bare feet, wading in the rivulets, lashed by the cold squalls. Shivering in her very bones the little white shadow ran and ran, up the path on the mountain towards the little shrine of the Madonna, which had been struck by lightning the year before. The Madonna had been saved, because she was the Madonna. But Yanoulé thought that she would not be saved

that she was only a little broken-hearted creature, and she wanted, she wanted to die and for this reason she ran up there, to call the lightning, to call it down on her head.

She ran and ran and her feet were bleeding and torn by the thorns, scratched and cut by the stones. The chestnut trees rustled and crackled, lashed by the squalls. All the mountain howled. Two bolts rent the black sky zigzagging between the galloping clouds. On she ran, with the little wet shawl and nightgown

clinging to her, panting and trembling, her darkened eyes fixed on the empty space where the little shrine of the Madonna had stood.

She steadied herself against the wind, which, once she had left the shelter of the woods, whipped her with such fury that it seemed as though it wanted to carry her away. She fell on her knees in front of the image, cried out desperately: "Little Madonna, little Madonna

mine!" Then with convulsive agility she clambered up on the platform and crouched down, holding on tight with one hand to a rusty cross, so as not to be carried away by the wind. She raised the other hand, the one with the ring, straight towards the sky and closed her eyes. Between the convulsive chattering of her teeth, and the sobs which shook her she murmured:

"Oh, have pity on me, little Madonna! Let . . . me . . . die."

But the little Madonna was merciful. Another flash fell with a great rumbling, but further off on the high mountain. Yanoulé reopened her eyes. The rain had suddenly ceased. The wind was blowing with less violence, and up in the sky between the clouds which were rushing away the stars were once more shining. Just a few more minutes and the storm was only a distant noise. Yanoulé looked around amazed, still trembling and



sobbing. A great quiet spread over the chestnut grove. The crowing of a cock rose up from below and then the barking of a dog. Yanoulé recognized it, her Blitz. Her house was down there, with her dear mother and her adored father, and her dogs and the rambler roses . . . What had she done? Why was she there? She saw again a bronzed and proud face, heard a voice which repeated: "Poor, poor little Yanoulé . . ." But distant and veiled that face and that voice. She descended from the little platform and knelt again in front of the image and murmured:

"Pardon, pardon, little Madonna." And taking the golden ring off her finger she placed it in the niche and fled down the hill.

A little later she was again in her room. She wasn't cold any more, she was burning. She made a bundle out of the soaking nightgown and the shawl and hid them. Getting into bed, she fell asleep.

Next morning she had a little fever and cough. But nothing much—a cold.

"The first cold," the doctor said. She stayed in bed a couple of days, then she got up and began to roam around again with Blitz and Rodo-

monte, perfectly cured of everything.

Cured, cured for ever. So much so that when five years later at a ball they told her that Remo Sanna had died on an expedition in the midst of the Gran Chaco, she only said:

"Poor thing! I knew him very well . . . He was such a friend of Father's. And he was married, wasn't he?"

The quadrille was beginning, and she rose to take the arm of her young cavalier, who called her, as everyone did, "Signorina Yanoulé." And she didn't even remember who had given her that perfumed and languid nickname.

No, Remo Sanna had not married. Nor had he ever thought of it. He had again thrown himself into his violent and adventurous life, without rest in order to forget the kiss of a child—the man who had kissed the lips of so many forgotten women. And she never knew, the Signorina Yanoulé, that when his bones were traced long afterwards, there was discovered amongst the rags which covered him, in an old portfolio among some insignificant papers, a dry flower—a carnation.

# A Fishing Settlement

By

HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN

*From the Danish by Harald Toksvig*



*Henrik Pontoppidan was born in 1857 in the little Jutland city of Fredericia where his father was minister. He studied engineering, taught school for a year, and made his debut in literature with the novel "Clipped Wings" in 1881. He was gifted with wholesomeness of spirit and a keen satirical perception, and he attacked in his work the whole web of romantic fantasies and false emotions that were then dominant in Danish life and literature. In all he has produced forty volumes, among them the three volume novel "Lucky Peter" which won him the Nobel Prize in 1917. One of his children is an American citizen, residing in Asheville, North Carolina.*

WAY out by the open sea lay a small, poor, fishing settlement—eight, ten, tiny black wooden huts. Half buried in the sand and with their gables up against each other, the low row of houses crept together like a caterpillar back of the high, naked dune, over which the angry surf cast its froth.

On quiet summer days when the sun melted the tar out of the timbered walls and scorched the sand so it burned under the feet, the little colony could, however, unfold itself and like a butterfly bursting through its cocoon, throw a momentary, colorful southern atmosphere over the sad waste. Up on the dunes stood rows of stakes with flapping fish nets; crowds of half-naked children noised on the outer beach, and here and there were sun-browned women in red skirts, squatting around a fire in the sand cooking pitch.

But under the first equinoctial storm, when the sky lay low over the deserted sand hills; when the big white gulls pressed close to the rolling water's edge, and the sand whirled like drifting snow—then

the little colony crept back of its dune again; blinds and shutters were closed and doors barred; then even the smoke did not want to leave the vents in the black burnt roof boards, but hung low and as if in fright over the roofs. And day after day the little fishing colony lay as if in a long sleep, while sand and large flakes of scum whirled over it.

During dark nights it might happen that through the noise of the sea that thundered against the dunes, a sound would be heard as of a door, that is forced open with difficulty and at once slammed shut by the storm . . . A man crawls up the slanting sand dune, lies down on his stomach, and begins to listen with his hand behind his ear. After a while another man comes up and stretches out beside him. A sleepy conversation—interrupted by hour-long pauses—takes place between them.

But suddenly they both get up and run quickly down to the houses, knock on a door here, a shutter there, and shout everywhere the same short word.

Broad men with whiskered faces

appear gradually through the darkness. In thick stiff coats they move about among each other without talking, busy themselves with ropes, ladders and boat hooks, until they at length gather about a little lanthorn and in a close crowd move eastward, back of the dunes.

Here and there back of a half open door can be seen the upper part of a half naked female with her hair uncombed over her shoulders. But when the men have disappeared, the doors are closed . . . and again only the sea's hollow, constant thundering is heard.

But in the east, on the dunes, a flame blazes up after a while against the dark sky . . . a pitch torch, from which dark red sparks fly inland.

An hour or two passes.

Then suddenly a many voiced shriek comes out of the sea. At the same moment the torch is extinguished. Everything is darkness.

But out over the breakers it is as though the storm had gathered in its wildest strength. It sounds like the beating of the wings of some giant bird in distress. Ropes burst; there is tramping on a deck, and the sound of a loud, commanding voice is lost in a confused shouting of many mouths and a woman's high, cutting screams of fright.

In under the dunes, facing the sea, sit the little broad men in a circle around the lanthorn, which throws a red gleam over the sand and up in the whiskered faces. Quietly waiting they sit with their hands around their knees or with their heads resting in their hands as if they slept.

None of them speak. Now and then when the woman's wails and the monotonous howling of the sailors becomes too heart rending, they look at each other, a little embarrassed, and try to smile; and one

old fellow who sits outermost in the row turns stealthily away and mumbles something over a rosary that he has furtively taken out of his coat.

Then suddenly it seems that the ocean tremblingly lifts itself in power. A series of hollow crashes sound in over the shore like shots from distant cannon. Then all is quiet. Not a scream.

After a while the seething water between the dunes and the surf is full of splintered ship's goods, which mill around as in a boiling kettle. Some is thrown all the way up on the outer beach, some is washed back with the waves or crushed on the spot. A large mast stump with a mass of tangled rope is flung on land, and a short cry escapes the shipwrecked one who has clung to it.

He is saved.

But at once a knife is in his side, and he rolls over backwards. The men surround him and the lanthorn is held up to his face as that sinks backwards to the sand with a last faint, surprised look.

"It's wine!" mumbles the man with the lanthorn after he has scanned the dying man's dark hair and olive colored skin.

The others nod in agreement.

A bowlegged mannikin bends down and feels about the stranger's clothes and sees a pair of rings that gleam in his ears. Whereupon he, for safety's sake, gives him still another deep, steaming wound in the side before he leaves him and waddles toward the water's edge.

Here the others are already engaged, with the help of boat hooks and rope nooses, in saving what they can from the surf. While the morning slowly announces itself out there in the grey, cold fog over the sea, the wine barrels and the splintered planks are hauled ashore as

the waves wash them up. The corpses are pulled in and plundered. Chests and boxes with gay silks are broken open and examined.

In the meantime the women come out from the settlement with warm beer in great wooden tankards, which go around among the men. Shivering in the morning cold they stand in a group on the edge of the dunes and stare with a covetous gleam in their eyes on the heaped up glories beneath them.

Towards noon when there is nothing more to salvage, and the naked corpses have conscientiously been buried under the dunes, the barrels are with much gayety rolled into the huts; the great wooden tankards are set on the tables, the men and the silk-bedecked women seat themselves around them—and day after day the little settlement riots in heedless intoxication with song and noise in the long nights while sand and white flakes of scum whirl over it.

\* \* \*

But all this is far, far back in the past. The little fishing village's saga is now half forgotten up there in the silent waste, where ocean and sand, year after year, have erased, graded and buried everything.

On beautiful summer evenings, when the sun sets in crimson clouds and reddens the ocean, it occasionally happens that the conscientious father of a family, on a pleasure trip in the naturally beautiful region, will, caught by the view, stop by a half washed up wreck on the shore, and for his listening children unroll pictures of the bloody scenes and nightly horrors of that time.

But he never neglects to mention how far man has progressed since then; how civilization in this respect also has done its great, humane work. And as he dutifully explains

this to them, he points with pride to the solidly founded life-saving station that peeps out from behind the sand hills, or out toward the east to the small, flat point which pushes out into the sea, where the tall lighthouse towers toward heaven like land's last great milepost.

The dunes about them have also been brought under civilization and have thoughtfully been planted with long, straight rows of sea reeds and lyme grass, that shall protect against sand drift. In between them are now light-brown heath-flats and peaceful swamps that lie and steam in the silent summer nights.

The settlement itself has through the hundreds of years kept its strange worm shape; but it is now a large fishing village with a church and a minister, with a store and an inn and a lot of small houses, whose tiled roofs shine doubly red between the white-green sand hills.

On quiet summer days when the sun melts the tar out of the few old wooden huts that are still left, and glows the sand so it burns under the feet, the city unfolds itself in its loneliness again as in the old days—spreads itself out over the dunes with black stakes for the nets and dried fish, with noisy crowds of bare-legged children on the outer beach and groups of strong, sunburned women in red skirts, that squat on the sand by a steaming kettle and peel potatoes.

Along the shore the artists sit neck and neck under large yellow umbrellas like toads under toadstools, poets swarm about with long hair and notebooks, and all over the village are flocks of strangers that eagerly view the curious settlement and its interesting dwellers.

. . . Toward noon the heat became really oppressive. Not a

breeze stirred. Over the sea and the village a haze of heavy warmth settled, that beat everything to the ground.

Around the houses lay ducks, pigs and children asleep with their faces against the glowing hot sand. Heavy and sleepy, with bare legs and unbuttoned waists, women went in and out of the doors and threw peevish glances toward a small door in a little bit of a house, where a young tourist with a mosquito netting around his hat stood fooling with a pair of giggling fishing girls.

The laughter of these glad girls was soon the only sound heard in the village.

Even the bare-legged little girls who all morning had run with lifted skirts and splashed along the edge of the beach, had grown tired and had sat down in the shade of some beached boats, where they rested with their hands in their laps and looked at the small, piping beach swallows that darted over the surface of the water and dove after fish.

An elderly gentleman with a tall, grey hat pushed back on his head and a pair of enormous traveler's binoculars hanging on his stomach stepped out on the stairs of the inn and delightedly sniffed the "most interesting" sea air, that to tell the truth had received a somewhat sultry admixture of manure smells and

the stench of half rotten fish.

Up on the edge of the dunes the fishermen sat with their small pipes in their mouths and mended nets. Some had already let their chins sink on their chests, and slept; most of them sat and half nodded and cast now and then a dull look out over the sea . . . this great, empty, milk-blue sea, that lay there so shining and quiet, so hopelessly deserted that one

could have thought it dead, had not its heavy, measured pulse-beats been heard by the shore.

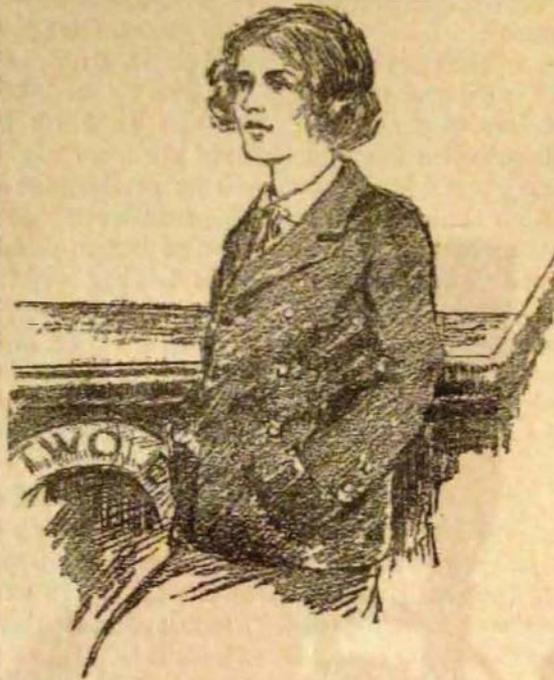
Out there in the northwest was a big steamer with a thick, woolly smoke in a mile-long trail after it.

It was the "Two Brothers," an English freighter, that was going east of the point in order to get southward into the Kattegat on its way to

one of the Baltic ports.

On board everything was quiet. They had only just taken a bearing and felt safe about the coast.

Around in the fore-castle where there was the most shade, lay the sailors—an Irish, German and Swedish medley—in red and checkered woolen shirts sleeping with their noses on the deck. It was the captain's own watch. He sat in his pleasant little enclosure on the bridge, from which he could in all comfort observe the ship's progress and view the sunny coast they were sailing past.



He was a little short-necked Englishman, stuffed with beef and porter, and as red and shining as a copper kettle. The milk-white eyes that were absolutely fixed were of a deathlike dullness. There was not a movement in his face, as he sat there and smoked sweet-smelling shag after breakfast.

But he was not alone. Beside him, half on his lap, sat a young, slender girl, her white fingers playing in his rough beard. Neither of them spoke. Occasionally when she coughed from the cloud of smoke that he unconcernedly puffed over her, she shook him playfully by his hairy ear. But at the least impatient growling from the fat belly she let go of the ear in pretended fright and snuggled to him like a cat with an ingratiating purring.

That was *little Mary*, as she called herself in confidence here. Captain Charles—when he condescended to talk at all—called her simply: Mary.

Among the crew—where on the whole she seldom showed herself—or by the cook or the steward she was addressed only with a polite "Miss." And when in the afternoon she took her daily walk up and down the afterdeck—quiet, straight and correctly English—with her hands in the pockets of her tightly buttoned jacket, both mate and sailors stepped aside without so much as indicating by an expression that they quite well knew what her position was.

They had taken her aboard more than two months before in Liverpool, and Captain Charles had on several occasions banged the table and sworn that now he would land her in the first English port they touched, and send her back to the miserable hole where she belonged. But the mellow sunshine of the last

few weeks, and the easy voyages had made him soft as a mitten. Always there was something beseeching in her eyes that he could not withstand, and her little hand had lain so softly about his neck that he had regularly withdrawn his words and had occasionally experienced a feeling almost as if his heart had moved beneath the fat under his vest. Mary was only seventeen years old.

He was sitting now, satisfied and motionless, after breakfast, and had fallen away into the strangest dreams. He was thinking whether he should keep her the rest of the summer . . . perhaps all winter . . . perhaps really marry the girl eventually. He had got so used to having her around that he could hardly think of being without her. Of course his friends would make fun of him if he went and married her, and home in Grangemouth it would make a terrible commotion. But he could, of course, let them laugh. As long as he was at sea he would not notice it anyway. And, besides, as far as Mary's past was concerned, she was really excused because of the home she had come from. Her father was an idler who on more than one occasion had beaten her half to death in drunken frenzy, and her mother was an old hussy who had herself taught her the profession. Besides Mary was really not more than a child who hardly knew what sort of a life she had entered.

As he sat thinking these thoughts and as Mary amused herself by resting her head on his chest and letting it rock up and down with his breathing, there came a couple of light jolts in the ship, which in a few moments stopped, while the strokes of the piston down in the engine room suddenly took on a furious speed.

Captain Charles' heavy body had in an instant pushed Mary aside; with a thundering oath he rushed out of the door, signalled "Stop" to the engine room and leaned out over the bridge. Yes—exactly! The ship stood still. Under the clear, glass green water, small stones and mussel shells blinked up from the serried sand bank that it had softly settled into.

His face that for a moment had lost all color became crimson; but when he had looked over the ship's side and reassured himself that there was no damage done, he quietly shouted an "all right" out over the deck, where the crew had come to life from all directions and hung over the rail.

"Half speed!—reverse!—half speed!" he then commanded to the engine room. And now when the machinery began to work, he went back and forth a few times on the bridge and took a couple of great draughts on his shag pipe in order to get completely over the fright.

But the ship did not move. Not even when he had commanded: "Full speed—reverse!" did it move from the spot. No matter how much the engine puffed and hissed, and how angrily the smoke roared out of the smoke stack—the heavy ship lay just as motionless, only groaning a little under the efforts, with a jingling sound of iron.

In the meantime the accident had been noticed on the shore by some fishermen that stood with great sea boots in the water's edge and pulled in nets—for an artist. A message was hastily sent into the slumbering village to wake the people from their midday nap.

And now there was life. First one by one, then in flocks, the men came trotting though the dunes, laughter chuckling in their stomachs,

and all the highest dune tops near the village were gradually peopled by women and children, who stood with hands shading their eyes and stared toward the north. From all directions people came traveling over the heath, shouting and pointing to each other from a distance. The wrecking commissioner and the police inspector came riding in a wagonette, and all the tourists—both ladies and gentlemen—had head over heels left the inn's breakfast table in order to rush to the "scene of the wreck": the man with the grey top hat before all the others, storking along with his long legs and with his napkin stuck in a back pocket in the confusion.

In the village everything was disturbed feverish activity. People flocked together outside the street doors, and asked and volunteered explanations. Only when it was absolutely established that the ship was grounded—solidly, undeniably fast—was the oppression lifted and an unpent joy broke out, that even infected the children so they began to run through the streets shouting hurrah. The grocer hopped smilingly up on his office chair and gave orders to hoist the large whiskey barrel up from the cellar. People stopped in at neighbors and acquaintances, and everywhere was the odor of coffee. Even the old people and the cripples that could hardly walk, staggered up to the nearest sand hill in order to enjoy the sight of the big, steaming sea monster, that lay out there and groaned, trying to get loose.

The beach facing the stranded vessel was black with people; and out around the steamer, which was stuck in the third bar several hundred yards from the shore, lay a crowd of boats with fishermen of the so-called salvage crew that hailed

the captain every time he showed himself on the bridge.

Captain Charles, however, acted as if he neither saw nor heard them. He had through the mate given an order that no stranger be allowed on board, and obstinately rejected every offer of help. He had launched his own longboat and let some of the men row aft with two anchors with strong chains which were attached to the capstan bar; the engineer had received orders to get steam up "all the way to the red line"—for loose they had to get.

Under all this he walked up and down the bridge with his hands in the pockets of his coat, or sat in the enclosure and drank undiluted whiskey from a beer glass. Mary's frightened round cat eyes followed his every move and the expressions of his red face. She had a couple of times tried to approach him but he had violently pushed her away.

The two anchors had after a while been placed, the engine began again to work, the steam hissed, the chains tightened . . . but the ship did not move an inch . . . sank only just a little deeper in the sand with every fruitless attempt.

In the meantime more people had come to the beach and more boats in the water. All the way from out by the point and from a neighboring settlement to the south fishermen came pulling their yawls along the coast. There was at last a whole fleet of small vessels that crowded about the stranded ship and pushed and pulled themselves forward among each other amid the loud gayety of their crews. Especially were they interested in guessing at the cargo, which they hoped was such that it would screw the salvage charge way up, cotton for example or iron. It could hardly be coal, they agreed, since preparations had

not at once been made to unload.

Somewhat apart from the others lay a six-oared boat with the wrecking commissioner. He was a portly, heavy-limbed man, who tried to regard the whole scene with superior unconcern. In reality there was no one more interested in the value of the ship and its cargo than he, as he had a lawful claim to a half per cent of the salvage wage just through his mere presence.

The customs assistant, a fat man with gold rimmed glasses, approached in another boat and greeted him.

"What do you think, Hr. Consul!" he said and laughed into a fiery red beard that fairly blazed in the sunlight. "To run in here in the middle of the day . . . in this kind of weather! By God, we can call that a present!"

The wrecking commissioner made a movement with his shoulders that could be interpreted as one liked.

"It's iron, they say," continued the customs assistant.

"Oh, God knows," answered the other with almost priestly solemnity, and looked straight in front of him. "It looks like a coal dragger. It's English."

The customs assistant laughed again.

"English, yes! And tough and obstinate as an English beefsteak! . . . Can you imagine, Hr. Consul, how he still thinks he can get out of it?"

"Oh, well. Perhaps he really will be able to," answered the commissioner with a disappointed expression of Christian compassion. Only in the corners of his mouth could a muscle play be traced that betrayed his excitement.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen! But is what has been told me elsewhere true, that the wrecking

steamer has been telegraphed for?"

It was the man with the grey top hat. He had hired a boat with four interesting old fishermen and sat—trembling with excitement—in the stern, the uncased binoculars in his hand.

"Could such really be the case?" he continued, as he was not at once answered. "I have heard, on trustworthy reports, that it was expected."

"Yes, we will probably have it here in a moment," answered the Consul and looked toward the east.

There, turning around the point from the south—shortly afterwards a little steamer came in sight. The consul at once gave his crew a signal. The oars went into the water and in a few minutes the boat was alongside the stranded ship.

To the mate who at once appeared, he told who he was, and asked if help was desired. Captain Charles, who from his cabin on the bridge had seen the little steamer stop and anchor a few cable lengths away, sent the answer no.

"No!" he repeated with tightly clenched teeth and hit the table with his fist when the mate hesitated about taking the answer. He sat with a whiskey jug in front of him and had emptied the third glass.

The consul shoved off and rowed full speed to the shore.

A couple of hours passed.

On the beach the crowd of people steadily became larger, because now the women also came and brought food and drink to the men. They camped about in the sand; the whiskey bottles went around. They clinked glasses and enjoyed themselves as at a picnic.

Towards sunset the surface of the sea suddenly rippled, and the boats that still lay around the ship began to bob up and down. There were

no clouds in the sky, but the sun had become strangely faint, and way out on the horizon the sea was growing rougher.

Before a quarter of an hour had passed the sea ran so high that the boats had to come ashore. By shoulders put to the gunwales they were pushed up on the beach, and the women gradually sought shelter under the broad bows.

The sky was now completely clouded over and the wind had increased in strength, so it looked quite serious for the ship. It lay in the middle of the outermost breakers, broadside to the sea that already broke heavily over it. From the shore one could plainly see how one cloud of spray after another dashed over the rail.

People who were equipped with binoculars suddenly observed great activity on board. The crew ran back and forth on the deck; a boat was launched, and an anchor chain was heard rushing out. It was plain that a last, decisive attempt was to be made. Great masses of smoke with heaps of big sparks rolled out under the dark sky, and the screw began to work aft.

From the shore it looked quite uncanny. Some of the women began to be uneasy. Otherwise it was absolutely quiet on the shore now. In the northwest the sun went down blood red behind great rising cloud masses.

Then the engine stopped out there. And after still another long pause, during which everybody on the beach had gotten up, they saw through the oncoming darkness the signal of distress that was slowly raised.

"Now he's crying," they said and laughed.

The district's eight-oared life-saving boat, which now had been

secured, was launched with the wrecking commissioner and the police inspector who should respectively arrange and certify with the seals of the law the terms of salvage. Still a third man had a place in the boat, a little thin man in a grey ulster and with a black glove on the left hand in which he held his hat. This was the salvaging company's agent, who had been landed from the little steamer upon its arrival, and had since then remained on the beach.

The wind had already grown to storm proportions; but with carefully timed strokes the well trained crew guided the boat through the waves, and in twenty minutes the three men were on board. The mate received them and conducted them below deck to the officers' mess. There sat Captain Charles—very drunk—back of a table over which a lighted, swinging lamp hung. From the big tin shade's white-painted interior the light was thrown over the polished mahogany surface; the rest of the room lay in a greenish darkness.

He received the strangers without a greeting and asked shortly and pointedly, "what it would cost."

The agent asked to be allowed to see the ship's papers. When these were brought to him and he had informed himself of the value of the cargo, the age of the ship, amount of insurance, etc., he answered:

"Six thousand pounds."

Captain Charles gave a jerk; it was as if he had suddenly become sober. Then a peculiar smile of resignation glided over his blue-white lips.

"Oh, so that's it—" was all he said, half to himself.

There was a couple of moments silence. Behind the captain the sea beat unceasingly against the ship's

side, and the blows sounded so weird and hollow in this close room that the young police inspector, who was still new to his job, became paler and paler and looked longingly toward the door. Up on deck sounded the heavy tramp of sea boots.

"Four thousand pounds," Captain Charles said finally.

The agent shrugged his shoulders regretfully.

"Impossible!"

The wrecking commissioner, whose duty it was to stand by the captain and protect the shipping company's and the insurance company's interests, now stepped in to act the part of mediator. But as he knew that the salvage company on principle never reduced an offer, and that it was to his advantage anyway to keep the salvage terms as high as possible, he turned quickly to the captain and with many sympathetic words in tolerable English, sought to make him see that on account of the increasingly dangerous position of the ship there was hardly anything to do but accept the terms.

The agent, who quite agreed with this wanted, for his part, to add the remark, that unless an agreement was reached within an hour the salvage steamer would be compelled to sail, as it did not, under the circumstances, dare remain close to the coast throughout the night. Furthermore he wanted to say that he could not for more than ten minutes consider himself bound by this very favorable offer.

Captain Charles continued silent. He had put both short, thick arms on the table and looked from one to the other of the two gentlemen with slow, understanding nods. After the agent's last words his pale lips trembled a bit. Then he turned to the mate who had been present during the negotiations as his witness,

and asked for writing materials.

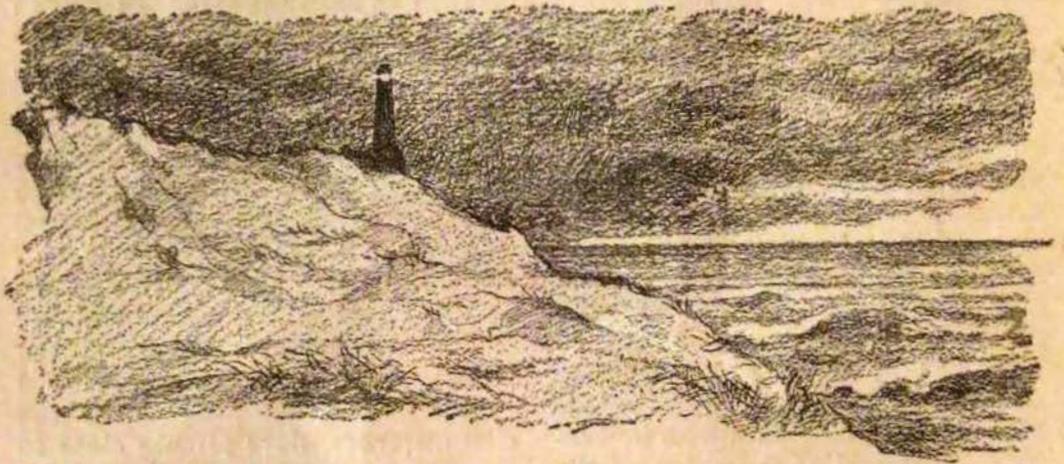
Two hours later the "Two Brothers" was dragged from the sand bar, and found seaworthy. In the dark, stormy evening, while lights shone from the many small huts in the village, where they had already begun to enjoy the third of the salvage terms which was the fishermen's lawful share, and where the grocer's booths and the inn's rooms were crowded with high-voiced people, the foreign ship steamed lonesomely east and around the point and out into the sea.

It was the mate's watch. Captain Charles had shut himself in his cabin with a new jug of whiskey—

but without Mary. The poor child sat on the edge of her bunk in her own little cabin and stared in front of her in the darkness with her round cat eyes. She had read her fate in the furious look with which her master had pushed her aside that afternoon. Her freedom was gone again! In the first harbor they touched he would send her back—home to the misery, the hunger, the dirt, her father's caning and her mother's curses.

Or . . . ?

The ocean is deep. The ocean is merciful. When the "Two Brothers" sailed into the sound the next morning, Mary was no longer on board.



# The Soviet Priestlings

By

A. DAMANSKAYA

From the Russian by Leo Paswolsky



*"Madame Augusta Damanskaya was born in a picturesque little village in the south of Russia. At the age of 17 she married and went to Petrograd to live. Before the war she spent many years abroad, especially in Switzerland and Italy. Besides her own short stories, novels, and books of travel, she has translated some fifty volumes by foreign authors into Russian. When the war broke out she returned to Russia, where she worked on a Moscow newspaper and nursed in the hospitals for the wounded. She attempted to adjust her life to the Bolshevik regime, but finding this impossible she fled from Russia in 1920, disguised as a peasant. She resides at present in Germany.*

*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

*St. Matthew, xviii-6.*

**M**ARIA STEPANOVNA OSTROUKHOVA, the wife of the local priest, who had suddenly disappeared, was still permitted to occupy the parish house, but it was being made plain to her on every convenient occasion that she was merely suffered to remain there. The Soviet authorities were most anxious to find out where the priest had gone, and whether or not his family was in communication with him, and why he did not return, if he really was not a counter-revolutionist.

Father Nikolai's successor, the church deacon, and the elder of the parish, who was a local merchant, managed to keep on good terms with the authorities. And when the Commissar, a young Lett, mentioned in a casual conversation once that it would, perhaps, be a good idea to

remove the "undesirable elements" from the church property, the deacon, who was a quickwitted and clever fellow, pretended that he had not heard the pointed remark and immediately proposed to the Commissar in a most pleasant tone:

"Did you say that you had not found any quarters for the new secretary yet? Well, why not give him a room at Maria Stepanovna's? It will make things rather cramped for her, but what of that? The man must have a place to stay."

The Commissar looked at him in astonishment. The secretary in question was one of the officials of the Chrezvychaika, the Extraordinary Commission that was the instrument of the Red Terror, and none of the families in the city would give him quarters, while there were no more dwellings left to requisition. The deacon repeated again in a tone of firm conviction:

"The man must have a place to stay."

The Commissar smiled with a pleased air, and the deacon went over to Maria Stepanovna's house.

In the sun-lit living room, with its

low ceiling, old-fashioned furniture, and pots of rubber plants, the missing priest's eldest son, fourteen-year-old Vadim, was playing on an old piano. His crutch stood against the chair on which he was sitting. The boy had a slight, thin body, crippled by tuberculosis, and a gentle, delicate face with sparkling blue eyes. The deacon paused in the doorway to listen to his playing, and his face took on an expression of pleasure. The boy's fingers moved swiftly over the yellow keys, the loose strings groaned their response, and the canary bird in its cage tried to out-sing the sounds of the piano and the boy's own clear voice.

"Mamma is over on the shore," the boy said shortly, without raising his head and forestalling the deacon's inquiry.

The guest went to the fruit orchard through the dining room, that was immersed in greenish dusk because of the trees that grew close to its windows. He found Maria Stepanovna on the high bank of the river. Her four other boys were with her. The boys always played together, being only one year apart in age, and were once known all over the neighborhood for their numberless pranks. Now they were much quieter and more sedate.

"What is this you are drying? Biscuits? Where did you get so many?" asked the deacon in astonishment, after bowing respectfully to Maria Stepanovna.

The woman blushed, but the boys began to explain, interrupting each other. Large quantities of biscuits had been brought on a boat from Esthonia the day before, and a good many had been spilled into the mud by the sailors as they unloaded the boat. The boys picked up the spillings; they were very dirty, however, and had to be washed.

The deacon listened to them, but his eyes were gazing past their faces. Then he bent aside the fold of his old, worn coat, sat down on a rock, and glanced up and down the river. The broad stream was flowing by serenely. One side of the river reflected the gold of the sun, while the other was darkened by the shadows of the fruit orchards that ran down to its very shore. The cupolas of two monasteries were inverted in the water. The remnants of bridges, torn by shells, rose in the air like monstrous fragments, but their reflections in the water were soft and beautiful.

"What a wonderful scene!" said the deacon, but finding no sympathy either in Maria Stepanovna or her sons, he continued in a business-like tone:

"Pretty soon it won't be necessary for you to look for leavings. I have found you a lodger, with a ration that . . . phew! . . . anybody would be happy to have."

The woman, who was still handsome, with only faint traces of grey in her luxuriant hair, and youthful, blue eyes, had no opportunity to express either pleasure or astonishment, when the deacon said:

"The secretary of the Chrezvychaika."

Maria Stepanovna's hands dropped to her sides. The boys opened their mouths as if by command, but remained speechless.

"You are joking, Father Deacon," said the woman with gentle reproach.

The deacon rose from his rock and made a hasty motion with his hands.

"Not at all. He is a good lodger. I am sure you will be thankful to me afterward." Then he looked around furtively and added in a low voice, but with great emphasis:

"And it will be much safer, too. Believe me, I know what I am talking about."

"Father Deacon, last week they shot fifty people in the Pskov prison. They don't even hide it. They write about it in the papers."

"I read it myself," said Styopa, the eldest of the four in a strained whisper, gazing hard at the deacon.

"Sh-sh," the deacon interrupted him and again glanced around. "It is not our business to judge them. The Lord will do that. And the secretary does not shoot people. He only writes papers. Besides I heard from the surveyor, who had some business with him, that he is really a very pleasant fellow."

He looked at the woman who stood before him in utter confusion, her eyes full of dull fear, and said:

"I should advise you very strongly to do it."

Then he shook his head sadly, as if to make his disapproval of her indecision more apparent.

Suddenly all four of the boys jumped up from the ground and their bare feet flashed through the air. They ran off to tell Vadim all about it. Rushing into the living room, they shouted in unison:

"We are getting a lodger from the Chrezvychaika!"

The cripple was playing a complicated tune in a high key, but he immediately broke it off. The canary, too, stopped singing. He listened with apparent indifference to the story his four brothers tried to tell him, all talking at the same time, then sent them to the Devil with an incredulous air, and resumed his playing. The canary immediately broke into a frenzied accompaniment.

Two days later the secretary of the Chrezvychaika moved into Maria Stepanovna's house. He was a

tall young man with slightly stooping shoulders, a pimply chin, short and flat nose, grey, watery eyes, and smoothly brushed hair. He talked in a rather deep voice, and looked at you shyly as he spoke. He was not terrible in the least. The boys, who helped him take his things from the wagon to the house, liked him. In five minutes' time he knew them all by name, never making a mistake, while they called him Ivan Petrovich, as though they had known him for years.

Maria Stepanovna conducted herself with careful dignity, while Vadim went off to see a friend and did not return until late at night, when he could slip unseen into his tiny, dark room, adjoining the bedroom which was occupied by Maria Stepanovna and the four younger boys.

Before he had time to undress, his mother called to him softly. He came into her room, where all four of the younger boys were already seated on her bed.

"Sit down," said Maria Stepanovna, and drawing her son toward her, she passed the palm of her hand over his moist forehead. "Have you eaten?"

"Yes," replied the boy scarcely making a sound.

"Don't fool, now," said the mother, and her voice broke into a short sob.

She put her hand over her mouth to fight back the sob, and then began to speak in a whisper. It was dark in the room, save for the uncertain light of a small red lamp. Birds were fluttering lightly in the nests under the roof. The branches of the birches just outside the window were scratching the windowpanes.

Maria Stepanovna and her boys sat huddled together and talked in soft whispers. They were care-

fully working out a plan of action.

"Not a word about father. He's disappeared, that's all. We don't know anything about him."

"Let's say that the Whites dragged him away with them when they were leaving," suggested one of the boys.

Vadim pressed the boy's arm just above the elbow, and hissed:

"Don't lie!"

"Yes, better don't. And don't say anything that's not necessary," said the mother. "He's gone, disappeared, that's all. And if he asks how we live, just say we get rations and sell our old things."

"You have to say that we exchange them," said eleven-year-old

Styopa with utmost earnestness. "I you say sell them, they might get you for speculating."

"The way they got Lyosha's aunt and sent her to prison for a whole month," added Tyoma sleepily.

"All right, we exchange our old things on the market place."

"Let him look," whispered Styopa exultantly.

"And another thing." Maria Stepanovna found in the darkness Vadim's hot, dry hand and pressed it. "Don't let's talk about the Bolshéviki and things like that. No discussions at all."

They all agreed silently. Vadim slowly withdrew his hand and whispered to his mother:



"If I could, I'd go away, too, over to where papa is."

He picked up his crutch. The mother caught his sleeve and made the sign of the cross over him in the darkness. The younger boys rolled off the mother's bed and disappeared in their own.

The following morning, as Maria Stepanovna and her children were having their breakfast, which consisted mostly of a kind of coffee made of oats, the lodger came to the door of the dining room and, hesitating on the threshold, said pleasantly:

"May I come in?"

The boys glanced at each other quickly. Vadim caught up his crutch, but his mother held him in his place with a glance. Then she said politely:

"Please do!"

Ivan Petrovich came into the room, shook hands with everybody, and sat down in response to Maria Stepanovna's silent invitation. Then he began:

"I want to see you about something. You see . . . I . . . well, at any rate, I can't stand the bread they give you on card rations." He made a gesture of contempt in the direction of the grey lumps that lay on the table and went under the name of bread. "Over in Tver, where I served before, I had an arrangement with my landlady. I got enough flour to make decent bread of, and she used to bake bread for me and get a part of it for herself. Can't we make the same sort of arrangement? The flour I get is first rate."

Maria Stepanovna blushed. The boys glanced at the mother and remained silent. Vadim sat with his eyes fixed on the torn oilcloth that covered the table.

"I am not sure I can bake bread,"

said Maria Stepanovna undecidedly. "We have no servants nowadays, you know."

The lodger shrugged his shoulders, made a motion with his hands to express half-offense, half-surprise, and said:

"But it's for your own good, and for the children, too."

And then he again cast a contemptuous look at the lumps on the table that had a sharp, sour smell.

Maria Stepanovna hastily consented. Ivan Petrovich immediately suggested that she go and see his supplies. Two of the boys followed her and came back in extreme excitement:

"You ought to see the things he has there!"

"Packages as large as this!" And Styopa spread his hands wide to indicate the size of the packages that held the lodger's supplies.

Vadim sat at the table, scratching the cover with his nails. Then he rose from his seat and went out into the garden.

Maria Stepanovna came out of her lodger's room with a number of packages in her hands. That day at dinner the boys noticed a difference in the taste of the soup and gruel which they received every day from the Soviet food station. The food looked as it always did, yet there was something in it that made it taste better. The mother smiled on them and urged them to eat more, especially her eldest boy, the cripple. Styopa was the first to realize what it was that made the difference. Suddenly he cried out:

"Ah, Ivan Petrovich must have given you some butter to fix this stuff up. I noticed there was something different!"

Vadim pushed his plate away and rose from the table. His mother called after him, but he walked out

of the room without turning around.

The bread-baking was a splendid success. The family's share was four pounds, and a part of it was used with the evening tea. Vadim took a small piece of bread and put it in his mouth. Then he stretched his hand for the slice which the mother had pushed in his direction. As he ate, his eyes became curtained as with a mist, which dissolved in its dullness the heat of their blue sparkle.

In the evening a number of friends came to visit Ivan Petrovich, and Styopa and Kolya were sent somewhere with a note. They came back, bringing with them a long package tied with a string and sealed with wax. Having delivered the package, they rushed into the kitchen, shut the door carefully, and began to whisper to their mother:

"Mamma, it's wine, it's wine!"

Maria Stepanovna told them to be still.

"Nonsense, don't you dare talk about it! The neighbors might hear

"

She put her children to bed early.

Late that night, after an evening of loud conversation and laughter, the guests in the lodger's room began to sing. Then the sound of opening bottles came from the room.

Vadim was tossing restlessly from side to side on his narrow bed. His mother went into his room and seated herself beside him. He took her hand and pressed it to his moist forehead.

"Mother, they shouldn't do it! Do you hear what they are singing? It's dastardly!"

Maria Stepanovna laid her head on his pillow.

"Don't mind them, my darling. Don't listen to them. Let them

"

Vadim's hand touched her cheek,

and a hot tear glided down his finger. He said nothing, only pressed himself closer to his mother and passed his hand again and again over her cheeks, her hair, her shoulders. They remained together until sleep began to overcome them.

The next morning Ivan Petrovich called the four boys into his room. Red and confused they stood before him, stepping from one bare foot to the other, as he was saying to them:

"Take it, take it all. I'll have to give it away to somebody. I don't want any more."

His pimples had swollen up during the night and his eyes showed signs of the spree. He was yawning, as he sat at the table, still half-dressed, and talked to the four boys to whom he was offering the remains of the feast.

The large slice of cake with berries, the fresh sausages, the box of candies, a plate of jelly—all luxuries which millions of Russian citizens now recall merely as far-off joys—drew the boys' eyes like a magnet. Their lips quivered, and some power seemed to push their hands away from their bodies and toward the table.

"Well?"

His voice took on a tone of impatience and the imperious quality of command.

Styopa was the first to stretch his hand shyly toward the table. The others followed. Ivan Petrovich gave them all there was.

As the boys were trooping out of the room, muttering, "Thank you!" to him, Ivan Petrovich suddenly stopped them with a question:

"And where is that proud brother of yours?"

The two older boys looked at him in sudden fright. But Ivan Petrovich merely yawned again, and said:

"Oh, let him go to . . . I'll

get something else for him . . . .  
Well, we are going back to bed."

He stretched himself, yawned, shut the door, and a few minutes later loud snores began to come from his room.

Vadim had gone with his mother to the early church services. He returned alone, with a troubled, pained look on his face. Then, as he saw the things on the table, his face suddenly took on an expression of anticipation and greed.

"Where did it come from? Where did it come from?" he was asking eagerly, pretending he did not know.

The boys pointed in the direction of the lodger's room, but at that moment the mother's voice was heard from the kitchen. They all went to her. Maria Stepanovna's face was ashen, and her hands shook as she took off her old hat. Vadim went close to her and his face became pale once more.

"I heard what they said to you," he whispered brokenly, looking straight into her face.

"Let me alone!"

The children gathered into a group and watched the scene anxiously.

"You . . . you . . ." Maria Stepanovna did not finish the sentence, but turned around and went into her bedroom.

The children went over to Vadim.

"I know," whispered Styopa. "I heard the deacon's wife talking at the well when I was getting water."

The other boys stood in silence. Vadim's hand was clutching convulsively at the edge of the table.

"They shot five last night. They, his guests . . . the deacon's wife said they arrested . . ."

"Come to the table, children!" The mother's voice sounded unusually loud as she said these words.

Styopa carried the samovar. The others followed him.

"Are these things from Ivan Petrovich?" asked Maria Stepanovna with unnatural simplicity in her voice, gazing past the children and past the array of delectable dishes.

They ate in silence, munching each piece for a long time. Vadim was the last to succumb to the temptation of the luxuries. At first he started on the grey soup and sour bread. But in a few minutes his hand stretched almost involuntarily toward the other dishes. He raised his eyelids heavily as after a long illness or a long sleep. The others did not look at him. He swallowed one bite; then another. Before long he was eating with the rest.

"That's enough, children. We ought to leave some of that sausage for tomorrow," said Maria Stepanovna in a low voice. She sat in her chair with drooping shoulders, wiping the perspiration off her face with a colored handkerchief. Styopa brushed his lips with the palm of his hands and said:

"That sausage must have cost at least twenty thousand. And where did he get it?"

"Take this plate to the cellar," said his mother in a loud voice, hastily trying to cover up the boy's words. "And get ready for church, all of you!"

The boys began moving back their chairs, making signs of the cross. Vadim, too, raised his hand to cross himself, but as though something had burnt him, he tore his fingers away from his forehead. Then he bent his head low, groped for his crutch, and went out into the garden. Maria Stepanovna rose from her chair, but dropped down into it again immediately, as if she did not have the strength to stand up. Her elbows on the table,

she dropped her head on her hands, and remained motionless.

The sound of church chimes brought her to her feet, however, a few minutes later. First she raised her head, listening intently to the ringing that spread out like slowly expanding circles, as the brass reverberations struck each other in the air and rebounded into space. Then she moved back her chair noisily, and went into the kitchen.

She had just struck a match to light a fire in the stove, when Ivan Petrovich appeared in the narrow door leading from the hall. He was still only half dressed. His cheeks, nose and lips showed signs of his recent heavy, stupor-like sleep. With the fingers of his right hand he brought together the collar of his blue shirt which was unbuttoned and open wide as he came in.

"Beg pardon . . . May I get some water?"

Maria Stepanovna did not raise her head, but continued her efforts to light the thin twigs that the boys had gathered for kindling.

"The morning services must be over, what?" asked Ivan Petrovich with a pleasant smile. Then glancing at the sizzling wood in the stove, he added with sincere sympathy:

"Do they call that wood? And how much of that precious stuff have you?"

"None at all," replied Maria Stepanovna in a low, hollow voice. "We've borrowed this from the neighbors."

"But what will you do this winter?" asked Ivan Petrovich, and his tone showed such concern that one might have thought the matter affected his close friends or blood relations. Maria Stepanovna shrugged her shoulders.

Then Ivan Petrovich dropped the ends of his collars which he had been

holding until then, massaged for a moment his hairy chest with one hand, as he slapped his thigh with the other.

"This will never do," he announced with emphasis.

He looked at Maria Stepanovna in silence for a moment, and then said in the tone of a man who had found the solution of a difficult problem:

"Never mind, we'll get some wood. I'll get an order to-morrow. I've got a friend, one of the fellows who were here last night . . ."

Maria Stepanovna's hand suddenly remained motionless in the air, while he became silent.

"Thank you," said the woman, her voice even more hollow than a few minutes before. "How can I take it from a stranger? Besides . . ."

She could not continue. But raising her head, she met the man's glance that was gliding greedily over her bare neck and shoulder. Then she suddenly stepped back to the door, her face flushed.

"He is a most accommodating fellow, this Polikarpych," said Ivan Petrovich in an unnaturally loud tone of voice, as his trembling fingers buttoned and again unbuttoned his shirt collar. "They say all sorts of things about him in the city, but it's all lies. Don't pay any attention to it. He is just a party man, same as I."

Maria Stepanovna opened her mouth as if to ask a question, but merely caught her breath, and the man, his glance still glued to her body, answered her unuttered question:

"Of course, being in a responsible position, he has to look after things."

And then he continued, avoiding the heavy stare of her darkened eyes:

"We've been together for a long time. Under the old regime we both worked in the same place. Then we were in the same company during the war. His father used to be a merchant, but now he is a commissar at Toroptsa. And I tell you, he is in the right place, too!" His face lighted up with a sensuous smirk, as he snapped his fingers and continued: "And my old man has remained a regular bourgeois. He was a court watchman before, and now that they've done away with courts, he got himself the watchman's job at the cemetery. Looks after the dead!"

He again passed his hand over his hairy chest, and repeated the promise:

"You'll have the wood, and no trouble at all."

Then he smiled pleasantly, got himself a pitcher of water, and went back to his room.

Before the week was out, two cart loads of wood were delivered to the parish house. And as they were being unloaded, several pairs of eyes, full of malice, astonishment, and envy watched the process from the windows of the neighboring houses.

In the evening of that day, immediately after the lodger, dressed in new American shoes and coat, went out of the house, the deacon came in. He did not greet Maria Stepanovna as was his custom, he did not even sit down. Throwing a sharp glance at the woman, he inquired:

"Well, how are things?"

Maria Stepanovna quickly bent over the table, as if to hide with her own body the shirt she was making out of a piece of calico. But the deacon noticed the goods.

"I see you have some new calico there. Where did you get it?" he asked in astonishment.

"I am making a shirt for Vadim. The lodger got it for me," answered Maria Stepanovna, without raising her head, her lips white. "He hasn't any change at all. When I wash his rags, he has to go naked."

The deacon drummed on the table with his fingers.

"S-so. And I hear you got some wood, too. Enough for the whole winter, I understand."

"Yes, I did get it," replied Maria Stepanovna, and this time there was a challenging note in her voice.

The thump of Vadim's crutch became audible on the steps.

"It's my ration," she said suddenly. "I have entered the service."

The needle which was dancing in her hand missed the seam and went deep into her thumb. She drew it out, sucked the blood, and then held her thumb tight in the other hand.

"The service? Where?" The deacon's voice was low, almost solemn, as he asked these questions, trying hard to control his excitement.

"The Municipal Economic Committee," she replied distinctly. "The rations there . . ."

She did not finish. Vadim ambled heavily into the room. His crutch struck the floor with such loud thumping that it seemed a dozen cripples were hurrying somewhere in helpless haste. His eyes were wild, and his sallow face glistened with hot perspiration, as he began to talk in a loud, breaking, raucous voice:

"And they didn't give you enough! Over at the Zavelchye, where I was to-day, they gave everybody in the Municipal Committee three cart loads and ten yards of cloth. Yes, yes, I saw it myself. You don't believe me?" He turned angrily and passionately to the deacon. "I saw it myself . . ."

His voice broke completely. A bubbling sound came from his

throat. The crutch slipped from under his arm and fell noisily to the floor. Maria Stepanovna caught her son just in time and led him to a chair. Then, placing herself before the boy, she threw a glance of entreaty at the deacon. He understood. Pushing his worn hat low on his forehead, he turned around and walked out in silence.

"Vadim, my Vadim," whispered Maria Stepanovna, bending over her boy.

He threw her hand off his shoulder, snatched the cloth from the table, and tore it into shreds before his mother could stop him.

At that moment the four boys rushed into the room, eager to relate some piece of news. They stopped short on the threshold, and shyly crowded around their mother and brother who by that time had developed a violent fit.

Only after Vadim had fallen asleep on his mother's bed, with a wet towel on his head, did the boys have an opportunity to tell their mother what had happened.

"Misha Golovkin, and Yura, and the Ushkov girls . . ."

"Wouldn't play with us anymore . . ."

"They drove us from the playgrounds . . ."

"They call us 'Soviet priestlings' and all sorts of names . . ."

Tyoma began to weep. Mitya, the youngest, covered his face with his mother's apron. Styopa clenched his fists, as he threatened to punish the offenders.

Maria Stepanovna, her face motionless, as if made of wood, her arms moving mechanically like those of a toy doll, tore herself away from them, took a pot from the stove, filled four plates with the unsavory gruel, and said sharply:

"Now eat, and go to bed!"

The next Sunday Vadim rose late. The house was very quiet. Only the canary bird was moving about in its cage. He dressed himself and went into the dining room. Plates filled with delicious food again stood on the table. The odors drew him irresistibly. He had his breakfast alone.

Then he paused in the open door of the lodger's room. Something out of the ordinary glistened on a small table between two rubber plants. He walked over to the table and sat down in a chair, which seemed to have been placed there, as if on purpose. Then he drew his fingers across the strings of a shining new mandolin. He shut his eyes and began to play. He did not hear the footsteps of Ivan Petrovich, as the lodger entered the room. Then he realized his presence, and the sounds broke off sharply. His face reddened in confusion, as he held the mandolin out to Ivan Petrovich.

"I beg your pardon. I . . . I just played a little . . . I . . ."

Ivan Petrovich laughed good-naturedly.

"Don't apologize. It's for you, anyway. A sort of a surprise. Play as much as you want to."

Vadim rose from his chair and sat down again. He wanted to say something and could not utter a word. He merely moved his head from side to side and stared at Ivan Petrovich with his blazing eyes. Only after the man repeated a number of times that the mandolin was to be Vadim's property, for ever and ever, the boy suddenly rose to his feet, extended his hand to Ivan Petrovich, and said with sincere gratitude, just as his father had taught him when he was a child,

"Thank you. Thank you, very much."

At that moment the boys rushed into the room. They had known all about the mandolin the night before. Now they surrounded Vadim, who held the mandolin gently pressed to his heart. They were all still happily talking about the mandolin, occasionally touching carefully its sweetly tinkling strings, when Maria Stepanovna returned from church.

That day Ivan Petrovich dined with the whole family. The conversation revolved all the time about the new mandolin, until Styopa asked Ivan Petrovich:

"Where did you get it? It must have cost at least fifty thousand, didn't it?"

Ivan Petrovich's face changed quickly and a shadow of disquietude passed over it. But he replied with a smile:

"I got it. That's enough!"

Maria Stepanovna looked intently at her lodger, and turned her glance away. Vadim rose from the table impatiently, and went into the garden with his mandolin. The boys soon followed him.

"Where did you get the mandolin, Ivan Petrovich?" asked Maria Stepanovna in a low, but distinct voice, looking straight into the man's eyes.

"What difference does it make?" He held her eyes steadily, and his voice sounded as though he were saying: "What business is it of yours?"

Maria Stepanovna remained silent, then rubbed her hands as if they were cold, and lowered her head.

"It must have belonged to some one . . . who isn't in this world now," she whispered.

"Nonsense!" said Ivan Petrovich, rising from the table. "Somebody must have been telling you tales again . . ."

Maria Stepanovna interrupted him:

"It's a sin to do that to Vadim . . . He is . . ."

"What's happened, anyway?"

Somebody must have been telling you . . ." He did not finish again.

The thumping of Vadim's crutch came from the garden. Maria Stepanovna ran to her bedroom, just as the boy came into the room. Holding his mandolin under his arm, he walked

over to Ivan Petrovich and said in a ringing voice:

"I wanted . . . I have a rather good handwriting. Everybody praises it. If you have anything to copy, or something like that, I'd be very glad to do it." His glance strayed caressingly to the mandolin, as he repeated, "Very glad."

Ivan Petrovich merely waved his hand and said:

"Nonsense. It's only a trifle, anyway."

He smiled in rather a confused manner and went to his room. Vadim remained still for a moment, then walked over to his mother's room. The door was locked.

He sat down on the old torn couch and closed his eyes wearily.

Several days later, just before an important church holiday, the four



boys, who sang in the church choir, were in the living room, practicing choral singing. Styopa played the accompaniment on the old piano, while Vadim strummed the melody on the mandolin. Beating time with their hands, the boys were singing the Cherubim's song.

"Fine," said Ivan Petrovich, coming out of his room. "Now try this." And he began to hum a tune without any words.

Styopa's sensitive ear caught the melody and his fingers quickly found the notes. The other three of the boys also began to hum it. And the mandolin, too, passed from the melody of the Cherubim's song to that of the Communist hymn, the Internationale. Ivan Petrovich sang louder and louder, adding words to the lilt of the melody: "The battle, decisive and final . . ."

Vadim heard only the golden sounds of his mandolin. Styopa pressed the pedal in an effort to add more power to the strange melody. But the younger boys began to catch the words, and sang, changing the unusual words but slightly: "For with the Internationale mankind will rise to life . . ."

"Please don't!" The chorus became silent, and the sounds of the mandolin broke off. In the door of the living room stood Maria Stepanovna with a tired and troubled expression on her face. "Please

don't!" she repeated and went into the kitchen.

Ivan Petrovich followed her.

"You can hear it in the street," Maria Stepanovna was saying to her lodger in the kitchen, and her voice expressed bitter reproach. "As it is, they all point their fingers at us . . ."

"You just spit at them all," said Ivan Petrovich, and then added merrily: "And I've got something for you, too. Boys, bring that yellow package from my room!"

Vadim followed them to the kitchen. They all surrounded Maria Stepanovna and gazed with rapture at the butter, cheese, and flour that emerged from the yellow wrapping paper.

"My, what cheese cake that will make," said Styopa. And Tyoma, winking his eyes as if trying to recall something, added: "Just the kind we had that time when papa . . ."

He did not finish, however, for just at that moment Maria Stepanovna's keys fell to the floor and the boys all ran over to pick them up.

Maria Stepanovna threw a quick glance at Vadim. He was staring at the butter and the cheese, and his dry, pale lips were parted by a smile. Then she turned to her lodger and said:

"Thank you, Ivan Petrovich, thank you! It will make excellent cake. Now, let's all have tea!"

# The Last Throw

By

ALUIZIO AZEVEDO

*From the Portuguese (Brazil) by Joseph E. Agan*

*Aluizio de Azevedo was born in the early sixties in the Maranhense Desert in Brazil. He was one of a group of young intellectuals engaged in combating slavery, an institution which existed in Brazil until 1888. His first book, "O Mulato," produced when he was only twenty, had the effect of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" on the tottering planter regime. Azevedo was not the stuff evangelists are made of, however. He soon abandoned the ranks of the abolitionists, becoming a prominent figure in the Bohemian group at Rio de Janeiro that was to produce most of what is worth while in Brazilian letters. Zola was his master and most of his novels are pitiless studies of reality. His best work, "A Woman's Tear," has its gentler moments. In his later years he was his country's consular representative in Europe and Japan. He died in 1912.*

TEN louis!

They were all he had left!

These few coins were all that remained of a large and famous fortune that had been handed down a line of noble ancestors to him, the last of his family. Ten louis!

Dom Felipe juggled the glittering gold pieces in his hand as he walked slowly toward the spot, where half an hour before he had abandoned the roulette.

Leaning against the back of his still vacant chair he glanced down at the green table with cold, indifferent eyes. The numbers were buried in the gold and silver of other players.

He remained motionless for a long time and stared with unseeing eyes at the silver wheel. His senses were concentrated on a single thought that burned in his brain—he must recover that squandered fortune, or, at least, a part of it. With a hundred thousand francs, a mere hundred thousand, he could save himself the disgrace of ruin.

With a hundred thousand francs he would hasten to Paris and pay his debts of honor. Then, under some pretext or other, possibly that of

health, he would pretend a trip to Switzerland and sail for America with what money he had left. In America fortunes were contagious; one discovered fabulous dowries. If he were finally obliged to work—he would work!

He did not know what work he would do but the new world swam before his credulous eyes in a golden haze. No definite plan or idea accompanied this hope; he believed in America as he believed in cards or the roulette. It was a gambler's last hope. It was a blind leap in the dark. Would not America also be a green table piled high with California gold? It was the card flung in the last desperate play.

He would go!

And afterwards? How fine it would be to return to Europe many times a millionaire and, still young, to revel unrestrained!

While these air castles mounted higher and higher in his feverish imagination, the wheel spun swiftly and silently and heaps of gold and silver poured along the table before his distracted eyes.

"But if I should lose?" he asked himself.

He dared not imagine the situation that this question's answer would make inevitable; he felt that he had compromised his honor by the very thought!

Nevertheless, if he lost that miserable handful of coins what remained for him but . . . suicide? What remained for him in this world if it were not ridicule and humiliation?

He saw himself penniless, creeping like a shadow through the dark streets, his head on his breast and his hands plunged into his pockets, fleeing from the sight of everyone and conscious that his abject misery made him as abhorrent as though he had a contagious disease. A cold sweat oozed over his skin and he shivered.

Cowardly means of salvation that stole into his distracted mind recalling rich friends and questionable resources were repelled instantly by his pride which still remained unbroken.

"*Faites vos jeux, messieurs!*" cried the banker.

Dom Felipe smiled a sad resigned smile as if in response to an inner voice that appealed to his courage and after shaking the ten gold pieces once more, he opened his delicate useless hand and with an air haughtier and more indifferent than ever threw them on the red section which was nearest him.

"*Rien ne va plus!*"

A vertigo threatened his feigned calm.

The small ivory sphere sprang from the banker's dextrous fingers and whirled around the top of the bowl. The silence of death reigned in the room.

If on that throw, instead of red, black should come up, the wretched gambler reflected, any beggar in the

streets would be richer than he!

The ball began to slacken its speed and hovered above the circle of numbers ready to fall.

The noble slid into a chair and rested his head in his rigid, bloodless hands.

The ball dropped.

Red!

Dom Felipe's ten louis became twenty. He made not the slightest gesture but awaited the next throw apparently indifferent.

The table was swept clean and covered again with glittering stakes. The banker closed the bets; the ball shot out: fell.

Red again.

Dom Felipe did not remove his hands from his face. On his twenty louis were placed another twenty.

The game continued in silence.

In the midst of the mute anguish that reigned in the hearts of all who played, a third red number doubled the stakes of Dom Felipe, who continued immobile as stone.

None the less, so pronounced was the rise and fall of his breast that his whole body accompanied the pulsations of his heart.

Red!

Eighty louis were poured upon the eighty in front of the silent player.

Red!

The gold began to form a heap.

Red again!

The pile of gold was on a towering level with that enigmatic face which gradually retreated behind those two white hands with their delicately traced blue veins.

Red still!

That imperturbable face now seemed petrified. Behind the stiff, thin fingers he seemed to be laughing sardonically at the other players.

The immobility and the luck of

this singular companion in vice began to attract attention.

Red!

By this time the other men and women could not take their eyes from that mysterious individual whose face none of them had recognized yet, so absorbed had each been in his own game.

Red! Red!

The mountain of gold kept rising, rising, and rising before those two hands that seemed each moment whiter, stiffer and more firmly planted against the unknown gambler's face.

Red! Red! Red!

The coins crept under his arms, fell to his lap, through his legs and rolled across the floor with a ringing sound.

Red!

The others abandoned their own games to watch this remarkable player, hoping that the two marble hands would be lowered, that the mocking mask would fall, revealing his identity.

Each throw doubled the wealth piled before that deathlike figure. In vain a beautiful soubrette at his side leaned against him suggestively; in vain did a group of women form behind his chair, talking loudly and betting at each new lucky throw whether or no he would stake everything again.

Now when red was announced by the banker's tremulous voice a roar of astonishment would rise in the room.

The tympan clamored continuously for attention and order.

But the comments redoubled about that mute statue. Some protested against his impertinent madness, begging for a black number as deserved punishment; others applauded him enthusiastically and shouted bravos at each turn of the wheel; still others calculated the accumulated gold by counting the plays.

Each time the ball dropped there rose a chorus of conflicting emotions, of approval and disappointment.

Finally the banker, pale and trembling, swayed against the edge of the table and moaned in the despairing voice of a drowning, shipwrecked sailor:

"The bank . . . has gone to glory!"

But not even then did the mysterious player make the slightest gesture, although around him gathered the curious debauchees of both sexes and all nations, forming a noisy, tempestuous wall.

They shouted at him from all sides in all languages and in all tones.

He did not move.

They tapped his shoulders; they touched his head.

To no avail.

They shook his chair.

The statue remained motionless.

Then two men, each taking one of the noble's hands, tore them away from his face and a third raised



his head which was sunken on his breast.

A cry of horror rose from the on-lookers.

He who had broken the bank and played in silence all night, enticed by the women and envied by the men, was a frozen corpse with wide, staring eyes, half-open mouth, and on

his stiffened cheeks, two silent tears.

The three men drew back in terror and the dead gambler fell against the table, burying his face and hands in the gold as if to defend his gains against the greed of the surviving players, who were already protesting in loud voices against the legitimacy of his possession.

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## Valparaiso

*By*

ALBERT BRUSH

From sky-blue sea to sea-blue sky  
 In steps the city mounts on high,  
 But pausing now and then to rest  
 On a cool and cloistered Plaza's breast.

As struggles the ass beneath its load  
 Tortured by blasphemy and goad,  
 So doth this city seem to climb  
 In laboured strides beyond the slime  
 That laps its languid feet until  
 It stands upon the highest hill,  
 Lifting its arms in a vain quest  
 To join the city of the blest.

What visioned monk or brother friar,  
 Struggling toward his heart's desire,  
 First looked beyond the sin and vice  
 And saw the Vale of Paradise?

# Nellis

By

AUGUSTA DE WIT

From the Dutch by Agnes Rix

*Augusta de Wit was born in the East Indies, and educated first in Holland, then at Girton College, Cambridge. She is equally at home in Dutch and in English. She has travelled very extensively, has taught in a Girls' High School in Batavia, and at present resides in Munich, which she plans to make her permanent abode.*

*Mrs. de Wit, although she has, as in this story, dealt with Dutch material, is principally known as a writer of East Indian stories and novels. The Yale University Press will publish shortly a volume of her collected Indian tales entitled "Island India."*

**A**LTHOUGH he was only eighteen years old, his shoulders were so broad that they darkened the room when he sidled through the doorway of the tavern. And his feet, with long, flexible toes and strong, round ankles as firm as screws, denoted even in repose the ability to run like the wind across the brown heath, or to tramp during long hours on sandy paths, steadily and untiringly, under a heavy load.

He walked with a slight stoop and his eyes seemed to be eagerly searching the distance. This was a habit which had become second nature with him during his career as a smuggler. He had belonged to the gang since his tenth year. From the sordidness of the hovel where his teeming family lived, from the swearing, the blows, the hunger of many for the mouthful which was insufficient for one, he escaped to the wide freedom of the forest and the comradeship of the jolly smugglers who gave him drink, and sometimes even money when he darted noiselessly as a squirrel through the underbrush and warned the troop of the police lying in ambush.

With curses and threats and a whipping because of the few cents he had made for himself, his father would bring him back and send him out into the streets on an errand which should bring either gain or more blows. But he never failed to make his way back to the hidden path and the gang, and finally to the tavern, where he obtained pork and potatoes and a glass of beer.

Gradually he grew to be at home in the woods, as much as the squirrels and the crows that build their black nests among the branches, as much as the rabbits that burrow in the sandhills warmed by the morning sun. He knew every covert, every hidden path through the low, thick brushwood, every warm hollow where there was a good bed of dried ferns and brown leaves. He roamed about in all kinds of weather, fair and foul, gazing at the blue summer skies which look purple between the dark tops of the firs, or letting the rain run down his neck; wading through the snow and struggling against the wild winds in early spring. Day and night were alike to him. So he grew up and became a lean, strong being, going

out to seek his prey and returning, satisfied, to sleep. Now and then the rising temper of his youth would burst out at some rollicking drinking party, or a fight in which blows fell alike on friend and foe.

Since he had grown stronger he, too, carried his load—sacks of salt of increasing weight on shoulders which broadened every day. Finally by some kind of silent general election he became the leader of the gang.

He had never been caught, and the thought gave him real pleasure. After some particularly daring smuggling feat he would enter the tavern where the customs officers were drying their muddy boots and torn, wet uniforms before the fire, grouchy and fagged like hounds after a vain chase. Rattling the newly gained money in his pockets he would ask the pretty lass behind the counter for a tot o' gin.

"Here's to the health of the officers, eh Janie? And hopin' as how they'll learn to use their eyes better."

As he swallowed the drink he winked at the giggling girl, and glanced at the officers, who scowled furiously. In payment he tossed a *rijksdaalder*<sup>1</sup> on the counter, with the words:

"Got change for that? I ain't

<sup>1</sup> *rijksdaalder*—a Dutch silver coin, worth about one dollar.

got nothin' smaller. It's a flush day."

And in the doorway he turned round once more, with a laugh which showed all his fine, white teeth, and said:

"If yuh catch me, I'll treat yuh all."

And so it had been going for the last three years.

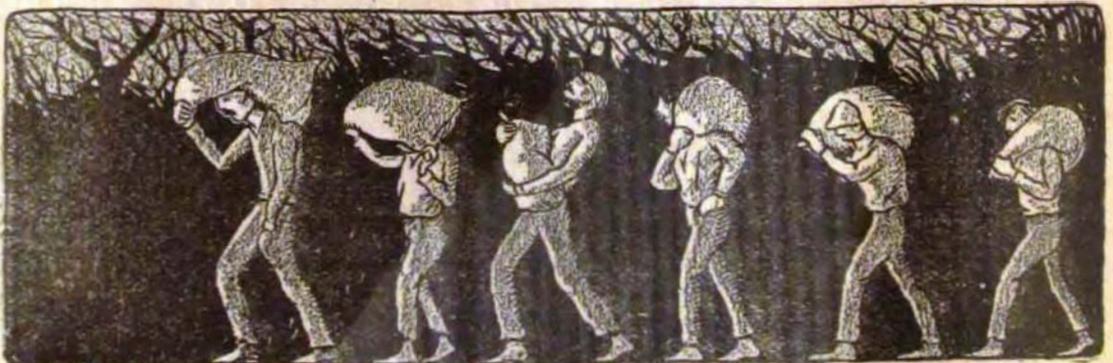
One night, in a raw December storm, the salt smugglers were again on their trail through the woods, one man behind the other, back bent, barefoot and silent. Nellis was leading. They were on the third leg of their trip from the Belgian frontier. They were scratched and bleeding from the sharp twigs which lashed them in the storm, and the ripe, open pine cones under their naked feet; their shoulders creaked under the load of wet salt; chilled to the bone, weary and stiff, they labored on.

Nellis turned. "Keep a look-out, boys!"

In the same instant they were surrounded by dark forms.

"Halt, or I fire! Give me the lantern!"

Quick as lightning Nellis brought the full weight of his sack to bear on the man who carried the light, throwing him to the ground. But at the same time he was pulled over



backwards and four men fell on him.

The officers clung to the smuggler like hounds to their quarry. They rolled together in a heap on the ground, torn by the stumps and stems with which they came in sharp contact. Nellis made no sound. In grim silence he wrestled against the bodies which fastened on to him, fighting wildly like a madman with fists and feet. With a desperate effort he got on his feet, tore himself free, and ran.

A shot rang after him, then a second. But darting behind a pile of wood he leaped and bounded over felled trees, over hollows and ditches, into the thick forest. He did not stop until he heard the sound of the shots grow faint. Then he fell exhausted on the ground.

He panted the night air through his parched throat, shaking under the thumping of his quickened heartbeats. He felt as if his head would burst. The darkness whirled around him. He pressed his clenched fists to his temples and found the warm blood oozing down on one side from under his matted hair. It flowed faster and warmer, down the side of his nose and into his mouth with a sickly taste. Carefully he felt the wound, and it smarted under his touch, across his forehead and skull.

Nellis was afraid. What if he should faint here and be found at daylight by the officers? He stood up dizzily, holding to a tree with one hand while he pressed the other against the wound. He tried to think where he was.

A faint light visible through the striped darkness of the pine forest, and the sound of constant murmuring which he distinguished between the roaring of the wind, indicated to him where the stream ran along the edge of the woods. He knew an uninhabited house there, not far dis-

tant. He had once slept there safely all day long, beside the salt bags of the gang, while the officers searched the neighborhood. He saw the house outlined like a black mountain, secure in the storm-flayed grey fields. Stumbling and falling over fern roots, he made for it, limping, for he had sprained his right foot in flight.

The window through which he hoped to climb in was closed with a shutter and seemed bolted. But the door of the barn was ajar. The rusty hinges creaked behind him, and then all was still.

The storm had heaped up the dead leaves in a corner. He crouched down on them. "They can't swear it was me," he thought, with a smuggler's knowledge of the law. That reassured him. But he felt himself growing dizzy and singularly light headed. He tried to stanch the blood with a strip which he tore from his shirt. He could hardly lift his arms, and the pain was so intense that he groaned. Then he heard steps approaching the door of the barn.

Instinctively Nellis tried to rise, to run, no matter where; but he could not get on his feet, and he crept back into the corner as far as possible, against the wall. This was undoubtedly the end.

The door opened and showed a flickering yellow light, which moved uncertainly to and fro. It was an old man, carrying a stable lantern in his hand. The wind ruffled his long, thin, grey hair, and tugged at the robe which he had hastily donned.

"I certainly thought . . ." he muttered, as he raised the lantern. Just then he caught sight of the pale, blood-stained face and the scared, angry eyes in the corner. He said calmly:

"You are wounded? Come, and I will help you."

And seeing how weak the man was, he approached him, helped him to his feet, and supported him to the house and into a dimly lighted room.

"Sit here for the present," he said, leading Nellis to a sofa. "And stay quiet till I return."

Nellis was as docile as a child; he was quite stunned. The old man returned with a grumbling, refractory maidservant, who said over and over again:

"Now, this is what you're always doing, Dominic!"

However, she helped him wash the blood from Nellis's face and hair, and place a wet bandage around his head. The old man took a blanket from the bed which stood in the corner of the room, and covered his guest with it.

"Now go to sleep. Tomorrow we will call the doctor."

Then he lay down shivering on the bed, and drew his dressing-gown about him, and the grumbling maid placed the oil lamp so that its light could disturb neither her master nor the patient, and went away.

Nellis lay perfectly still, with his knees drawn up to keep from sliding off the smooth horsehair couch. He was afraid. The night-light behind the porcelain shade, the bed with the green curtains in large folds, the rugs, the couch on which he lay—the rich folks' furnishings in a room which he had always seen with nothing but cobwebs in the corners, all this alarmed him.

But particularly the old man, who had so suddenly made his appearance and had brought him here—he was especially afraid of him. Did he want to keep him here and meantime warn the police? He raised himself on one elbow and looked

inquiringly at the man sleeping in the green bed. He did not stir. The old, sunken face lay still, with closed eyes, and parted lips. The sheet moved slightly over his chest with his regular breathing. Nellis looked at him for some time. Then he let himself slip back, cautiously stretched out his legs as far as the couch would permit, and slept.

He was startled by a voice in his ear and a grip on his wrist. He resisted.

"Not so rough," said the voice. Two men were standing by his couch. One of them was the old man of the night before, the other retained his hold on his wrist, and said to the old man:

"You have here a strange guest, Dominic."

The Dominic made some remark about losing the way and an accident in the dark. And the other sneered and began to loosen the bandage. When he saw the wound he gave a low whistle through his thin lips.

"Well, I never! And where did you get that?"

Nellis did not answer; he looked at the doctor distrustfully out of the corner of his eye.

"I can guess," the latter continued. And he began his work. The Dominic looked on concernedly; and seeing so much blood he asked: "Is it serious?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "Enough to take you and me out of this world. But these people have parchment instead of skin, and cast-iron by way of bones." He wiped his instruments carefully and said to Nellis:

"You can go back to the town tomorrow. You belong there, don't you, on the Heggelersdijk?"

The Heggelersdijk was the dis-

trict where the smugglers and the poachers lived.

"No, my friend, you need not answer. My question is merely a rhetorical figure. Go to the hospital, and the surgeon there will see to you. Go before ten in the morning."

He went away, accompanied by the old man. Nellis heard the click of his nailed boots in the hall, heard him laugh as he stood in the doorway and said.

"Only one of the townspeople, such as you, Dominic, would be fooled in this way. Any child in the village could tell you."

Then Nellis understood that the old man had taken him in without knowing who he was, and he looked anxiously at the door as his protector entered the room. Fine folks were always hand in glove with the police and the courts.

The Dominic said nothing. He paced the room once or twice and then stood gazing out of the window. His hands were crossed on his back; his fingers moved nervously. Suddenly he turned and said in a tone which implied that he had just made a decision.

"The first thing for you to do is to eat and grow quite strong."

Nellis stared at him in astonishment. Then the Dominic went to find the housekeeper, who was busy about the house. Her voice sounded in the hall, discontentedly: "It's a shame, Dominic, that good wine which you got from your Bible class! I can't allow it. I shall go to the village and get him some brandy, that is much better for him."

Then followed some indistinct reply from the old man, and the housekeeper responded:

"Well, what difference does that make? I won't melt in the rain. I'd rather go to the village than to the cellar, as sure as I'm alive. Does

the Dominic think that I can stand by and see him pour his good wine down the throat of that tramp? No, Dominic, Dominic! If you're going yourself I'd much rather do it!"

And she pattered down the cellar steps in her loose slippers.

She returned with a dish of stew in one hand and a dusty bottle in the other.

"Now, don't drink that as if it were water out of the gutter, like the stuff you get at home. If I had my way you wouldn't get any at all. But there's no arguing with the Dominic."

Nellis seized the bottle and gulped down the wine. It was good. And then he fell on the food, bolting it ravenously, until he was satisfied and forgot his anxiety in a new feeling of drowsy comfort. He lay back on his pillows and looked around the room—at the bedstead, at a table on which stood a large white bowl and a pitcher, at a cupboard full of books, at a picture on the wall showing a pale face crowned with a wreath of thorns. He vaguely remembered seeing something like it before . . .

His heavy eyelids drooped lower and lower. The last thing that he noticed, half asleep, was the Dominic walking to and fro outside, in front of the window.

Slowly the old man paced the wintry garden, up and down, up and down, not heeding the cold drizzle and the slipperiness of the muddy, black paths. There was something pathetic about his bent form in the worn black coat. Now and then his lips moved as if he were speaking to himself. He wore a worried expression. For forty years the good teacher had preached to his congregation of tradespeople, some active, others sleepy and retired, in the secluded little Dutch town where he

nad been born and bred. He had baptized their sons and daughters, catechized, confirmed and married them. And everything had always been as it should. But suddenly this smuggler had appeared. It was like a revelation from another world, from an evil, wild chaos. After the first shock he was beginning to ponder the matter with the semi-fearful curiosity of saintly souls regarding evil, wondering what might be the inner being and existence of such a man of violence.

He must lead this wanderer on the path of perdition, who had so wonderfully been placed in his power, back to the fold. But how should he speak to him? He visualized Nellis as he had seen him that morning asleep—the youthful face freckled to the very tip of the nose, the downy upper lip, and the dark lashes around the eyes which were closed so quietly, almost like those of a child. But then he thought of the doctor.

"A dangerous fellow. I wouldn't bother about him, Dominie. It's casting pearls before swine."

He hesitated. But in the end—it was growing dusk—he reproached himself for his little faith.

"Who hath made man's mouth? have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will teach thee what thou shalt say."

He went to his guest. Nellis lay tossing under the tumbled blanket, his face dull red with the rising fever. He was thinking regretfully of the loss at the last moment of his hardwon gain. The heavy sack would certainly have brought in a *rijksdaalder*; now he would get nothing. And he had lost his boots as well. They were new . . .

The Dominie read the grief in his dark eyes. "Already he repents," was his glad reflection. He sat down

beside the couch and placed his hand on Nellis' shoulder.

"Young man—"

The door was opened, and the maid poked her bonneted head round the corner.

"Dominie, the burgomaster is here and wants to speak to you. Shouldn't wonder if it was about him there," she added, with a threatening look at Nellis.

The Dominie rose confusedly; his benevolent thoughts were scattered like a brood of chicks at the swoop of a hawk.

"What are we to do? You're still very ill!" He was quite upset. Was his home, so hospitably opened to the fugitive, to turn into a trap?

Nellis jumped up and ran to the window. With trembling fingers the old man undid the fastenings and helped to raise the heavy sash. In a twinkling Nellis was outside, on his bare feet, and out of the little garden on to the high road. The protecting dark enveloped him.

He limped along for some distance, keeping as close as possible to the alders by the ditch. And so in time he caught up to a covered cart which was jogging along. The driver held out the butt end of his whip and hauled him on board among the sacks and barrels. So he was carried along, nearby to his home on the Heggelersdijk.

His mother had hung the kettle over the fire to boil water for coffee, and was warming her hands on the lukewarm metal.

"I thought they'd caught you," she remarked with listless astonishment.

"They'd better look out for their own skins," answered Nellis. He sat down by the window, shaking violently, and supported his burning head with two hands.

"I s'pose you've eaten?"

He said "yes" without raising his eyes. And when night came and his father stumbled in and banged the door behind him with an oath, he crept into a corner and lay down, with his face to the wall, on an old potato sack and some straw.

He remained there all through the following day, sometimes groaning aloud. Nobody paid any attention to him. He remembered how the Dominie had given him the blanket off his bed and the wine from his bottle and food out of his dish.

The second day dragged slowly on. About noon he rose and rummaged in the muddle in the dark, dirty corners till he found a piece of twine. With this he went out. He returned, tired and pale, with the smell of gin in his clothes, and crept into his corner. But at evening he rose again and went out of the town into the woods.

The forest is bordered by a strip of scrub oak which retains its dull brown foliage all through the winter. Into this he vanished, bending so that the branches swayed above him as he went deep into the brush. When he emerged he held a brace of hares by the hindlegs. Their heads hung as if their necks were broken, and the eyes bulged from their sockets. He felt them; they were large and fat. The dealer in the town had not had such fine ones for a long time. He slipped the hares into a bag and turned across the fields in the direction of the Dominie's house.

The cross old maidservant opened the door.

"So! At least you've got the decency to come and thank the Dominie. He's been thinking you were sick and dead, for he went to the hospital—in all this bad weather and him so old—and they didn't

know anything about you there."

She brought him to her master. The old man was sitting by the window, pensively gazing at the western sky which stretched in pale hues over the lingering orange on the horizon, like an archway of pearl over a road of gold and translucent glass. He held an open book on his knees.

"Here he is," said the maid laconically.

The Dominie rose hastily from his seat, dropping the book to the ground; and running up to Nellis he laid his two small white hands on the fist which still awkwardly clasped the gnarled stick.

"I *am* glad, I *am* glad!"

He looked up at the sturdy face above him, his eyes glistening with eager joy.

At last Nellis managed to open his mouth and say, "I thank ye very kindly, an' here's a couple o' hares."

The Dominie only half heard him and did not understand him at all.

"Better not bring in the lights yet," he whispered to the maid, "he doubtless wants to speak to me." He laid his hand on the arm of his guest and added, "Sit down, Nellis,—that's your name, isn't it?"

"Yes, they call me that," answered Nellis in a doubtful tone. He sat down cautiously, on the edge of the chair.

"And are you quite better?" the Dominie asked.

"Pretty fair," said Nellis. And after a moment he added, with increasing confidence, "Jan Brunnings gave me a lift t'other day, and they didn't know nothing about me at home, and I ain't heard nothing neither, not from the burgomaster, or the officers, or the courts, or nobody."

The Dominie interrupted him nervously.

"I've been thinking how you might best be helped. I can't do it myself, I need no one,—I do my own garden. But they want a gardener's assistant at the castle. If I give you a note to the lady she will be sure to take you on."

Nellis was busy loosening with his teeth the strong knot which tied the sack. He gave it a final tug.

"Oh, I can earn a plenty," he declared confidently. He pulled out the hares and laid them on the table. "They're fat ones."

The Dominic leaned over to examine them with his shortsighted old eyes.

"What have you there?"

"Hares, from the heath. I caught'm with a snare in the woods."

He laughed, half slyly, half boyishly. "The gamekeeper tracked all around me, but he ain't seen me yet."

"You don't mean to say that you poached those hares?" cried the Dominic.

"Sure, just now! I'm a good hand at that. The baron's brother comes here to hunt every year, but he needn't take such pains. I'll see to that," declared Nellis proudly.

The Dominic was speechless. Then he burst out,

"Fellow, how dare you come to me with these?"

He trembled so that he had to steady himself on the table. Nellis looked at him, puzzled.

"But I told you the keeper didn't see me," he said in self defense.

"You needn't be afraid of him,—he won't bother you."

The Dominic sank back on his seat, covering his eyes with his hands.

"I saved him from punishment, and now he regards me as an accomplice," was his appalling thought. And immediately the Christian habit of severe introspection forced him to the humble admission, "I deserve this—I was silent when I should have spoken, I left him in his sins, and now he has fallen deeper."

He wiped the perspiration from his brow, and after a while said gently.

"Don't you know that it is a sin to steal?"

Nellis stared at him in amazement. The old man pointed with a trembling finger at the hares. "Take those away and deliver them to the person to whom

they belong. Unfortunate young man, how have you come to be a deceiver and a thief?"

"I ain't ever stolen nothin' yet," cried Nellis. "The man as told you that lied!"

The Dominic stared at him. "What about those hares, then?" he asked at last.

"I snared'm mesel'. Did the Dominic think that I'd steal a hare from a pal? I went there mesel' this noon, an' set the snare, and this evenin' they were caught. If I



take'm to the town I can certainly get twenty-five stivers for 'm across the counter, and nobody can say nothin' agin that."

"Nellis," said the Dominie as he leaned forward and looked right into his eyes. "Don't you really understand that if you take those hares which belong to another and which he alone has the right to shoot, you are stealing? And that if you secretly carry salt across the border you are depriving the State of customs, and that that also is theft?"

"I don't steal," declared Nellis. "Everybody knows I carry salt. I can earn the money just as well as the king, he's got plenty any way."

"Do not fool yourself with such arguments! You know that you are doing something which is not right. If your conscience had been clear you would not have run away from the Burgomaster—who did not even know what you had done."

"But of course I'll run," cried the smuggler. "Should I let myself be caught and hauled into court and locked up?"

"Then you admit that you deserve punishment?" asked the Dominie in a more severe tone.

"Yes, if they catch you, you've got to go to the lock-up," acknowledged Nellis. "An' if they're just about it I wouldn't say nothin' of it. But it happens sometimes that they collar you when you're goin' along the edge of the woods. And there may be snares there, but I mean to say they can't prove that you put'm there. But sometimes they take you all the same, and the game-keeper is believed, whether he speaks true or not, that's the law. And with smuggling it's just the same. If they catch me with a sack on my back, and they've seen me and can swear to it that it was me, well,

I wouldn't say so much about it. So long as it's fair. But otherwise I'll punch'm in the face, and the officers know that, and they're just as afraid of the smugglers as the smugglers are of them."

He stopped: he had clearly outlined the rights of both belligerent parties.

The Dominie looked at him sadly and thought, "Is it possible that in our land, where the word of God is taught to all, there should be those who are worse than the heathen!"

And he told the sinner of the Judge's wrath, of his compassion on those who repent and turn from their wicked ways, of the peace of those who walk in the path of righteousness. Nellis sat opposite him, his eyes fixed on the ground motionless. He did not understand it. He did not understand why the rich folks might shoot the hares on the heath, and he must not touch them. He did not understand why the king, who was rich, should receive money from him, Nellis, who was poor. He did not understand why he might not resist the police who wished to take him into court. He, the untamed lord of a wild garden of Eden, upon whose head not even the shadow of the tree of knowledge had fallen, understood neither the law nor the law-giver. The old divine gave him his best, all his godliness, all his pity, all his innocent grief—the most sacred treasures of his own sweet soul and the words in which is contained the heritage of the sorrowing ages, of generations seeking and finding, of those few rare souls whose ardent desire for the supreme good became a purification and a light into the world.

"Promise me that you will lead a better life from now on," he pleaded.

But Nellis did not answer. He did not know what to say. He was unhappy and perplexed. Finally he stood up, took the hares mechanically, and went away. The Dominie did not hinder him. In him arose bitterness against this man who despised God's grace and persevered in evil.

The aged maid crossed the hall with the lamp as Nellis went out. She saw his downcast face and the hares in his hand.

"Stolen game! Shame on you! So you thought you'd get rid of that here, impudent fellow. That's all the thanks we get!" And she slammed the door after him.

Nellis stood outside, in the dark and the mist, half stunned. And he returned whence he had come, limping on his swollen foot. He came to the tavern where the smugglers were wont to barter their salt secretly to the shopkeepers of the town. A reddish light shone through the dirty window. He halted, and looked again at his hares. "And they're such *finé* ones!" In his disappointment he said the words aloud. He could not think clearly. He only felt, like some dull pain

within, that the only one who had ever been good to him had spurned his gratitude and his gift.

Some one opened the door of the tavern. Cautiously the host peeped out.

"I thought somebody was bringing in some salt," he said in hushed tones. "Whatcher got there? Hares? Well, thirty stivers for the two."

Nellis threw them at his feet. "Take'm, and be d——d!"

In a moment the host had hidden away the soft little bodies. He invited Nellis to come in: to take a drink on the deal. Nellis took the glass from pretty Janie without looking at her. He swallowed the raw gin and said gruffly.

"Gim'me another. You can take it out of the '*daalder*.'"

And he took a second drink and a third and a fourth. He drank till he no longer felt that dull pain within. And when the innkeeper thought it was time to close for the night he said:

"Y'r credit's up, Nellis."

And led him to the door and kicked him out into the street. And there he lay.

# The Bozhur Flower

By

M. M. RAKICH

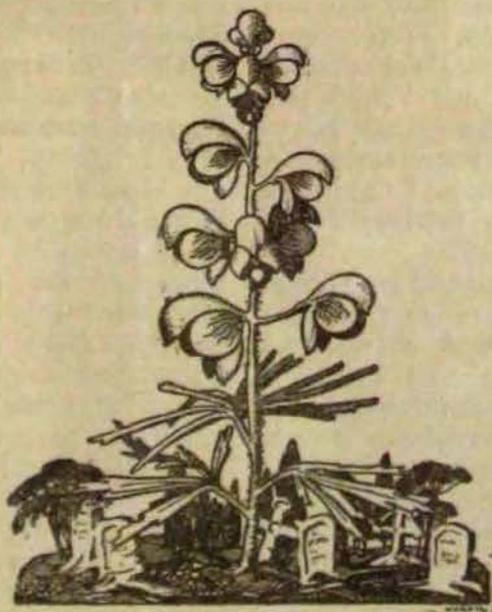
*From the Serbian by Dorothea Prall*

*There is a popular belief in Serbia that after a famous battle on Kósovo plain, a flower burst into bloom, crimson from Serbian, blue from Turkish blood.*

'How beautiful the night! Lo, everywhere,  
Through poplar and acacia boughs and tall  
Old linden trees and oaks, the moon lets fall  
The pouring marvel of her golden hair.

Over the meadow land of fragrant grass,  
Over ploughed fields which sudden rain in streams  
Has deepened to a black, mysterious mass,  
The soul of moonlight, large and lovely, dreams.

A secret hush. On silent Kósovo  
Where countless legions met their ancient doom,  
Still watered by the blood of long ago,  
The bozhur flower bursts to crimson bloom.



# Fresh Bread

A story for men.

By

ARVID SKAPPEL

From the Norwegian by Arvid Paulson.



*Arvid Skappel was born in Christiania, Norway, forty years ago. He began to study medicine but quickly gave it up. He is very fond of travelling, and has covered most of the world. For a time he was in America, then he returned to Norway where he was connected with the Christiania daily, "The World." Several years ago he founded a magazine, devoted principally to fiction. His books "Under the Stars and Stripes" and "Pacific" deal with his travels, and have been very successful. He says, however, that he still has his best novels to do.*

OLD Frida was not much to brag about as a sea boat. She was all right in headseas, for she had a broad bow and a stern that was round like a ball. But if the wind and the way she was headed made the swell surge against her sides, the round-bowed lady was not very safe to be out in. There was not a pair of sea legs made that could stand up on her then. When she rose and sank with the waves, burying herself almost completely between them, one could manage neither on deck, on bridge, or in stokehole.

As on this trip. All the way from Blyth to a good distance past the Russian border, with Archangel as her destination, she had behaved badly, indeed; as treacherously as a snake or a fox. It had been a voyage that had tested the crew's patience as never before; and if glowing oaths and red hot cursing and damning could have melted ancient scrap iron, there would have been nothing left but slags of old Frida. But Lord, you say, one

can't scrap a boat into junk just because she rolls. There is one thing certain, however: such a heaving and storm-ridden sea watch after watch, day after day, week in and week out, unconsciously beats a feeling of depression into the blood and forces one's humor perilously beneath the zero point.

One dreary morning—off the Russian coast—it happened that the steward had had bad luck with the bread baking. The dough would not rise, and the loaf looked more like half a pound of chewing gum than anything else in the world. Whether the rolling sea was to blame for this ill luck, or if it was the steward's own fault, I don't know, but one thing is certain, and that is that the same rolling sea did not tend to make the crew in the fore-castle receive the soggy bread with any amount of satisfaction. Neither port nor starboard—neither seamen nor stokers. A lesser thing than bad bread would have caused the crew's unbalanced temper to overflow; and the oaths and

curses that were flung at the poor steward's head were, indeed, both painful and choice.

It was especially the firemen and the coal trimmers who were dissatisfied. And it surely was not mother's best behaved children who had shipped on the Frida on this trip; there were all kinds of refuse that came from God knows where. Both skipper, engineer and mates had had their hands full, trying to keep things going smoothly from watch to watch. It would have been folly to take them to task for carrying a Browning in their hip pocket, for discontent had been smouldering under the ashes for some time, and it was only the prudence and the indulgence of the officers that prevented it from coming to open fight.

But the feeling down in the stoke-hole was increasing, and on this early, dreary morning no power on earth could have kept the cover from flying off the kettle. Already the youngest one of the coal trimmers, Nils Peisa, had been sent astern to the captain with a sample of the steward's fatal bread; and he had been ordered by the rest to tell the skipper in plain language that just because they were stokers and simple seamen, that did not mean that they were swine and would eat all kinds of garbage: they wanted bread, decent bread—fresh, soft bread.

But the skipper was taking a nap, he was told, and Peisa returned with a tray of crackers which were so hard that they had to dip them in their coffee before they could get their teeth into them.

Well—life on the sea is life on the sea, and if one can't get any soft bread aboard ship, there is always hard tack to be found. That's the life of the sailor. But the gang in the fire room on the Frida wasn't that kind. They hadn't come

aboard her to be starved to death.

Jörgen Knurren was their spokesman. He always was—in peace as well as in war. If there was "deviltry in the air," as he himself called it, he was the one who by reason of his size, strength, and brutal force became their leader. And if there ever was a moment of peace and quiet aboard the ship, he would soon begin with his complaints; he would grumble and growl, and swear and rage, just to bring about fresh trouble and deviltry. One never could feel safe with Knurren around. He could not live without noise and strife—he could not breathe in such lukewarm air. He had to use either his mouth or his fists.

"Damn it!" he bellowed suddenly and threw the piece of hard tack he had in his hand against the deck so that it was crushed into crumbs. And jumping to his feet, he hissed out: "What does that fop, that damned puppy-dog of a skipper, think that he can put over on us? Well, he can give you guys anything he likes, but me—me—Jörgen Knurren! I am going to have a few words with that Sunday school guy, so help me God. Even if I have to lay him out cold and see him dead. I, Jörgen Knurren, am going to get decent soft bread, I tell you."

"Oh, don't get so excited, Knurren," said Peisa, trying to calm him and going towards him in a conciliating manner. "Tomorrow everything will be all right, so what's the use of . . ."

Jörgen Knurren stopped short and stared at the coal trimmer. For a moment the youth's audacity had made him speechless, and out of his bloodshot eyes he gave him an evil glance. Then, suddenly, he picked up a piece of hard tack from out of the bread basket on the table and threw it at Peisa's head. The youth

dropped to the deck with a gash in his nose from which the blood flowed freely.

"Puppy-dog," cried the berserk; and he hissed out the word between the teeth. "Don't you know Knurren?"

And wiping the froth from his mouth with the back of his hand, he threw the white foam in the face of the insolent one who had dared to make suggestions to him.

But at this, several of the men were on their feet. There was protest in their faces which in the near-darkness of the fore-castle seemed pale in comparison with Knurren's. What the devil did he mean by striking one of them like that? Better find out right now how hard he could bite. They put down their cups and their eating utensils, wiped off their mouths with the palm of the hand, hitched up their trousers, and stood angry and unflinching, face to face with Knurren.

Again Jørgen stood agape for a moment, staring at his new adversaries. Then he snapped his jaws together with a snarl and a gnash, swept the crowd with a glance of his two flashing eyes, and in the next instant he had sprung to the doorway where he stood facing them. He measured them with his evil, yellow eye, like that of a cat, piercing each one as if he were branding him with an iron. Then he slowly lifted his enormous ham fist in the air, bringing it down with the weight of a sledgehammer, snarling under his breath in a voice full of sneer and menace: "The first mother's pet that moves as much as a finger, will land where he landed"—and he spit in the direction of the stunned coal-trimmer. "And mind you, you fools, if any one of you dares to act as cushion for my fist, he'll regret that he ever was born. Have I said

enough?" he suddenly shrieked and let his sledgehammer fist whiz in the air round about himself with a broad, menacing sweep—"Sit down, or I'll make you sit down . . ."

And the men stumbled, defeated and in silence, to their seats at the table.

"Now you follow me back to the skipper, you poor vipers, and I'll show you, you cowards, how to get bread that's fit to eat."

He stepped across the high threshold out on the deck, and stood there waiting, while one by one the men came stealing out, clinging close to the bulk-head.

"Curs!" he exclaimed, his mouth distorted.

As he stood there, Knurren looked what he almost was—a mighty gorilla. Over six feet in height, a giant in every way; almost inexplicably ugly, rugged and hairy. The low, apelike forehead slanted back at a sharp angle, the eyes were like little round balls, stinging and black, though they sometimes glistened with a phosphorescent yellow glow. His jaw was square and prominent, and his clumsy, unshapely, hairy hands hung below his knees, while the legs were slightly bowed. His whole frame was bent forward, and the upper part of the body was pushed out in such a way that the arms swung to and fro before him, like two clubs, whenever he moved.

It was difficult to find any trait in this giant's outward appearance that might serve to prove that his origin and ancestry could not be traced back to the cream of society in some East African animal kingdom. This monster must possess phenomenal strength; and he seemed to be almost dying for desire and a chance to use it.

It cannot be said that people gave much sympathy to Jørgen Knurren

as he dragged himself along in this world. The only reason for his being tolerated, listened to and obeyed by those with whom he happened to come in contact, was their respect and fear for his physical power and his brutality. No one has any particular desire to be hammered to pieces by a bloodthirsty gorilla.

The time was approaching eight bells and change of watch when Jørgen Knurren wobbled astern on his straddling sea legs, followed by the gang from the stokehole. The seamen heard the commotion and thought they had best come along too, since it would otherwise seem like a notion of only the few; and one by one and in small groups they trailed aft. One could hear Knurren mumbling and cursing in his red beard as—heavy and awkward—he walked toward the ship's stern in the rolling sea. Now and then he would burst out into venomous profanity. In the doorway of the mess-room he met the steward. He asked him where the skipper was. The rest of the gang had stopped just abaft of midship—as much out of timidity as of old habit.

"He is still asleep," stammered the steward and tried to hasten by.

"Then wake him, you pasty face!" He caught hold of him by the neck and held him there as if he had been a little child. "And tell him that Knurren wants to talk to him."

"You tell him that yourself, Jørgen," whined the steward, squeezed into a corner in the gangway.

Jørgen went inside and stopped in the pantry. His eye glanced from door to door, as if to calculate just where the skipper was taking his nap. Suddenly he raised his head angrily and shouted in a loud and insolent voice:

"Here is some one who wants to talk with you, captain."

No reply. No one appeared, to announce Knurren's visit to his chief, neither mate, nor second mate, nor any one of the engineers. It seemed almost as if they were staying away purposely.

Knurren paced toward the door that was farthest aft of the port side. He shoved it open without even knocking; and it gave a bang that you could hear throughout the compartment.

The captain drowsily turned around in his bunk, rubbing his eyes.

"What sort of behavior do you call this!" he grumbled. "See that you get back forward right away!"

"Get back!" hissed Knurren. "We've come here to get some bread, and we are not going to leave until we get it. Are you awake now?"

"You'll get fresh bread when you ask for it in a decent manner. Now get out of here."

The skipper pulled off the blanket the covered him, and sat up at the end of the bed. Two cold blue eyes flamed against Knurren. "Have you understood what I said?" It came, short and forceful.

"I told you I want some fresh bread, or I'll . . ."

The skipper jumped down from his bunk. He was dressed in a white flannel shirt which was open at the neck, and he had on his trousers and a pair of slippers. He was almost a head shorter than Knurren and of slender build; yet under the loose-fitting shirt one sensed a pair of broad, well shaped shoulders and a strong, finely rounded chest.

The thin, determined looking lips of his mouth became a narrow strip, and a deep furrow appeared between the thick and almost black eyebrows as he pointed with his hand in the direction of the doorway and repeated:

"Go!"

The word hit Knurren like a whip; he bent way over, clenching that enormous fist of his, while his eyes shot gleams of yellow:

"I want to get . . ."

"Go!" There was a dangerous note in the captain's voice.

"Go!" And in the same instant his fist made Knurren's eyes look into a rain of stars, and more from stupefaction than from fear or respect, the giant backed out through the messroom, across the gangway and out on deck—followed by the captain.

Midships, the crew stood all together, in one large group. The sound of loud-mouthed talk, an outcry, and a dull thud had reached them out there, and had stirred their curiosity. It had made them forget ship's discipline—never to come aft of midship except in line of duty and when they had work to do there. Something must have happened just now—they were staring and gaping, and could scarcely breathe for excitement; and when the two came out they were all stretched across the main deck like a fence of glaring human beings.

Jörgen Knurren stumbled backwards, his body bent, although the skipper was no longer pursuing him; but halfway to the crew, he stopped. He straightened up, threw a quick, wild glance across his shoulder, wriggled his head like a bleeding bull, and started to spit furiously as if he wanted to rid his mouth of some unclean taste.

"Damned whelp," he yelled, shooting forward the upper part of his body in the direction of the captain, who had stopped, too. "Cub, who only dares to hit a guy when you've got him alone and no one looking. Strike now, if you dare, you cheat—you belly-pincher—

strike me first, you son of a . . . and I'll squash you and grind you to bits!"

"You fool skipper—you come over here to me. Ha-ha, you pale face—you don't dare to do that, I bet . . ."

But he suddenly stopped: the captain was calmly coming over toward him.

"Listen to me, Jörgen Knurren," he said in a quiet and even voice, while his eyes met Knurren's and held them nailed, "no man has ever used such language to me on my own deck and got away with it. So if what you want is fight, you'll get it. Nevertheless, I am going to ask you now once more—you and the rest—to go back to your deck. You'll get your fresh bread—as I have already told you—when you come and ask me in a decent way; not when you come barking for it like dogs. Now go back to your quarters."

"Ho-hoi-i-i-i-i," yelled Knurren with a mocking laughter. "So you want to fight, you little toy-captain . . . Go? Who is it you tell to go? A good-for-nothing like you! Don't you go, guys. You just stay here, and I'll show you how to wipe the deck with the skipper's rags up here in the Arctic Ocean. Come on, if you dare, you milk fed pup, come on . . ."

And the next moment the giant had pulled his heavy blue sweater over his head, and flung his cap on top of the winch. Then he pulled his belt a few notches tighter.

The little that one could see of the enormous body was brown, as if it had been smeared with walnut oil, but the chest and the arms, and even the upper part of the shoulders, were covered with thick, black hair. His muscles were tremendous; and not until now, as he stood there naked, could one get the right im-

pression of the abnormal length of his arms.

A murmur of admiration came from the crew, intermingled perhaps with an undercurrent of anxiety. For while most of them had not much use for their young captain—they could not forgive him the cold, correct tone in which he ordered them about, and which made them boil with rage inside—the thought of seeing him ground to pieces between Jørgen Knurren's sledgehammer fists alarmed them.

But when they saw the skipper calmly taking off his shirt, the anxiety they had felt disappeared in most of them. It no longer seemed entirely certain that the fight was going to be nothing but a brutal butchery. There was something about the way the skipper had pulled off his shirt that indicated it was not the first time he had been in a fight. And none of them had imagined that the loose-fitting clothes they saw him in every day, could hide a chest that measured very few inches less than Knurren's. His skin was a pinkish white, like a woman's, but under it one could see winding wiry muscles, giving the skin that covered them a bluish hue; and at every movement he made, they would quiver and throb, just as they do on a blooded horse.

Knurren's eyes took swift measure of his opponent. He recoiled. But it was only momentarily. With a snorting sound he scornfully swept aside his amazement.

The captain ordered the first mate and the boatswain to come over to him.

"I shall have to give Jørgen Knurren the lesson he has been begging for all this time," he said, his lips contracting into a slight smile. "But I don't know what sort of tactics Knurren uses when he fights

And I want fair play. So you two will have to see that everything goes right, and you have to take the time for each round, too. Fairly and squarely. It may be a knockout that will decide it."

Seldom, if ever, have two so totally different opponents been seen in a ring. Almost inhuman raw strength on the one side; endurance, litheness and intelligence on the other. It was easy to see that Knurren did not like this arrangement of time, fair play and referee, but he made no opposition. Now he had his chance in spite of all, and he would not fail to take advantage of it. No one of the men looking on could have any doubt as to the final outcome of the struggle, but at the same time they felt sure, and had already had proof, that it would be a violent and a fierce battle.

At the very same instant that the first mate cried: "Time!" the fight broke loose. Swift and lithe as a boy in his teens, the skipper commenced to dance around the colossus. It was evident that the noble art of boxing was by no means Greek to him. He seemed to realize that a pair of quick feet is the best support to a man's fist. His movements were like lightning: he drove home blows from left and right, now striking at him with a feint, now with a solid touch, as if he were just feeling his way.

Knurren took to the defensive. He kept swinging around with his right leg as a pivot, following as best he could the other man's movements, and parrying his attacks with his long arms, his eyes fixedly watching the skipper's constantly moving head. But suddenly he grew weary of this dancing around, made a false attack with his left, and followed it up unexpectedly with a blow of such crushing force that the captain

would have been sent into an involuntary and lasting slumber, if he had not ducked his head as promptly as he did; and the sledge hammer whizzed perilously near his jaw.

The shaggy berserk now tried to get close to him, but the skipper, realizing only too well that once in the gorilla's grip he would be done for, fell back, ducked and escaped; and finally he sent home a tremendous blow with his right that hit Knurren in the diaphragm. It forced the giant to stop and get his breath. He rolled his monkey head confusedly. It was the first time in his life he had experienced such an awakening. He stood quite still for a moment, blinking his eyes and gazing at his opponent as if he were about to ask: "How did you do it?"

But he was far from done for, he remembered his successful beginning—made a feint with his left and let the right follow with a tremendous swing of the arm, and the skipper received such a blow on the left of his neck that he began to reel, and the next second he felt himself caught in the horrible vise of the ferocious gorilla. Then followed a rain of short, swift, merciless blows which sent the skipper half unconscious down on the deck, while the colossus stood bending over him, prepared to give him a last knockout blow in case he should try to raise his head. With his watch in his hand, the first mate was just about to throw himself between them, should Knurren show signs of taking advantage of the favorable situation and try to throttle his fallen enemy.

"Time!" He was saved only by seconds. Knurren had to be pulled away by many pairs of arms; he was like a maniac, swearing and yelling

wildly, and he could not understand what the devil time had to do with him.

The skipper was in need of the pause. Knurren's embrace and the jab to the neck had nearly put him to sleep, and again and again he repeated to himself, in his dazed condition, that from now on it was a question of keeping away from those damnable tentacles. Another such squeeze and he knew that he would be done for. And he nodded assent when the first mate whispered to him: "Try to close his blinkers—he don't like the jab you gave him over the right eye."

So when it came to the second round, the skipper kept his promise. He tripped and danced, driving home a punch with lightning speed, jumped back, and was again out of reach. He tired out the slow awkward gorilla with his constant ring dance, and at the end of the round he planted two punches on his nose. While they drew the blood from his mouth; his skin, which was like bark, was only scratched, yet the blood irritated the giant. But the skipper felt all the time as though he were hitting a sand bag. When the round was finished, he nevertheless was at an advantage, in spite of his fall in the previous round. Knurren was puffing violently; he acted as if he were doing it in order to fill his lungs quite full. It was a new sensation, and Knurren hated anything that was foreign and incomprehensible to him. He glanced in the direction of the crew to see whether they had noticed anything. He saw them with their heads close together, and he delivered under his breath, a string of vicious oaths. "You just wait, you swine . . ."

In a rage Knurren took to the offensive; he stabbed and stamped like a bull, but the captain seemed

as if made of rubber, for he was never there when Knurren struck. Several times the berserk received punches in the solar plexus, blows that made him cry out and gasp for breath. Exhausted and seeing red, he tore at this marionette enemy of his in order to put an end to this ridiculous exhibition, but again he ran his eye into a tremendous "right hook" which made him sneak off with a sheepish expression on his cruel countenance. At the same moment the first mate called out that time was up.

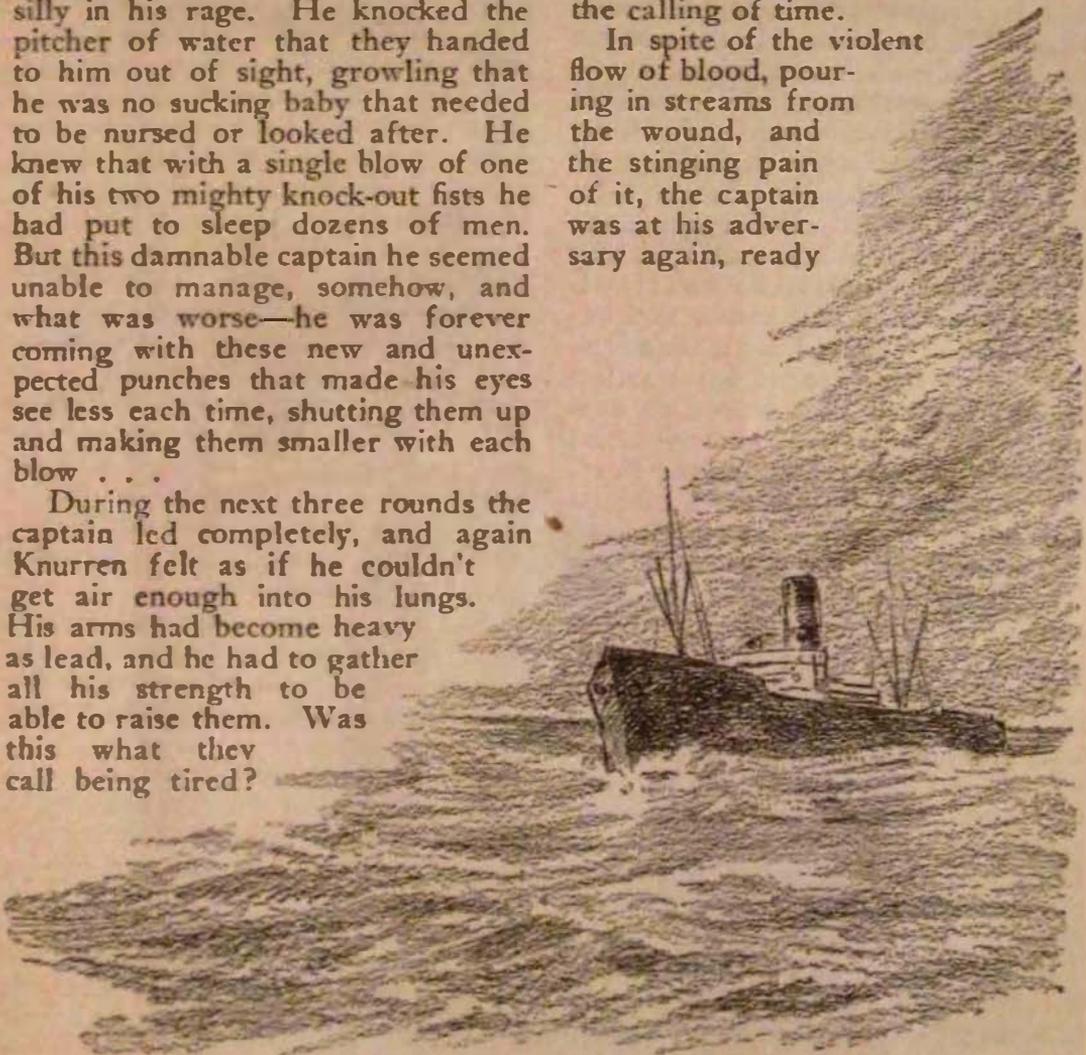
He puffed and snorted and seemed silly in his rage. He knocked the pitcher of water that they handed to him out of sight, growling that he was no sucking baby that needed to be nursed or looked after. He knew that with a single blow of one of his two mighty knock-out fists he had put to sleep dozens of men. But this damnable captain he seemed unable to manage, somehow, and what was worse—he was forever coming with these new and unexpected punches that made his eyes see less each time, shutting them up and making them smaller with each blow . . .

During the next three rounds the captain led completely, and again Knurren felt as if he couldn't get air enough into his lungs. His arms had become heavy as lead, and he had to gather all his strength to be able to raise them. Was this what they call being tired?

There was something akin to wonder behind his monkey brow.

Toward the end of the eighth round the skipper's growing self-assurance nearly sent him to his destruction. In a moment of carelessness, he permitted the giant to come too close to him, and managed only partly to parry an upper-cut which sent him high in the air, his feet entirely clear of the deck. Before he had time to pick himself up again, the giant's right fist described a circle in the air and hit him from the side, nearly separating his ear from his head. Again he was saved by the calling of time.

In spite of the violent flow of blood, pouring in streams from the wound, and the stinging pain of it, the captain was at his adversary again, ready



to give and to take still more beating. Both men, however, were now more careful, although many and heavy blows were dealt. The skipper's white body began to take on patterns in red and flaming tints, but he had learned his lesson and kept at due distance from the iron paws of the savage.

The thirteenth round was almost the captain's last. In a moment when he thought he saw his adversary expose himself, he attacked with a short punch against his chest and ribs, but Knurren parried with a devastating blow against his jaw, and he toppled over and fell to the deck. He did not get up, and they all thought his neck was broken; it seemed as if his muscles had ceased functioning. The spectators approached with feelings of anxiety and curiosity. But no—he was not beaten yet. Before the mate had counted to five, the captain was on his elbow, on seven he was crawling to his hands and knees, and before nine had passed the mate's lips, he was in the face of his startled antagonist with two iron-hand eye-shutters. But the berserk had scented victory, and was on the alert. He hailed a veritable storm of jabs and blows upon the skipper's still befogged head; the captain reeled, first to the right, then to the left, and when time was called, he fell against the deck like a lifeless corpse.

They carried him to the ship's railing, and the boatswain threw water on his face while the first mate tried to get him to stand on his feet. It looked serious, his eyes seemed unable to open, and foam dripped from a lifeless mouth. But when the steward arrived with a glass of cognac, he roused to life again. The mate, who was holding him in his arms, felt the strength beginning to return to the beaten body, and he

was encouraged to think that his chief might last a few rounds more.

The captain, however, knew that it was not a question of rounds. He felt that his strength was at its lowest ebb, and he realized that it was no use attempting to regain his lost power by any scientific tricks or to preserve what he had left by careful attacks.

The next round would be the deciding one. There was not the slightest doubt in his mind as to that. He himself was almost at the end of his resistance; nevertheless not so near as Knurren—who had been gloating at his fallen enemy with badly disguised triumph all this time—thought that he was.

There were no feints or jabs this time. Knurren raged forward in a fierce manner, apparently determined to make this the last chapter. He pushed the captain before him over toward the winch which was midship. But with unbelievable quickness and endurance, the skipper succeeded in parrying and ducking and keeping away from the close proximity of the excited and maddened gorilla. Knurren retired, and in his arrogance he exposed himself again and again, in order to entice the skipper to follow him out on the deck, where he could get at him and give him the final blow.

But the captain wouldn't follow him; he refused to be taken unawares. And then, exhausted, Knurren with a long drawn-out oath went after him again.

Then the miracle happened.

Like lightning the captain's right fist shot its way into the giant's solar plexus which he had left uncovered. It looked as if in this blow he had collected all the weight and force he still possessed. No one can say exactly how it occurred, but suddenly Knurren threw his arms in the

air and fell flat on the deck like one who had been shot.

The captain stood stiff, staring at his fallen enemy, while he was being counted out. Then he sank in a heap, without a sound, at Jörgen Knurren's side, pale and motionless. It took some time to put life into Knurren and his victorious captain, and, queerly enough, both of them opened their eyes at the same time.

The captain was the first to get on his legs. With his hands in his pockets, he stood and watched the men trying to help Knurren to his feet again, rubbing and massaging his legs in order to make them support the body. There was neither resentment nor triumph in his eyes, as he stood there, regarding the colossus before him. He just seemed to be waiting to see what the other man was going to do.

Then Knurren caught sight of

him. Strength suddenly returned to the giant's body; with a rough gesture he brushed aside those who were trying to help him, quickly stroked the back of his hand across his eyes, which were almost glued together, and went forward to the captain. He stretched out his broad, hairy fist, and his voice was not very clear as he said:

"Captain, you are the first man who has ever made Jörgen Knurren bite the dust, and if I never got anything but hard-tack to eat for the rest of my life, I'd gladly chew it on any ship on which you are the skipper."

The captain took his hand, and a shadow of a smile passed across his thin lips as he shook it and replied:

"To-morrow morning you'll get some fresh bread, Jörgen Knurren. for now you have asked for it in a decent way."



# The Moles

By

GEORGES IMANN

From the French by W. L. McPherson

## SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING INSTALLMENTS

*Vladimir Medviedoff, the leader of the exiled Russian Revolutionists in Geneva during the War, is plotting the downfall of Czarism. Through the influence of the beautiful Ida di San Carvagno Pitterba, wife of the Sardinian consul, who is in love with him, he has secured the position of confidential secretary to Prince Olebine, a dissolute old aristocrat, cousin of the Czar. Olebine is on the verge of death as a result of the mad excesses into which he has been led by his favorite, Gaby, who is in the pay of Mme. di San Carvagno. Medviedoff secures money to foment the Revolution from Germany and from the Prince's private fortune which he manages. Mme. di San Carvagno obtains valuable aid and information for Medviedoff from the French Consul, who is in love with her, and does not suspect her. Georges Hunter, the new attache at the French Consulate, has also fallen under her spell.*

## CHAPTER II.

**O**H times, oh customs, oh progress, oh democracy, oh disappointing vulgarity! Anarchists of our earlier years, poor devils with eyes lost in dreams, noble brutes in straw sandals and blue woolen sweaters!

You slaughtered innocent empresses, stabbed harmless presidents and died, loathed by the crowd, in the pale dawn when the blade of the guillotine seemed to gleam like a belated new moon.

You were ignorant of the subtle limit which separates crime from political action. You believed that by striking down a person you could destroy a society.

Your error was great, you old romantics. But let the present console you. Your nephews have profited by your blunders. You were only alarming. They, to-day, are redoubtable: and their anarchy appalls me, because it breeds tyrants!

That evening Stapfer (Jean-

Pierre-Hippolyte), postman in the Cornavin district, finding only three letters in his bag, praised the Lord. They were addressed, in the order of their distribution, as follows:

*Monsieur V. I. Medviedoff, 5 Rue Rossi.*

*Monsieur le Consul de France, the consulate.*

*Monsieur le Secretaire-Adjoint du consul (same address).*

The letter paper of all three missives was the same. The handwriting was the same. The perfume was the same. But Postman Stapfer didn't notice these details. He limited himself to determining that the postage on the three was sufficient.

Then, his heart lightened by the completion of his day's work, Stapfer utilized his liberty by setting out for a Communist reunion.

The meeting was to be held behind closed doors, at ten o'clock, in the back room of Père Ouritzky's shop. It was not the first time that the Intelligenza sat in session at

the old man's. But this evening's reunion was invested with a special importance by the fact that Medviedoff had promised to lay before it the plans of a vast movement, from which would sprout, "like the buds of spring," the first flowerings of the great Revolutionary tree. Those were his own words, for this cold and self-controlled man dropped easily into rhetoric when in his talk he evoked the Revolution.

"Like the buds of spring," Stapfer repeated in his turn and pounded his heels more gently on the asphalt of the Place Neuve, proud that he was to come in contact presently with some of those men whom a Zuricher had praised to him during the two months of his last relief service on the frontier—Porodziansko, Muravieff, Gorochebnikoff, and the supreme master of all of them, Medviedoff.

Names fitted by their harmony to charm Stapfer's innocent soul! Then other names, mysterious, sonorous as the forests, yet lighter and cheerier than the first—Villebot, Dably, Legré, all from France, which the erudite Stapfer had already seen in the windows of bookstores, on the covers of magazines, at the bottom of tracts discreetly distributed in the cantonment stables; Mascarvigni, Broncasso, whose "*L'Avvenire*" and "*La Gazzetta del Lavoratore*" the young fellows of Tessin read out of sight of their chiefs; finally from nearer home, the pastor Kurt de Louèche, Ziegelmann of Chaux-de-Fonds, Dreher of Zurich, and the German comrades.

Indeed, these would not be all. Medviedoff had several times announced that Geneva would remain a sub-committee, without ever specifying what was the central body. A conscientious employee and

methodical person, Stapfer relished the secrecy of the Workers' International less than he did its rigid organization. It was like the postal administration—only more exact, more thoroughly hierarchized. It gave Stapfer a title—that of "Vigilant for Propaganda"—and though inferior and almost negligible, coming after the more enviable functions of "Propagandist," "Zealot" and "Effective Agent," Stapfer valued this title, which lifted him above the anonymous mass of comrades, granted him, beside his syndical card, a ticket to all council meetings, embroidered on his sleeve one of those symbolical stripes which capitalist society had always refused him.

"Like the buds of spring!" That pleasant figure of speech brought him back, as he walked along, to the necessities of his task, the day when the Internationale should send a call to its children—to run to the Carnavin Morse office, seize the apparatus, defend it, pending the arrival of Communist reinforcements, or fight to the last breath and die for the Red flag. It was a solemn oath, taken at Prazemkine's before the picture of Karl Marx. How different that was from militarist servitude, an oath on the Bible or an oath to the flag. The "Vigilant" felt on his brow the burning breath of heroism. In the evening air, under the branches of the Bastions, ignoring the amorous couples on the benches, the little postman believed now that he saw travelling ahead of him the exaggerated shadow of a great man, one of those prodigious beings at whose feet mobs bow, Stapfer, defender of the Communist Morse equipment, the Vigilant-Chief of the equalitarian Republic.

At the door Ouritzky demanded ten sous. Stapfer paid them, but criticized in sharp terms such anti-Communist conduct.

"You have to order drinks, too," Ouritzky added mildly. Then, as the postman flew into a rage, talked of taking the matter to the committee and exhibited his pass as Vigilant, the old man shrugged his shoulders and handing back the card, now carrying, like a fossil mark, the fat imprint of his thumb, murmured:

"Foolishness—ach! All that is foolishness."

His gesture of sovereign contempt, looking over the little postman's head, seemed to embrace the company, the shop, the Morse telegraph, the world and the thunder of God.

Although the meeting was called for ten o'clock, Stapfer, entering at nine, found himself so jostled in the crowd that he took a seat in the corner alongside the oil jars, where he was left shut in, breathless and almost suffocated. He was greatly intimidated also by the presence of unknown comrades, among whom he made out so many Zealots, Propagandists and Effective Agents—all superior beings, whom a simple Vigilant could address only with the greatest respect.

A man approached him, a gigantic Georgian, promoted because of his six feet of stature and his powerful arms to the rank of Commissary.

"Your card!" he demanded.

Stapfer had to show again his beautiful red card, which the giant read with a contemptuous air. Then he drew back and seemed to measure Stapfer with a look.

"Schweizaretz - M e r z a v e t z !"  
(Swiss pig), he said in an aside to a famished looking boy who wore the white cloak of the Tolstoyan Absti-

nents. But before leaving he thought it worth while to make a further impression on this puny stranger. For he introduced himself, roaring in a terrible voice:

"Do you know who I am, comrade? I am Muravieff, the Communist from the Caucasus."

"Rachel, the shutters!" cried Ouritzky's shrill voice, above the buzz of conversation.

After the beautiful Jewess had drawn together the heavy wooden panels, the heat in the narrow room became intolerable.

"Leave them open!" somebody called out. But all the others protested in chorus. An excellent way to give the alarm to the police, whom spies had probably already warned of the meeting. These last words were spoken in French, with certain indirect glances which made the unfortunate Stapfer still more uncomfortable.

"The first man to open them is a traitor," shouted Ouritzky.

And as quiet ensued he took advantage of it to cast a triumphant glance at his daughter. The great heat, too, would create thirst and thirst called for lemonade, a famous vitriol which he served only on these occasions, after having carefully removed the label: 95 sous a litre.

Then, when all his guests had harangued, vociferated and sung the famous "*Da Boudiet Revoliouzia!*" Père Ouritzky stood up very sleepily, brandished one of the bottles and answered in his sing-song voice:

"*Da! Da! Boudiet! Bravo, my children! I make it only twenty sous a bottle!*"

Foolishness! ach! foolishness!

Now with the shutters closed and the door locked so that no light

<sup>1</sup> Long live the Revolution.

could escape to the outside, the grocery seemed to sleep snugly in the country-like quiet of the street. Nothing distinguished it from the other shops scattered along the dreary avenue connecting Plainpalais and Carouge. Except perhaps the three Hebrew characters on the sign and the addition in Russian letters: *Sdiezj govorniat po-roussky*.<sup>1</sup> But one saw these letters and signs so often repeated on the windows of butchers, tailors, booksellers and cigarette dealers, in this ghetto of the invaders, that the good citizens of Geneva had long since ceased to take any notice of them. Poor, over-hospitable Switzerland, which, for love of liberty, received exiles only to send them back dictators!

"Hasn't Vladimir Ilitch come?" said a voice.

A certain impatience had begun to manifest itself. Ten o'clock struck and not one of the directing members of the sub-committee had appeared. Those who filled the grocery now were, as Ouritzky would have said, only the small fry of these meetings—men wearing threadbare, patched and repatched capes, or cloaks with greasy collars; women, pale and thin, in masculine waterproofs, with tam-o-shanters or caps on their heads, preserving of their past charms only the restless flame in their eyes.

"Isn't Vladimir here?"

Presently the cries redoubled:

"Vladimir Ilitch! Vladimir Ilitch! Afanassi Nikiphorovitch, why isn't Vladimir Ilitch here?"

"Porodziansko isn't here, either!"

"Nor Mascarvigni, nor Villebot!"

A woman squawked:

"You know well enough that Mascarvigni is in France."

"Yes, but the others?"

"It is ridiculous to make us

wait here so long for nothing."

"We are wasting our time!"

"We have been waiting for an hour!"

"Well, what if you wait another hour? Didn't Plekhanoff and Axelrod wait twenty-five years to see the first revolutionary workman?"

Everybody was silent. He who had checked the clamors of the meeting with this tone of authority was a tall, white-haired old man, very erect in his linen robe, tied about the waist with a cord—a type of solid mujik, with soft and deep blue eyes under bushy eyebrows.

Stapfer recognized him: Prazemkine, the virtuous Prazemkine, who had received his oath of fidelity under the picture of Karl Marx.

A beautiful figure, moreover—this earliest of the emigrés, enduring for twenty years in the slums of Geneva a nobly supported poverty. Up to a ripe age he had taught natural sciences in a university in Southern Russia, so ignorant of the new social theories that he knew only by hearsay of the works of Marx and Engels. A chance reading unveiled the Manifesto to him. It was a revelation, the lightning flash of conversion illuminating the awakened soul of a mystic. The impure hands which had opened the Manifesto let it drop only to unite in a gesture of prayer, and then separate in horror, trembling, repenting their crime, revolted at having been soiled for so many years by impure contact with money, neglecting the accomplishment of the only noble task, individual labor for the benefit of the community.

"Yes, twenty-five years before seeing the first revolutionary worker," Prazemkine repeated. He knew that a single word from him would suffice to restore silence and

<sup>1</sup> Russian spoken here.

he could not forbid himself a certain pride (a survival of bourgeois weakness, perhaps?) in seeing the most ardent cool down.

They revered him, in fact, like a patriarch. They attributed to him a culture which Medviedoff himself envied. Nevertheless, if Prazemkine had been questioned he would have admitted in all frankness that his inexhaustible knowledge was limited to his study of the Manifesto alone. In the narrow attic room where he lived and where he preserved of his former splendors only the Master's books and an English lithograph of Marx, published in London in 1848 in the Red Republican, he spent long hours every day, with the Manifesto opened on his knees, arguing such and such an article, meditating on it in company with several disciples, pointing to the lines with a shrivelled finger, as an exegete expounds the Bible.

A tiny stove, stuffed to the bursting point, transformed the attic room into a hot box where happy cats took their ease. Flowers were drying up in a vase on the window sill, near the exile's rickety chair. One would have said it was the modest retreat of some Mimi Pinson in retirement, the cosy shelter of an old maid, still romantic, though thin-blooded, cultivating the illusion of country surroundings before her pot of basil.

"If Vladimir Ilitch isn't here, he has good reasons for making us wait."

Prazemkine, emboldened by his first success, went on in a grave voice, a little formal and pedantic. But no one listened to him any longer. The protests started up again. An atmosphere of storm hung over the smoke-filled room.

What a queer idea it was of

Ouritzky to keep closed up to meeting time the larger room in the back of the shop!

"Open the door! Open the door!" they cried.

But all at once a howling was heard, above the other clamor.

"Son of a dog, will you open—yes or no?"

There advanced, pushing through the crowd, a sort of hairy being, a bandy-legged dwarf with the muzzle of a beast, with misshapen arms, long and gnarled like a tree's branches. The old man, panic-stricken, obeyed.

"It's Gorochebnikoff," a neighbor explained to Stapfer, who was overlooking no detail of this first meeting—a little nervous, all the same, feeling that he had been led into strange company.

"Gorochebnikoff! The man of whose merits Prazemkine had boasted on the day of the oath-taking! Gorochebnikoff, by occupation a scrubman, now that the bourgeois régime obliged him to earn a living, but in whom the future Revolution saw the Organizer, a sort of superior Samson, ready in advance to discharge all the duties of a Communist clean-up. At present, a nerve-shaken maniac, a sanguinary epileptic, living in perpetual apprehension of the approaching crisis, proud, in fact, of his deformity, which he attributed to the vices of his mother, another victim of the abhorred bourgeoisie.

The crowd having passed into the back room, there remained in the front one only some peaceful patrons, little shopkeepers, tired out by their daily toil, happy to find in the rancid lemonade something of the far-off savor of the national kvass, quietly discussing business in utter scorn of the Communist Decalogue; two students, who while wait-

ing for the meeting were holding an examination quiz, and a group of women, talking over a course in literature.

Through the half-open door came the strident voice of Gorochebnikoff while Prazemkine repeated incessantly:

"They waited twenty-five years—Axelrod and Plekhanoff—twenty-five years before seeing the first revolutionary worker."

Suddenly there was a silence, one of those silences which occur in a church when the prodigious breath of divinity passes across the brows of the worshippers.

Through the low shop door came Medviedoff. He cast a rapid glance at Ouritzky and shook off his cape with a slightly theatrical gesture. Then, bare-headed, brushing back with a familiar motion the thin hair on his forehead, he walked toward the improvised platform in the rear shop—broad planks laid on four barrels, supporting a table and three chairs, to which one mounted by two herring boxes, one large and one small, arranged like steps.

Once in the presidential seat, the chair in the middle, the secretary of the sub-committee made a sign to two persons who had entered at the same time as he did, but whom the comrades had not noticed because of their hurry to get settled on the auditorium benches. They now saw advancing from the other end of the shop a young man, with a rosy face and exaggerated manners, clean-shaven like a Scotch minister. As he took his seat on the chair to the left he quietly drew off his gloves, showing in all his movements the affected indolence of a dandy.

They whispered:

"It's Villebot, the delegate from

France, the editor of *Nous Tous*. (All of Us.)

Presently that little Communist review circulated from hand to hand—a publication as neat and elegant as its proprietor. The striking title stood out in green letters on a pearl gray cover, in a frame of arabesques. The subtitle read: "Organ of the World Democracy."

Villebot and his magazine had only a brief success, for all eyes were turned to the second personage seated on the speakers' platform, at Medviedoff's right. They distinguished at first little but a long black cape. A sort of scarf, also black, covered the stranger's head, which, to intensify the mystery, was enveloped in a muslin veil, hiding the features. In short, a true *feuilleton* figure, of whom one couldn't say yet whether it was a man or a woman, although the slight body and the rounded shoulders, perceptible under the cape, indicated that it was a woman. But why be astonished at that? It was not the first time that Medviedoff had thus brought with him one of those enigmatic beings with whom he loved to surround himself. Calm reigned again. All eyes were fixed on the table. In the heavy air there was only a silence cadenced by the crowd's breathing.

Medviedoff began to speak. His voice, low at first, rose little by little, now firmer and more distinct, but broken by moments of harsh, strident intonation, or by super-acute sonorities like those of a nervous woman.

He thanked the comrades who had responded to the committee's summons and whose presence in the hall, whither the French proletariat had sent one of its most illustrious representatives (the elegant Villebot bowed), constituted a living

symbol of the coming union of the peoples, and then evoked in advance the kindly sense of the World's Communist Association. He regretted, however, that insurmountable difficulties had prevented the secretaries of the central committee from being with them to-day. His voice recovered its harsher inflection when he mentioned the dear German comrades detained in their own country—Schumacher in Bavaria, Franken and Helena Hertling in Berlin. Then, noticing Stapfer, Medviedoff changed his tone. His expression became soft, almost wheedling and caressing. He even made a spontaneous movement with his arms toward the Vigilant, as if to embrace and press him to his breast.

He spoke in turn in French, German, and Russian, so that each one of the comrades of the great Communist fatherland could have his share in the discourse. Often, leaning over toward the front bench where strange auditors with Semitic faces were seated, he talked through his nose, exaggerating his gestures, and turning his speech into their jargon—that international Yiddish, which, from London to Constantinople, rallies under the same language high finance and the ghetto.

"What a man!" murmured Stapfer, much affected. And this same thought was to be read on all visages—an ardent admiration, a sort of passionate devotion—on the moist lips of second-hand clothes dealers with curls, on the men's brows, wrinkled with attention; in the humid eyes of the women, whose throats swelled out from time to time in stifled sighs. His hands clasped over his breast in the prophetic manner, Prazemkine drank in these preludes to the Marxian gospel. Rolled up in a corner on his gnarled legs Gorochebnikoff gri-

maced at his ease. Only Villebot drummed on the table with a distant and indifferent air. The phantom in the long cape hadn't budged.

"Beer! Lemonade!" whispered Ouritzky, two bottles in his hands.

Approaching his subject, Medviedoff gave a rapid history of the movement as a preface to the sensational revelations, those famous "buds of spring," for which Stapfer was waiting. His voice had fallen to a dead timbre, the nonchalant utterance of a tired lecturer. Nevertheless, in brief, concise phrases, as if he were explaining pictures thrown on a screen before the audience, he retraced, step by step, the progress of the Communist idea, from the embryonic Marxian period to the beginning of the world conflict. He trembled slightly as he recalled his brother's death and ostentatiously wiped his glasses. Villebot took this opportunity to nod approvingly. Applause came from a bench on the right, quickly repressed by the indignant Prazemkine, as outraged as a religious devotee would be to hear such manifestations at the end of a sermon.

Sitting erect in his chair, Medviedoff studied the abortive revolution of 1905 and again his voice became sharp and strident, with piercing notes, or biting with sarcasms about the first meeting of the Soviet.

Then, turning dialectical, passing from the oratorical emphasis which he affected in his invective to the mathematical argumentation of debate:

"And now, comrades, I shall prove to you that the Revolution can be only the indispensable culmination of capitalistic evolution, which carries in itself war to the ultimate limit."

That was why he welcomed the war—why, for years, he had wished

for war. And this war now unloosed, he wanted to see it made still harsher and more cruel. All the tears and deaths up to now were not enough. He desired to see multiplied a hundred fold those horrors at which his too humane heart stood aghast. It was necessary that the earth should run with blood, and smoke like a fireplace full of peat. Rheims, Louvain, Verdun and Dixmude were only child's play in the presence of the massacre of which this too humane heart dreamed. His fist pounded on the table: a ferocious gleam came into his eyes.

Stapfer was startled.

Although he understood but little of this polemic he was conscious that Medviedoff was uttering big and beautiful words, and the breathless silence of the comrades confirmed him in that impression.

Nevertheless, he felt a certain disquiet, alarmed by the word "war," which here, in neutral and peaceful Switzerland, the Vigilant ad-horred. In the cantonment on the frontier, when on calm nights he heard distinctly the thunder of the cannon in Alsace, his antimilitarist faith was kindled, fiercely, ardently, ready to transform him, if need be, into a heroic defender of the Communist telegraph communications. But that sacrifice accomplished, he wished to enjoy in serenity the delights of universal peace—the permanent quietude of a world from which the last rifle had been banished.

An honest man at bottom, Stapfer had also a heart sensitive to human sufferings and open to pity. He could not pass through the peristyle of the Rath Museum, where twice a week he devoted an hour of his spare time to unwrapping packages, without being pro-

foundly saddened by the posters on the walls: the "Refugees from the North," by Steinlen—the mute distress of a family, a heart-broken old man awkwardly carrying a child in his arms—two lamentable sketches by Poulbot and the whole bitter gamut of Forain. All pure masterpieces, which awakened in Stapfer's soul the vague consciousness that France, after all, was fighting for something besides the interests of her bankers.

He had turned instinctively to Communism because he expected of it concord and union. And yet in his first words its apostle was celebrating war, wishing it to be longer and more savage, acclaiming with gestures of hatred the red cheer of blood.

The crowd had received the master's declaration with a shiver of enthusiasm. The Tolstoyan Ab-tinent and the Communist from the Caucasus exchanged sympathetic smiles. Stapfer thought that he heard in the corner where this Quasimodo of a Gorochebnikoff grated his doglike chops against each other, an exclamation from a woman, whose arms were entwined about the monster's shoulder:

"What a Czar he would make!"

During the intermission the grocer's voice was heard again announcing his wares. The Jews on the front bench stretched themselves, laughing and shaking their curls to right and left.

Medviedoff must have judged that the moment had come to go to the real point of the discussion—a dangerous question, demanding of him who would resolve it more science and suppleness than all the doctrines of hate in which he had taken delight up to now. The brutal facts were as follows: the German Consul had turned over to

him the night before two hundred and twenty thousand francs, in a check payable at the Deutsch-Auslaendische Bank of Geneva, for the purpose of fomenting a strike, on such a date as the Imperial Government should fix, in establishments in the canton making war material for the Entente countries. An almost equal sum had been distributed among the sub-committees of Latin Switzerland, but Geneva was to give the signal. The German cantons would then declare a sympathetic strike. That, at least, was the inner conviction of the Imperial Legation at Berne, and Kurt, Dreher and Ziegelmann, sounded by Herr von Harberg, had guaranteed success.

Further, according to the views of Berlin, this movement ought to coincide with the disturbances caused at Creusot by the presence of Mascarvigni. In short, a pretty *coup double* and triple, Germany wishing to wind up the affair at Verdun before November.

"I'll take care of the syndicates," Medviedoff said calmly to Consul von Thrich, as he slipped the check into his portfolio, "but I am afraid of the committee."

And since von Thrich expressed surprise:

"They are honest people, your Excellency, but behind the times, and impractical. They will accuse me of having dealings with the bourgeoisie."

Herr von Thrich carelessly signed another check. His fountain pen made a blot on it.

"Here," said the consul, as he removed the spot with his blotting pad, "Are five thousand marks which His Majesty deigns to send through me to the committee. For let us not forget, my dear Medviedoff, that the more men despise money

the more easily they are bought by it."

In the cosy salon of the consulate, under the severe glances of His Majesty and the Kaiserin Augusta, Reaction and Marxism exchanged the kiss of peace.

But now Vladimir Ilitch trembled in the presence of the faithful, before the too pure Prazemkine, Gorochebnikoff, Muravieff, these women illumined by the true word, those men whom the very mention of "capital" seemed to enrage as a red rag does a bull. His emotion betrayed itself in a livid pallor, a nervous trembling of the fingers. His glance sought Villebot's, which seemed to give him the signal: "Go ahead, comrade!" Then his eyes rested for a moment on the black, motionless figure to his right. So, attacking the question directly, eager to finish with it, he blurted out:

"Porodziansko crossed the frontier yesterday."

A murmur of astonishment ran through the crowd. A woman's quavering voice said:

"You mean Mascarvigni, Vladimir Ilitch."

"No, I said Porodziansko."

As if to emphasize the significance of the words he repeated:

"Porodziansko crossed the frontier yesterday. He is in France."

Again a murmur ran around the benches. Prazemkine, holding his hand to his ear like a speaking trumpet, bent his head forward, believing that he had not heard aright. The Jews shuffled in their seats, showing their amazement by sweeping gestures, shouting these words to one another: "*Arouh! Arouh! Abqereist!*"

"Mascarvigni demanded it," exclaimed Villebot, seeking an excuse to come to the orator's aid. But his phrase did not have the quieting

effect which he anticipated. To allow a secretary to go on a mission without the consent of the council was a grave infraction of the statutes of the organization, a sort of bourgeois *Coup d'Etat*, which anarchist discipline could not tolerate. However high the credit which Medviedoff enjoyed with his comrades, this act of independence might cost him his leadership.

"No law, no master, except the chiefs and the rules," as Prazemkine declared. Moreover, this first objection to the master's exercise of his good pleasure was supplemented by another and graver one, which had to do with finances. All these honest men might condemn the iniquity of capital to the point of putting it into a common treasury. But they didn't intend that anyone should dispose of it without their express consent. Now Porodziansko's trip to France meant a draft, by anticipation, on the said reserve. And the accounts were not in a sufficiently satisfactory state to permit useless expenditures. Discontent succeeded the evangelical ecstasy of a few moments before.

"Let the comrade have a chance to explain," said delegate Villebot.

"That's it! Let him explain! Let him explain!"

"Comrades," Medviedoff began, "the interests of the cause made Comrade Porodziansko's trip indispensable."

"How so? What made it indispensable?"

The discontent increased. Medviedoff also becoming impatient, shouted:

"Yes, indispensable. Mascarnigni couldn't do the job alone. The occasion was favorable. For the last week the French consulate has been upset by preparations for a fête, a gala day of the Allies. At any

other time we should have had to wait months to obtain a passport."

Certainly that much was evident. But since the tumult was not appeased Medviedoff burst out:

"How plainly must I put it to you? Do you think, perhaps, that the workers will go on strike if we sit here with our arms folded?"

Then he explained his projects. A general strike at Creusot was only a matter of hours. Although jealously concealed by the French censorship, it was already announced in the German press, on whose authority some Swiss evening newspapers had also spoken of it. Now, if it lasted only a week, if it lasted only a day, its consequences would be incalculable to France, at a moment when Germany was preparing to launch the Crown Prince's best troops in an assault on Verdun. The Swiss proletariat, by uniting with the French strikers, would contribute to the swift collapse of one of the belligerents, and in the present state of the war collapse could only be a prelude to revolution. They were bringing about in France the disorganization from which the Russian empire suffered after Kovno, Brest-Litovsk and Warsaw.

"We have, moreover, the very best news," Villebot interrupted in a tranquil voice. "There were three important mutinies last week: at Châlons, at Epinal and at the base at Sathonay."

"You hear," cried Medviedoff triumphantly.

Then, fumbling nervously in his letter-bag, he drew out a crumpled copy of a newspaper.

"Here, shall I read this: 'The dead body of Colonel Krause has been discovered in Marseilles, at the Russian expeditionary base.' The *polkovnik* Krause," he repeated, and his voice was drowned in the

joyous tumult which greeted that assassination.

"*Cha! Cha! Cha!*"

The Jews on the front bench stamped with their feet, their faces illuminated, while an improvised chorus sang this funereal hymn:

*Krausa zariézali kak porosienka,  
Rvastoun nié pietouchitsia bolché!*<sup>1</sup>

Once more the charm worked. Divided for an instant by interest, all these men fraternized anew in hate. Medviedoff replaced the copy of the newspaper in his letter-bag and invited the assembly to vote on the propriety of his action.

Stapfer followed the debate with a sense of consternation. Several times a phrase came to his lips: "You are working for Germany." But it choked in his throat, under the threatening glances of the Communist from the Caucasus. If he had been called on to explain, he would have found in his Swiss skull only arguments of great good sense to oppose to theirs. And these people talked so well! Yet he felt now a strange discomfort, the sort of apprehension which a rational person feels when thrust into an asylum full of madmen. As the uproar increased he recalled the posters of the Rath Museum—the poor old man, especially, with his pitiful expression, and the little child in his arms.

*Krausa zariézali kak porosienka  
Rvastoun nié pietouchitsia bolché!*

The chorus sang again while they proceeded to vote by raising of hands.

Medviedoff had begun the balloting on the left, where a majority at once decided in his favor. Only the Jews delayed voting. They wrangled from habit and asked one

another's opinions. To vote is, in fact, to give a judgment. What advantage would be conceded to them in return? Finally, the general opinion was that Medviedoff was proceeding too quickly.

"Too quick! Too quick!" the front bench bawled, while the long hands with black finger nails were lifted to heaven one after another and the curls danced furiously.

Suddenly in a pause which followed the hand-waving Prazemkine's voice was heard.

"Comrade, with what money shall we sustain the cause?"

"Yes, yes, with what money?" answered the chorus of Jews.

"The Central Committee has declared itself able to pay the costs," Villebot explained.

"Pardon me, the Central Committee recently made an appeal for fresh contributions," answered Prazemkine.

They all looked at one another.

"It is exactly a month ago that the Central Committee asked for an advance," he continued. "The report of our Comrade Treasurer even pointed to a deficit."

"Yes, yes, a deficit."

"... Caused by the presence of Comrade Mascarvigni at Creusot. How is it, then . . . ?"

He could not finish. All the benches were in uproar.

"I tell you that the committee has money," said Medviedoff sharply.

"Even after Porodziansko's departure?"

"Yes."

"Then," Prazemkine broke in again in a voice of thunder, "I beg of you, Vladimir Ilitch, tell us where the money comes from."

This was the question which Medviedoff feared. This imbecile Prazemkine was spoiling everything with his scruples.

<sup>1</sup> They cut Krause's throat like a pig's,  
That bully will swagger no longer.

"I ask you where the money comes from, Vladimir Ilitch."

"Yes, yes; the money, the money."

A yardful of madmen, decidedly. As a dying fire is rekindled by a single spark, the agitation was renewed and became more violent. It was no longer a political reunion which Stapfer was attending, but a horse sale, the tumult of an Exchange at midday, spectators and brokers fighting among themselves over their profits.

"The Central Committee has robbed us! Let it pay us back! Porodziansko has carried the money over the border. *Abgereist! Aroub! Aroub!*"

"Silence!" Prazemkine commanded. "You see very well that I have something to say, comrades."

His arms crossed, in his attitude of a prophet, planting himself before the platform, he cried:

"Vladimir Ilitch, swear to us that you haven't sold yourself out to capitalism."

"The Central Committee has approved my conduct."

"Let them produce the books!"

"Hear! Hear!"

Two camps formed now, each having guessed from the secretary's first words the source of the credits.

Medviedoff, exasperated, blurted out the figures:

"The sub-committee has at its disposal at present two hundred and twenty thousand francs."

"To pay for a twenty days' strike in the Brechard-Briquet," Villebot interrupted.

"I ask where the money comes from," Prazemkine shouted once more.

Then, in the tumult, as Medviedoff opened his mouth to answer, something new happened.

Gorochebnikoff had leaped on the

platform. They heard the dull sound of his body landing on the wooden stage. Crumpled up, his legs crossed like a tailor's, keeping his balance by waving his misshapen arms, he vomited forth pathetic imprecations, accusing in turn Medviedoff, the Committee, Prazemkine, the bourgeois and the world in general.

Certainly the occasion was a good one. For a long time he had suffered in his pride of a pariah at Medviedoff's success.

Why should it be so? To one good fortune, intelligence, the respect and adulation of the mob, and to the other, himself, only laughter or disgust when he appeared—at most, the fear which the blind strength of his arms inspired? He hiccupped:

"The money? You ask where the money comes from? From Olebine. Ah! Ah! Yes, from Olebine, who hands it to his lackey!"

His throat rattled as he ran across the platform like a cat, shaking his fist at Medviedoff and repeating:

"Traitor! Traitor! You are a traitor to the cause! Lackey, answer me. Dirty seller-out!"

"Make him stop, Vladimir Ilitch!" cried some indignant women. The Jews, highly amused, clapped their hands. Since the committee was rich its members could now find means to reimburse themselves. That was the essential thing. And so much the worse for the capitalists if they had let themselves be tricked by this joker Vladimir! The meeting, moreover, quickly adopted that view. The figure of two hundred and twenty thousand francs had dazzled them. Only the purist Prazemkine persisted in his original indignation.

"Go on, Vladimir Ilitch; go on!"

"The community receives as a gift more than five thousand marks," he shouted.

Bravos burst forth. The deficit was going to be made good.

The frightened gnome on the platform was silenced. The crowd greeted his retreat with monstrous epithets, while this cry shot forth on all sides:

"Hurrah for Medviedoff! Hurrah for the Committee! Hurrah for our illustrious Vladimir Ilitch!"

A little more and they would have hurrahed equally for the two hundred and twenty thousand francs.

Prazemkine left the room in disgust. But before going he drew himself up to his full height and facing the howling crowd, hurled a curse at Medviedoff.

"Gorochebnikoff is right. You are bourgeois and Jews, the servants of capitalism! Karl Marx . . ."

Hoots drowned out his voice.

"Your ten sous, comrade," Ouritzky insisted, barring the way.

Then Stapfer believed the moment had almost come for him to disappear. The ballot by raising of the hands gave Medviedoff an overwhelming majority, almost a unanimous endorsement. It was a time when the softening of all hearts required the co-working of lemonade, drunk "to the Great, the Universal!"

In a voice which he tried to control but in which there was an accent of triumph, Medviedoff read the order of the day:

*"The subcommittee assembled . . . etc. . . . etc. . . . having considered . . . etc. . . . gives full power to the secretary of the subcommittee to organize, in collaboration with the secretaries of the syndicates, the complete cessation of work in the factories of the Canton*

*and of Latin Switzerland. It approves the financial statement and invites the people of Geneva to an imposing manifestation of international and revolutionary solidarity."*

"Is that all?" Medviedoff asked, placing on the table the paper containing the order of the day, which the elegant Villebot signed.

In the groups delegates were questioning one another. It was the instant chosen by Medviedoff to play his big card, to try to make unforgettable this meeting, which, after threatening to break him, had vastly strengthened his credit.

The shade in the black cape remained motionless.

"Yes, is that all, comrades?" Medviedoff repeated. His voice indicated clearly that he didn't think so. The crowd waited expectantly.

"No, it is not all," he continued, and taking up the order of the day he read:

*"Welcomes with heartfelt emotion the return to liberty of its venerable grandmother, Maria Andreyevna Brasovna."*

The black veil and the cape were cast aside. They saw now on the platform a little old woman with an ample figure, corpulent, but full of vigor, who began to throw kisses into the air while a formidable ovation greeted her.

"Babushka! Babushka! Grandmother!"

Brasnova! There was a moment of stupor, followed by delirium. The platform was almost wrecked by an irresistible onset. Prazemkine himself returned to the room, forgetting his tirade, his arms wide open.

"Babushka! Babushka! Grandmother!"

With amused gestures she defended herself, laughing and crying by turns. She deserved her nick-

name, this robust peasant woman, whose will to live thirty years in Siberia they had been unable to break down any more than they had quenched her still juvenile enthusiasm for the cause which she had embraced. Maria Andreyevna Brasovna, whose name figured in every committee report in homage to the heroine of the Red Place, more venerated in the ceremonials of the Communist religion than Vera Sassoulitch, Rosa Luxembourg or Louise Michel—the ancestress, the good grandmother, the Babushka of the Revolution.

Now she spoke, wiping her eyes, to which the warmth of this reception had brought sweet tears. Perfectly happy, she tapped Vladimir's shoulder and scolded affectionately that old trouble-maker Prazemkine, who listened to her contritely, and as a sign of reconciliation kissed Medviedoff full in the mouth.

"Yes, it is I, it is I. The Devil take me if they thought I had come back, these dear little people! Don't squeeze me so hard; you will suffocate me! Yes, yes, my children, grandmother is here: grandmother has returned from her trip to the country of the militarists. (She alluded to her recent captivity in Germany.) And do you know what they told her in the country of the militarists? They told her that Nikita (Nicholas) is done for, my lambs—done for. They will have cut his throat within two months!"

She seemed to be telling some marvelous legend to an audience of little children—always animated, smiling, with that little tear of tenderness which clung to the corner of her clear eye.

"His throat cut! His throat cut! And all of them—they will cut the throats of all of them, my lambs. A beautiful fête, to which

grandmother invites you. Ah! there will be blood, I promise you, in Paris, in London, in Rome, in Petrograd! Blood! Blood! Blood!"

She sat down, as if tired from talking too much. Then she murmured gently:

"Ah, dear little people, how good it is to be among you again!"

Villebot, who was buttoning his gloves added:

"I call your attention, comrades, to the fact that we owe it to Germany that Maria Andreyevna has been set free."

"Come, a cheer for Germany, my children!"

"A cheer! A cheer!" Villebot repeated.

In an access of joyous enthusiasm they responded:

"To Germany! To the strike in the factories! To Babushka, who will lead the strike! Hurrah for Vladimir Ilitch, for the rebellion, for the Revolution!"

"I charge only twenty sous a bottle," cried Père Ouritzky in his sing-song voice.

"Foolishness! Ach! Foolishness!"

Who suddenly spoke those words? The old man, Vladimir, Villebot? Or was it simply Stapfer's ears which began to buzz on leaving the overheated hall, while, shivering in the night air, he traversed the peaceful, sleeping city?

Here is what was in the three letters delivered on his eight o'clock tour by Postman Stapfer:

First letter:

*Monsieur P. J. Medviedoff  
5 Rue Rossi  
Geneva.*

"My Wolodja:

"Your communication on the subject of Andrea hardly surprised me. It isn't in that direction that

we must look. I think, moreover, that the affair is making headway since the arrival of young Hunter at the consulâte. It isn't any use to play the entangling woman with him. A boy, whom I am sure I can lead by his—lips. If I knew that you were jealous, my Wolodja, I would tell you, nevertheless, that I run a risk of being burnt myself at that sport. Alas! you are not jealous, my dear, and I love only you. That's the unfortunate part of it!

"The consulate auto will continue to go to the frontier to look for letters from Porodziansko. As always, give your mail to Gaby.

"Coco intends to postpone to October 7 his festival of the Allies. In that way Mascarnigni gains two extra days in which to cross. The French consulate is in a state of ebullition. I will show you a confidential enclosure from the Minister, which ought to interest you.

"Two words more. I made a scene with Coco, who balks at paying my note due to Marval. Pass along two thousand francs of Olebine's to Ouritzky, so that he can advance them to Coco. Whatever the latter may say, he will end by accepting them.

"All my thoughts will be with you tonight at the meeting. Have courage. I will be at your side—in thought, at least, my love. Excuse this scrawl, for I write you in haste, while waiting for my manicure. We dine this evening at the Royal with the English Ambassador.

"Diushka."

Second letter:

*His Excellency,  
the Consul of France,  
Geneva.*

"Coco:

"You took an unworthy advantage of me. I didn't want to make

a scene this evening at the consulate, thinking that you would come back to your original decision. Besides, your secretary was there. I have too much esteem for that delightful—I underline it, *that delightful*—young fellow—to claim before him something you promised me, all the same. You should know, at least, that a man in your situation ought to keep his word and that you cannot treat the wife of the consul of Sardinia as you would other women. Marval has been here twice to-day and I had to invent hard luck stories to get him to wait until to-morrow noon. After that he threatens to present the note for settlement to my husband. Since you dislike to inform Bel Patek of your financial difficulties, apply to Ouritzky, who is discretion itself. I know that I am asking a great sacrifice of you, my Coco. But is it my fault, and oughtn't you to assume yourself the excessive expenditures into which your love has led you?

"I thought for a moment that your young secretary would perhaps consent to advance me the necessary sum. I believe that he would be glad to do it. But that would be to bring a stranger into our adventure. Out of regard for your name and mine, I can't do that. What is your opinion?

"On re-reading this letter I see that I have been unkind to you. Excuse me. Since this morning the annoyance which this stupid affair causes me, has quite upset me. And to think that I must go to this ambassadorial dinner, when an evening alone with you would be so delightful, dearest!

"Is it true that things are going badly in France? At all events, till to-morrow, at ten o'clock, at the consulate.

"Many kisses,                      Dette."

"P. S.—No check, naturally. Bills."

Third letter:

*Assistant Secretary to the  
Consul of France.*

*At the consulate.*

"Dear Friend:

"Although we are floor neighbors at the Leman I send you this little note by post, so as not to give ground for stupid gossip at the hotel.

"For two days you have made yourself terribly missed evenings in the grand hall. Why?

"A horrible duty to-night. An ambassadorial dinner, when an evening with you would be so pleasant, my friend.

"To-morrow evening, then, without fail. Otherwise you will make me believe that you are really cross.

"Your

"Ida di San Carvagno."

### CHAPTER III

For whom did they dance that evening? For the war blind the prisoners or the refugees from the North? Nobody could have told—not even Villieu, who had sent orders from Paris to hold the fête. For he was headstrong and obstinate, the old fool, turning over that same idea always in his rudimentary skull.

Propaganda! We were neglecting propaganda! Propaganda was necessary! Without it France would fall!

Such were his exhortations, reproaches and suggestions—a whole medley of documents encumbering the official mail.

In default of the great offensive, which Alyva denounced amid the plaudits of the Left, Paris arranged for the spring trip by the brave General Picq, a tour by Sarah Bern-

hardt and concerts by Mayol in the twenty-eight cantons. Every day the Cornavin station saw arriving some valiant little woman, ready to gamble with the hereditary enemy for the important secrets which would bring us victory.

"It is your turn. Aid us in propaganda!" Villieu repeated incessantly. And millions flew away in propaganda, eating up half of our credits, melting like snow under the sun.

Ah! Rheims might burn without hope of restoration; the throat of the North might rattle under the enemy's heel; the hospitals might vomit out their dead for lack of serum or quinine, and thousands of poor devils, forgotten by the Red Cross, might die of hunger in the prison camps in Germany! These negligences did not halt the great bureaus. Propaganda, gentlemen, propaganda. I have never seen anything more like a dance of death than Villieu's propaganda.

"Let us have a ball," said M. de Malongrin, half out of his head. We went to work. In a week the Basler-Hof, which its proprietor, Schwanzbach (also from Basle, certainly!), transformed in the Hotel des Belges for the occasion, was scraped, cleaned and made ready for the fête. The Ariana furnished the green plants; the Kursaal orchestra was bought up for the evening. For a whole week the carpenters, the decorators, the painters—in fact, all the crafts in Geneva—were hard pushed. His Excellency Baron von Thrich, the German Imperial Consul, with rage in his heart, could see pass by his windows great furniture vans, loaded to the guards, joyously climbing to the Hotel de Belges by way of the Quai de Mont Blanc.

Alas! Fatality, that intractable

coquette, was on the watch! One morning M. de Malongrin rushed into the consulate, panting.

"Hunter, the flags! We forgot the flags!"

There was a moment of anguish! We could never find enough Allied flags in Geneva, and it was too late to write to Lyons. Nevertheless, a propaganda fête without flags—what a disaster! But fatality was appeased. An hour later Gerber and Streif, representatives of Wertheim, offered us a collection, ordered in advance from their house in Stuttgart, and, in the bargain, two plaster busts, one of the "good General Joffre," the other of "the heroic Gallieni."

This incident of the flags was, moreover, only a brief paragraph in the long chapter of our difficulties. The most serious was to find a suitable date. Everybody, spies included, wanted to be associated in our propaganda and all the ladies were eager to polish Père Schwanzbach's floors. But the gowns and the time necessary to prepare them—the dressmakers were all working overtime!

"Marval promised me mine for October 7th," Mme. di San Carvagno announced. And since the only decisions which went at the consulate were those of Mme. di San Carvagno, the invitations were sent out for the 7th.

I still feel itchings in my fingers and a cramp like that of two nights' travel when I recall the twelve hundred envelopes which we had to address.

*S. E. le Marquis de Gomez y Murrita, Chevalier du Mérite Militaire de Saint Ferdinand, Officier de Sainte Hermenegilde, Grand Cordon d'Isabelle la Catholique, en son hotel* (always at his hotel, even when His Excellency lived in furnished

apartments); *S. E. le Comte Feodor-Nicolai - Ambrosevich - Prostopzov, Croix de Saint Georges, Sainte Anne et Saint Stanislas . . . Illustrissimo Marchese Ruffo della Torre e Illustrissima Marchesina . . . Kniaz Tounmanoff, Conde di San Felice, etc., etc.*, for it was necessary not to forget a name or a title, or a medal, or a capital letter.

All the while the consulate was idle, the doors closed, passports and permits piling up on the table or viséd in haste between two invitations.

How many dealers in contraband, forgers, agitators and spies must have passed into France that week! How many poor fellows had to fall at the front, how many tears have to be still shed to-day, how much bitterness stirred up, how much grumbling and revolt for this gala of the Allies! Sleep in peace, little soldiers, and you, poor prisoners, my brethren, German captives who never returned! Laugh, you mothers, widows and orphans—the needs of propaganda were satisfied. They played the Marseillaise and we listened to it, standing up!

A murmur of approval went up from the men when Mme. di San Carvagno appeared, followed by the unfortunate marquis and consul, older and goutier than ever, covered with all his cordons like a holy image, his baldness emphasized by two curious protuberances—one on each side of his forehead—which M. de Malongrin always regarded with the uneasy ecstasy of a child who had just broken a piece of bric-à-brac.

They whispered: "A siren! Wouldn't you call her a siren?"

And she really was a siren, with her pretty, cruel head, her shoulders, whose whiteness recalled light foam, her eyes, with green, perfidious

glints from the depths of the sea, and her undulant, lascivious body, on which the thousand spangles of her gown glittered like scales.

She advanced now on the arm of M. de Malongrin, who had hurried to meet her. A smile, a nod to the right and the left, disdainful alms thrown to all these men whose desire she awakened, and to me, who awaited her, who would have liked to run to her, to seize her, to carry her off, a careless wave of the hand, as if to say: "You have admired me enough; that will do!"

"Poor San Carvagno! He looks the part, all right!"

I turned around. There were five, ten or twenty of them, all in black coats, gloating in scandal, happy to compare notes about this woman whom they coveted with the impure trembling of their hands, their flabby lips, their eyes shining with passion. And the disgraceful gossip flared up, stirred and fanned by the pseudo-Levantine, Volo Bey, the millionaire.

Millionaire, yes; Levantine, and

more swindler than financier. A former dealer in holy water in Marseilles, pushed on to success by priests and women, who was soon to sell to William's agents the great newspapers of Paris.

Volo Bey, Volo Bey! You finished your career too late, one gray morning at Caponnière, elegant even when facing the bullets, wearing chamois gloves and a flower in your coat. You were a better man, after all, than your accomplices—Alvya, who rocks his crime to sleep in the sun of San Sebastian; Grilleux, exiled to his province, his favorite studies and to the society of his adventuress paramour.

And yet I stood before your body with no feeling of respect for the dead, my eyes dry, and my heart light. For was it not you who killed my dream, besmirched the woman I loved, she who only the day before, had given me her lips beneath the lindens of the Ariana?

"And Olebine? Have you seen Olebine?"

But Olebine had not arrived.

*(To be continued)*

# Jasmina, the Flower of Dobrodja

By

ADRIO VAL

*From the Rumanian by Henriette Sava-Gois*



*Adrio Val was born in Rumania, December 3, 1897. Her childhood was passed in France. As a very small girl she displayed marked literary inclinations, and began to write verses and novels, which she carefully concealed from friends and family. She has contributed to the majority of Rumanian magazines, and during the war published a daily article in the newspaper "Romania." She has also done work as a dramatic critic.*

*Her own creative work includes plays, novels, and especially poetry. She came to the United States in 1921, and has lectured extensively on Rumanian subjects.*

"DAMNED moon," shouted a hoarse voice from the dark cabin. "Come away from the moon, d'ye hear me?"

Before the porch, with its black hole for a door, the gray beach slept in the still night . . . A little further off, the black sea moaned against the rocky shore, and shivered under the caress of the moonlight . . .

Motionless, her face lifted towards the moon, Jasmina seemed not to hear the thundering voice. Then a giant bent almost double came through the low door. He suddenly stood erect, unbelievably tall in the pearly light, with coal-black eyes like two sins at the gates of Hell.

"Come away, will ye? She used to do the same . . . and she had to die . . ."

Outlined against the sky, he pointed his gigantic, brown finger at her with an air of violent menace. At last Jasmina looked at him, seeming to tar herself with pain from some world of her own, and meeting his glance, she trembled for

a second. The shadow of a smile wandered across her face. Her lips moved slowly:

"Yes, I'll come in . . ."

The giant stared at her and every wrinkle of his powerful face deepened in a fearful expression:

"Girl, she used to love it too . . . too much! And she died . . . Remember . . ."

Jasmina moved slowly towards the cabin, like a strange flower in some old tale, white and slender, with a moonpale forehead and delicate hands, seeming rather a creation of fairylight than a man's child. Only her eyes, the eyes of the old Devil, burned beneath her eyelids like two flames—messages from a world of passion and pain . . .

The old Devil entered the dark cabin first, and Jasmina lighted a small pine torch in a kind of primitive lantern, putting it on the round block of wood which served as a table in the house.

The filthy misery of the cabin trembled suddenly in the uncertain flame. On the black-red floor there

was a vague noise from several baskets of fish, like a faint struggle for life, and all kinds of fish nets hung on the walls, over and under the two horrid chairs and the small bed covered with unwashed oil-cloth. Two broken ship lanterns hung above the dirty couch.

One corner stood apart from the rest of the miserable cabin—a different world, hidden in branches . . .

Without a word Jasmina crossed the small room and let herself fall in the midst of this tiny garden. That was the girl's couch—rough but fragrant with the aroma of plants which Jasmina changed every day. The branches bruised her skin, but their odor perfumed her heart. She remained there motionless, her eyes open, glowing in the dark, still veiled with the silver of the outdoor night. She didn't recognize herself in those moonlit hours, but felt as though she were in another universe, drunk with shimmering light, full of sufferings and of joy.

The girl's love for the moon was known in the fishing village and everybody now called her as Omar the Wise One in the square had named her: Jasmina, the Moon-child. Omar also called her: The only flower of Dobrodja. For in that village, lost in the most arid part of the coast of Dobrodja, Jasmina in her colorful tatters, and her pale beauty seemed to those people, harried by Life, something like a flower in the desert.

It was the poorest of all the villages of the coast, inhabited almost entirely by silent Turks, who worked hard at their fishing. The black sea is rebellious and not even a summer day can calm its restlessness. The Turks in the village, fanatic and silent, indifferent to

their inclement destiny had one single consolation: the prayers of the muezzin, whose pathetic voice called from his blue tower five times a day to raise the souls of the Faithful from misery towards Allah . . . And that is what they could not forgive in the old Devil's life: Mehmet Selim, most miserable of a miserable village, never crossed the threshold of the mosque. He never looked towards the sky of Allah; never noticed His humble muezzin. Five times every day of his life he scorned the only promise of hope these victims were allowed. He scorned the roses of Allah, and the Turks said his heart was the nest of starless nights. A cloud of mystery hung upon the head of this dark-faced man who lived far from the other cabins, on the very edge of the shore. No one in the village ever remembered having seen him smile. During all his life he had never been heard to greet a neighbor. Usually he was at sea from dawn until night. Occasionally he passed through the village, his basket full of the products of his mysterious fishing, to sell them God knows where.

During the long winter nights the fishermen used to whisper strange things about Mehmet Selim . . . A kind of superstitious terror surrounded his cabin for them, so that no one ever approached it; when on rare occasions they had to pass that way, they preferred to walk a few more miles and make a detour. But everyone dearly loved Jasmina, the Devil's child, as different from Selim as a moonbeam from a rock. The girl played with the children, helped the women in their work, had kind words and a smile for everybody, nursed them when ill—and not being able to help them with money, as she never had a penny for her-

self, she used to go far away over the hills and bring them plants to enliven their gloomy homes.

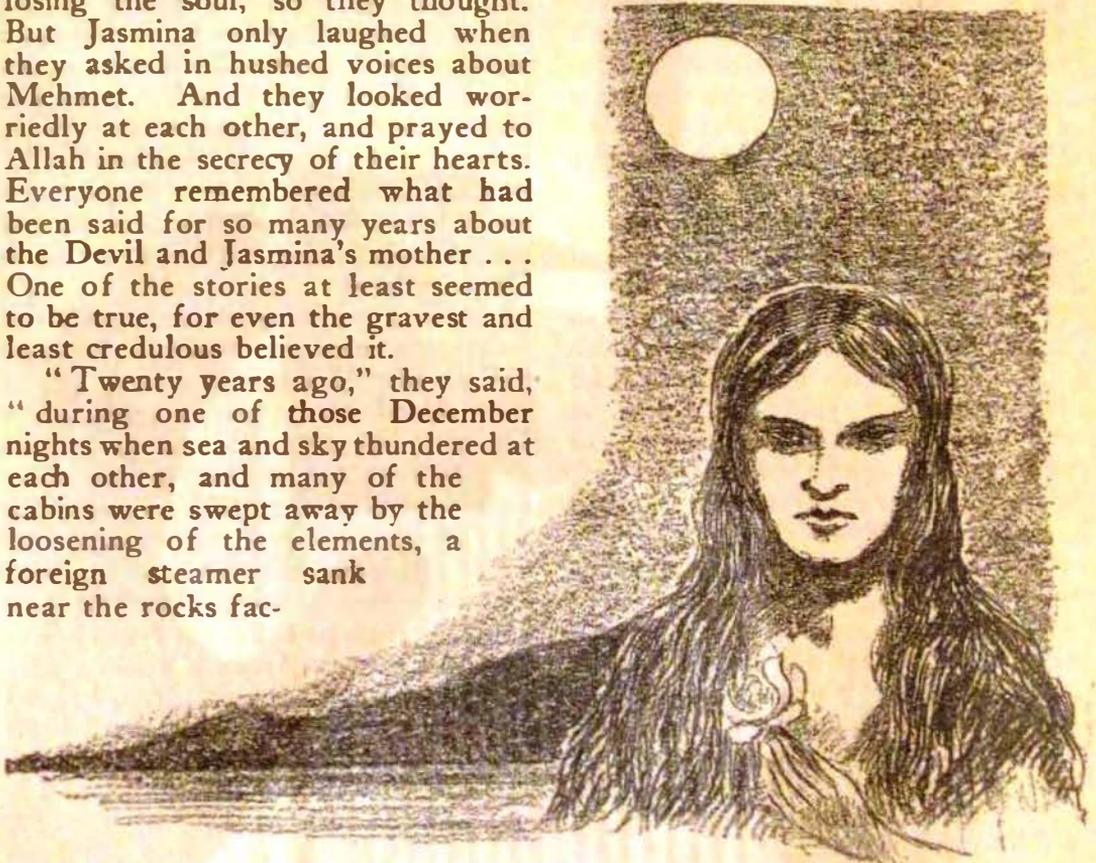
And they adored her (one must be very poor to feel the emotion of receiving a flower . . .) with the reverence one would feel for some fairy one couldn't understand, knowing only that she was there to bring sunshine into their worn-out hearts. She was to them the benediction of the moon, created of its very rays, to pass mercifully through their bitter lives . . . They knew by tacit agreement, that if it were necessary, not one of them would ever hesitate to give his poor life for the "Moon Child" . . . Perhaps they would have hesitated to interfere with the old Devil; but that wouldn't have been a matter of life, but of losing the soul, so they thought. But Jasmina only laughed when they asked in hushed voices about Mehmet. And they looked worriedly at each other, and prayed to Allah in the secrecy of their hearts. Everyone remembered what had been said for so many years about the Devil and Jasmina's mother . . . One of the stories at least seemed to be true, for even the gravest and least credulous believed it.

"Twenty years ago," they said, "during one of those December nights when sea and sky thundered at each other, and many of the cabins were swept away by the loosening of the elements, a foreign steamer sank near the rocks fac-

ing the village. One could hear the deathly screaming of the frightened passengers and see frightened torches flashing in the darkness. The whole village stared, terrified. The mere thought of putting out to their rescue seemed mad. But that very night an unheard-of thing happened; the Devil, silent as usual, had jumped into his bark and in a second had vanished from sight, between two liquid mountains.

Trembling, the muezzin went to the mosque to implore the Prophet's pity for those who were drowning and for the unfaithful Mohammedan who had gone to meet Death.

Petrified the village watched, until the dawn lighted its livid lantern . . . As the sun broke in an explosion of bright rays, the



black sea breathed deeply, suddenly calm and its waves sang from the shore to the distant horizons, sweeping away all traces of the night's disaster.

No one had seen Mehmet Selim return to shore . . .

For two weeks there was no sign of him . . . But one night, a boy came back to the village telling them breathlessly that he had approached the Devil's cabin and had seen Mehmet sitting on the rock beside his porch, holding a very fair woman in his arms in a wild embrace and that she was sobbing and crying . . .

For two years the village knew that a foreign woman—slim like a tall lily—luminous as they could never imagine a human being—with eyes as blue as the lakes of the Prophet's paradise—lived over there in the cabin.

Sometimes they met her, her tiny dancing feet barely touching the earth, a smile wandering around her pale lips, a curious expression in the blue eyes, her golden braids crowning her like a princess, seeming hardly conscious of them. The young fisherwomen, catching sight of the blond vision, wiped their moist eyes with their aprons, and the old ones shook their fists . . . "Allah, let him not breathe thy clean salt air any longer! He has driven her mad, Allah!"

"The fairy is mad!" said the girls thoughtfully and the children became silent when she passed, whispering to each other:

"The Princess is mad, you know . . ."

And during the first year of her life in the village a child cried in the cabin . . . And the muezzin prayed again in the mosque for the Devil's crime, and the little one's

happiness. He humbly asked Allah never to give back to the blond woman her clear mind of yore, that she might not realize that she was lost in a nightmare . . .

But a peculiar thing happened during the second year of her life there. Mirak, a gypsy *Lautar*, came from Argesh (a Rumanian Province) with his singing *Lauta* and camped quite near Mehmet's cabin, either ignorant of the superstitions which surrounded the place, or not being impressed by them.

He was a handsome, tall boy with a red mouth beneath the silky moustache, and big eyes—eyes full of gypsy passion and yet of tenderness . . .

They said that his playing could move even the gloomy rocks from the shore, and that the sea used to stand still, listening to his songs . . . Omar the wise one swore that he had seen her, the last night they ever knew anything about the Stranger, wandering along the shore with Mirak, and may Allah have pity on their souls—the Gypsy played to enchant even the distant horizons and She was crying softly and the haggard expression of her face was gone . . . After that, not a living soul saw them any more. The blond woman and Mirak disappeared . . .

Some of the fishermen said that the old Devil saw them one evening from his boat, holding hands, and took them both out in his bark into the wide distances . . . The fact is that Selim returned alone to shore.

Had he really put out their eyes, as many said, so that they shouldn't see each other's face before they died? Allah alone knows and Mohammed, his beloved Prophet.

Twenty years had passed since that day, and Jasmina, the daughter of the fairy and the Devil, charmed

the miserable village with the smile of her being . . .

Only Omar shook his head doubtfully, talking about the burning fire of her eyes—the eyes of Mehmet Selim.

That May Sunday had been a burning day, the sun streaming down like liquid fire over the coast. A hot evening fell heavily, covering sea and land with glowing shadows . . . Jasmina sat motionless on a brown rock by the dusty road which, following the tormented shore, led somewhere far away to a town with people dressed in silk and living in cool palaces—a town they said was named Constantza.<sup>1</sup>

Her eyes half closed, her childish lips opened like a pomegranate flower drinking sunshine, Jasmina blended every fairy-tale she had ever imagined with the stories she had heard about Constantza and Rumania and all the marvels of the unknown, wide World . . . Suddenly she laughed aloud . . .

What did she care about the wide world? Could there be a wider world for her than the seas and skies and the miracle of moonlight?

With a beating heart, she watched the last blood rays of the incandescent sunset, awaiting with longing the first silver glance of the queen of the night.

A last flame kissed the sky, and there was nothing left but a blue mist floating over the black sea and the handful of ashes of roses spread on the moving horizon . . .

The thin half-moon trembled in a vague halo of silver—melancholy like a broken ring . . .

Jasmina was trembling too, her face lifted in an all forgetful happiness.

Then a tide of harmony filled the air—caressing her like a stream of subtle waters . . .

A long trill rose and fell and rose—touching the broken ring in the sky . . .

What was it? Was it the star song or the moon's whisper . . .?

Jasmina didn't want to know . . . The music came nearer and nearer . . . It was as if the longings of a thousand souls sang in those flute-like trills, telling of old sorrows, asking for a hope . . .

Suddenly the girl awoke from her dream . . . A tall young man stood before her, dressed in a white costume, all embroidered, with a little flute in his right hand, and a big black hat in his left. Smiling he stood there, the personification of glorious youth . . . She stared at him with childish eyes, as though in a deeper dream than before. The stranger still smiled, and asked her something in an unknown language which sounded sweet to her ear. She couldn't understand, but it was as though a ray of moonlight had glided into her very soul.

All in the village knew about the love and secret betrothal of Jasmina and Dan, the shepherd from Argesh. And the village, although composed of Turks, approved of the choice of their Moon Child. But the village sank into silence when it remembered Selim the Devil. Everyone had already learned to love Dan, who had come to Dobrodja on his way to buy fish and sheep for his own village.

He knew their Turkish dialect a little and Jasmina had already learned Rumanian, with the speed given to the human heart by love.

Everybody could read in her flowery face how happy she was . . . But she had always stopped

<sup>1</sup>Constantza: Famous Summer resort on the Black Sea in Rumania.

Dan when he had wanted to ask Selim for her!

She didn't quite know why, but she trembled every time she asked him to wait a little longer. Were they not happy, like that? Wandering side by side in the sunflames? Holding hands in silence in the silvery nights? Talking for hours on some rock far into the sea or rocked violently by the black waves in their canoe . . . ? Weren't they happy, planning with hushed voices—mysterious with hope—their home over there in Argesh? It was to be a white house on a green hill—with a thatched roof like a big hat—and the little windows full of red carnations, and the wide balcony, with its pots of geranium.

The house would be the cleanest in the whole Argeshelul village and she would be the quickest at work and the most beloved wife of all the young wives in the province of Argesh.

Old Stana, Dan's white-haired mother, would love her so much . . . And Vlad, his father, would tell her all the stories of the country—as they sat thoughtfully gathered around the winter fire, during the long nights—or cheerfully on the threshold as the summer's twilight fell . . .

"Jasmina, and Sundays we shall go to the little church bent over the hill, the old church you know—with all its saints in red clothes and with golden beards . . ."

Yes she was happy . . . She didn't think or rather she didn't want to think about possible obstructions that might suddenly rise in her road. Only when Dan became too impatient to ask Selim that he might take her away to the nest in Argeshelul, an oppression overcame her and something like an iron claw pressed her throat . . . She didn't

want to think—she didn't want to . . .

Dan resigned himself to waiting a few weeks more, not understanding her patience, but his love for her was stronger than his desire to call her his own. And the complicity of the village to keep silence and secrecy and to wait—to wait a little more still—although it seemed unnatural to him, in a way paralyzed his eagerness to carry away the Beloved.

It was a tropical June afternoon, drowned in melted gold. Jasmina and Dan were on their rock, the gray cliff, lost in the waves of the sea, which was almost translucent with feverish heat that day . . . And as the lovers sat immobile they seemed a symbol of tenderness at the edge of an abyss.

Violet night fell over the world—the sun dropped into the sea like a bleeding urn . . .

"Jasmina, Beloved—let's go to the house on the green hill. Jasmina . . ."

Fear took hold of her suddenly, and hiding her head in Dan's arms, she shivered:

"Oh yes—let's go, Dan, let's go . . . Take me away—take me away . . ."

Like a frightened child she cried, calling him by names whose meaning he did not understand . . . and clinging to him with her nervous arms . . .

"Dan . . . something fearful is happening . . . Dan . . ." And as he tried to rise to look around to assure her, she screamed and clung to him with all her strength.

"Dan, if you ever loved me, don't look—don't look . . . Dan . . . I will die if you look . . . Don't look . . . Don't look . . ."

There was such anguish in her words that Dan sighed and holding

her closer, forgot everything in his effort to calm her.

"I won't look dearest. Calm yourself; I won't, I swear it . . ."

So they couldn't see Mehmet Selim disappearing behind them as silently as he had come . . .

He had anchored his black bark a few minutes before, near their boat and the old Devil had climbed the gray rock carefully, suddenly appearing a foot from the place where they stood. A convulsion had distorted his face, and his gigantic hand had risen in a menace towards the sky and had sought the short knife in his belt.

He started towards them—then he stopped abruptly, stood a moment as though petrified and disappeared behind the gray rock. Now he was running as fast as he could. With a jump he was in the boat, and in another moment, out of sight, into the night.

It was the next Monday that the village saw the curious thing it will remember forever: Mehmet Selim comin among them and saying "Good morning" and smiling and talking . . . ! Smiling! Talking! He had spoken to them! So the old Devil was becoming human? Was happiness to be allowed Jasmina after all?

Mehmet Selim was coming back to mankind; in his old age, the old Devil remembered he had a heart. Oh, how glad they were for their Moon Child . . .

The soft-hearted muezzin went to the mosque alone to add a prayer to his five daily ones, thanking the Almighty Allah for touching the sinner's heart.

In another week or so, the astonished village discovered that Mehmet Selim and the Rumanian were friends, and they rejoiced and

were cheerful, for the horizon of Jasmina's life seemed to clear up . . .

Only Omar scolded them angrily: "Herd of lost sheep! Can't you see through the Devil's grim smile? You'll never reach Mohammed's paradise, you stupid ones! He wouldn't let such a breed as yours in! Can't you see the Devil is fixing some trap through his friendship with the boy? I tell you, if the last day of this week, Jasmina and the boy are not far away, Sunday it will be too late! We must send them away, do you hear me, or they will die as truly as I can read good and evil in the faces of Allah's sons."

But the village laughed and answered that he was a fool and a devil himself to see only evil things, even in Allah's miracles.

"Stupid herd, you shall cry above your nonsense!"

Saturday morning, Omar went in secrecy to find Jasmina. His austere face had something of the resolution of a visionary:

"My child," he said, and his voice admitted no reply, "I have arranged for you and Dan to leave tonight at ten. Everything is ready and I am going with you. I shall see you married by the old *Pope* I know, on the right side of the Dambovitza in Bucarest."

Jasmina was already trembling, tears burning her eyelids:

"But Omar—I can't leave my old father like that!"

Omar grasped her arm violently:

"You fool—you'll go with me tonight, or you'll never see the stars of Heaven again without a veil of tears over your eyes . . . if you should still be—alive!"

Jasmina looked at him amazed:

"Alive—?"

Omar was shaking her by both shoulders:

"You fool! You fool! Don't

you want to live? Don't you want to be happy? Do you want him killed? Don't you understand that the Devil will never forgive you for loving? And for loving a Christian? Ha! You are a stupid child—Selim is a mad devil—Dan doesn't know—and somebody must save you all from yourself, or Allah, shall punish him too, for having seen the misfortune approaching without bringing help!"

Jasmina was crying:

"But I can't—I can't abandon him. He is old now; we will just talk to him, tell him all about our love: he will understand; he will feel, Omar, how holy our tenderness is. I can't—go—like that—"

With a movement of anger, Omar pushed her aside with such violence that she nearly fell, and went away, scolding aloud at human imbecility and making large gestures towards the sky.

Jasmina awoke the next day with a sad presentiment. She tried to smile, persuading herself that it was only that madman Omar, whose visions had frightened her the day before . . .

But when she got out into the bright sunshine, instead of fading away, the blackness wrapped itself still stronger around her beating heart . . . Good Allah, why? Why?

She started towards the village, not realizing precisely what she was doing, her fear increasing with every step; she could feel the beating of her temples, like the blows of a hammer, all over her body. She arrived breathless and approached a little group of fisher folk, good-humored and laughing in the gay Sunday.

"Hello, Jasmina," cried one of them. "Here comes our Moon Child! Our flower! May the morning bathe thy white feet in

clear dew all the days of thy life!"

But they stopped, looking at her haggard face:

"What's the matter, child? For the love of Allah, what has happened?" And an old fisher's wife put her arms around her.

Jasmina's voice reached them like an uncertain echo:

"Have you seen Dan?"

"Why, yes, Child"—answered several voices.

"We were just rejoicing over his friendship with Selim. Father Selim just took him for a little pleasure trip in his fine old boat this morning. The old man was all right, and joking they went . . ."

But the last words were lost, for Jasmina, all the terrors of the earth in her eyes—had slipped, stiff and white, to the feet of the startled people . . .

Omar who just approached the place, stood still, looking intently at them; then he glanced at the sea, shook his head, and folding his arms on his chest, remained there motionless, like a prophet whose warnings have been ignored.

Two weeks had passed since that bright Sunday when Jasmina had known by her presentiment that misfortune was at hand. The old Devil and Dan never came ashore again, and the village was sunken in sorrowful silence. Omar froze them with his disdainful glance which clearly said:

"Stupid beasts: I told you to take care . . ."

He had spoken only once since, and that was to explain that the Devil had probably realized, all of a sudden, that he loved the child of his blood too much to kill her, and even too much to see her killed by sorrow. He knew she was of a breed—his own—whose passions

were deadly . . . So he had decided to die himself but to punish the guilty one who had crossed their road to take away his child . . . "And," Omar added—"perhaps Selim began to like—yes, to like—the young Dan because Jasmina loved him—and mad with anger against himself, he sent his own soul to everlasting death . . ."

But no one was listening to Omar. Everybody's heart was broken by the sight of Jasmina—a shadow of the old Jasmina, haggard, immobile, drowned in distress, her glance lost upon the treacherous sea . . .

They watched her, fearing some evil might befall her, as she seemed to have almost lost her mind, or at least every interest in surrounding things and people.

One Sunday evening, just three weeks after the unhappy day, they lost sight of her, and eve yone began to look anxiously for the girl.

Omar went too, silent and disdainful. Without a word he entered his bark, and steered the boat towards the gray rock—the Lovers' Place . . . The blue bark was there, trembling in the breeze like a broken leaf, and like the old Devil, some weeks before, Omar appeared on the rock behind Jasmina . . .

She stood erect—her glorious hair floating in the wind . . . She looked far away over the moaning waters, staring at a moving spot as in a trance . . .

She was seeing the little black

bark and Selim and Dan laughing and joking . . .

And then, suddenly without a word, Selim had turned the boat over and laughed . . . laughed . . .

And she could see Dan struggling to take hold again of the bark and the old Devil pulling him back . . . and laughing . . .

. . . For the last time her beloved one rose in distress, his head above the water and his homesick look embraced the horizon.

Then, the black sea drank in his face.

Jasmina cried—a loud sob, so loud that it rose above the desperate voice of the sea.

Abruptly, she stopped . . . she could hear him . . . yes . . . he was calling . . . it was his beloved voice . . .

"Jasmina!"

With a cry, Jasmina stretched out both her arms, and leaped.

"Yes . . . I come . . ."

Omar had not moved a finger to stop the Moon Child from her destiny. His arms crossed on his chest, he stood motionless and expressionless.

"May the path of Allah be blessed in all times . . ."

The pale moon was slowly lifting its broken silver ring over the seas, and the muezzin's voice tinkled clearly in the violet evening imploring the pity of Allah for the souls of His forgotten earth.

## The Four Winds

It may be the result of our steady fiction diet that makes us find sermons in stones, or, to be more exact, the emotion and sensation of fiction in, strictly-speaking, non-fictional sources. Though, as a matter of fact, the two books we have in mind are non-fictional chiefly in form.

"The Red Garden" (Knopf), from the Danish of Henning Kehler, is a series of situations and silhouettes out of Red Russia. The author puts them forth as his experiences while connected with the Danish Legation at Moscow in 1918. His work in the interests of the Red Cross took him all over Russia.

The book is in an unflinchingly cheerful vein; that is to say, the author is. He recounts his escapes from sudden and unpleasant death, his eleventh hour rescues with the same lack of indignation or rancour as he handles episodes more foreign to his own person, which, if properly treated, would cause insomnia for a week. As, for instance, when the conscientious Red Commissar orders a soldier shot, without five minutes' delay, whom an old woman accuses of having robbed her of a hundred-ruble note; please understand that the Commissar regrets the incident quite—perhaps I should say almost—as much as the soldier, but duty, orders, discipline, etc.; then when, a little later, the woman discovers the money absent-mindedly tucked away in a forgotten pocket, the Commissar has her shot, too, as the only way out of the situation.

If one's credulity is taxed, from time to time, immediately comes the reflection that these things could have happened, even if they didn't.

And the scene where the sailor expresses all the class hatred that has been pent up for centuries by plucking out a hair and dropping it in the soup of his vis-à-vis in a station lunch room, an ex-officer in the Imperial Navy. After three plates of soup have been utterly ruined—this was in 1918 when the inhabitants of Russia could still be fastidious about such trifles—the annoyed and exasperated officer shoots the sailor and blows out his own brains. A slight slump in the lunch-counter's trade followed.

The fictional emotion here comes from the fact that Russia and conditions in Russia are now in the realm of the fantastic, and facts no longer in a form to exert pressure on our minds.



This in a measure explains the emotion of John Dos Passos' "Rosinante to the Road Again" (Doran). In spite of three centuries, Spain is still the fatherland of Don Quixote, and one may, in the words of Sancho, find a Dulcinea behind the least-expected bush.

The interesting young author of "Three Soldiers" is in Spain in "questure" of a gesture. He sees it on every hand, in the gypsy dancer, Pastora Imperio, as she walks across the stage, quietly, unhurriedly, stopping at the footlights, the fingers of a brown hand above her head snapping an insistent rhythm; in Belmonte, the *torero*, as he turns his back on the baffled bull, and walks off, his red cape drag-

ging on the sand after him; and especially does he hear it in the fifteenth century verses of Jorge Manrique on the death of his father, which are as meaningful for the Spaniard of today as they were for the poet's contemporaries. Mr. Dos Passos defines this gesture as "an instant swagger—swagger for lack of a better word—of defiance in the midst of a litany to death, the all-powerful." On every hand the recognition—not to say worship—of Death the Conqueror; and side by side with it, an overpowering individualism, in highest and lowest, the longing to leave an impress on the stars. And the only solution of such a conflict is, right in the maw of death, to look as though you didn't care. Accept the uselessness of the struggle, but don't cringe; and not only do not avoid Death, but go half way down the road to meet him. And, as Death is ever present, you must not for a moment lay aside the gesture, lest he catch you unawares.

We accompany Mr. Dos Passos all over Spain, a-foot and on mule-back, always encountering the gesture, yet never able to describe or reproduce it to our entire satisfaction. We visit *tabernas*, and *colmenas*, we drink yellow Andalusian wine, we divert ourselves hugely in Carnival time, we visit circles of artists and literati, we talk with everyone we meet on the road; and always—and everywhere—we hear the monotonous, insistent snapping of Pastora's fingers, as in accompaniment to Manrique's warning:

*Cómo se va la vida*  
*Cómo se viene la muerte*  
*Tan callando.*

And incidentally Mr. Dos Passos gives us some of the keenest and soundest criticism of Spanish social

problems, literature, and the Spanish character that has been written in a long time.



We reprint another exquisite effusion from the Colossus-of-Rhodes-like "Secession," which stands with its business foot in Brooklyn and its artistic foot in Vienna.

workingman with hand so hairy-  
sturdy  
 you may turn O turn that airy hurdy-  
sturdygurdy  
 but when will turn backward O  
 backward Time in your no thy flight  
 and make me a child, a pretty drib-  
bling child, a little child.

In thy your ear:  
 en amerique on ne boit que de Jingly-  
ale.  
 things are going rather kaka  
 over there, over there.  
 yet we scarcely fare much better—

what's become of (if you please)  
 all the glory that or which was  
Greece  
 all the grandia  
 that was dada?

make me a child, stout hurdysturdy-  
gurdyman  
 waiter, make me a child. So this is  
Paris.  
 i will sit in the corner and drink  
thinks and think drinks,  
 in memory of the Grand and Old  
days:

of Amy Sandburg  
 of Algernon Carl Swinburned.

Waiter a drink waiter two or three  
drinks

what's become of Maeterlink now that April's here? (ask the man who owns one ask Dad, He knows).

It doesn't matter if you don't understand it; do you feel it?

Through a misunderstanding, the translation of the story "Pearls," in the October number of *WORLD FICTION* was attributed to Leo Pasvol-sky. The translation was made by Mr. D. A. Magul and Miss Irina Khrabrova from an original and hitherto unpublished ms.

## THE PRODIGAL RETURNS FROM AMERICA



\* —I am bringing the fatted calf with me in cans.

(Simplicissimus, Munich)

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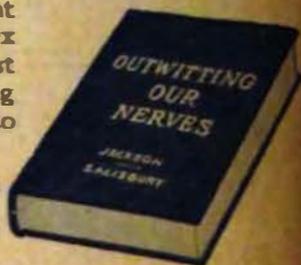
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