

The Owl



No. 1. May 1919

Beerbohm.	Galsworthy.	Nichols.
Belcher.	Graves.	Orpen.
Bianco.	Hardy.	Sarsoon.
Caldecott.	Kennington.	Smith
Crawhall.	Masefield.	St. John.
Davies.	Nicholson (N).	Squire.
	Nicholson.	Turner.

London. Martin Secker

Miscellany



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THE PRINTERS

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Foreword

“*All Owls are Satisfactory*,” Lewis Carroll begins his essay on these birds: we accept the omen gratefully.

It must be understood that “The Owl” has no politics, leads no new movement and is not even the organ of any particular generation—for that matter sixty-seven years separate the oldest and youngest contributors.

But we find in common a love of honest work well done, and a distaste for short cuts to popular success.

“The Owl” will come out quarterly or whenever enough suitable material is in the hands of the Editors.

The Master and the Leaves

I

*We are budding, master, budding,
We of your favourite tree ;
March drought and April flooding
Arouse us merrily.
The stemlets brightly studding ;
And yet you do not see.*

II

*We are fully woven for summer
In modes of limpest green,
The twitterer and the hummer
Here rest their rounds between,
While like a " long-roll " drummer
The night-hawk thrills the treen.*

III

*We are turning yellow, master,
And next we are turning red,
And faster then and faster
Shall seek our rooty bed—
All wasted in disaster
The magic show we spread !*

IV

*" I mark your early going,
And that you'll soon be clay,
I have seen your summer showing
As in my youthful day ;
But why I seem unknowing
Is too deep down to say."*

1917

Thomas Hardy

Sonnet

*Forget all these, the barren fool in power,
The madman in command, the jealous O,
The bitter world, biting its bitter hour,
The cruel now, the happy long ago.*

*Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,
Even to the soul, they are not lasting things,
Men are no gods, men tread the city dirt,
But in our souls we can be queens and kings.*

*And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,
On whom my dull eyes, blind to all else, peer,
Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder,
Nor the world's hate, can threat or take from here.*

*So you remain, though all man's passionate seas
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.*

John Masefield



Vincent Brooks, Day & Son

Song

*You are my sky : beneath your circling kindness
My meadows all take in the light and grow :
Laugh with the joy you've given,
The joy you've given,
And open in a thousand buds, and blow.*

*But when you are sombre, sad, averse, forgetful,
Heavily veiled in clouds that brood with rain,
Dumbly I lie all shadowed,
I lie all shadowed,
And dumbly wait for you to shine again.*

J. C. Squire

Ghost-Raddled

“Come, surly fellow, come! A song!”

“What, madmen? Sing to you?”

Choose from the clouded tales of wrong

And terror I bring to you.

Of a night so torn with cries,

Honest men sleeping

Start awake with glaring eyes,

Bone chilled, flesh creeping.

Of spirits in the web-hung room

Up above the stable,

Groans, knockings in the gloom

The dancing table.

Of demons in the dry well

That cheep and mutter,

Clanging of an unseen bell,

Blood, choking the gutter.

Of lust, frightful, past belief,

Lurking unforgotten,

Unrestrainable, endless grief

From breasts long rotten.

A song? What laughter or what song

Can this house remember?

Do flowers and butterflies belong

To a blind December?”

Robert Graves



Fable.

The Pianotuner and the Scorpions.

An unfortunate Pianotuner was about to end his miserable life by hurling himself from a high bridge when he paused to observe a Scorpion devouring her mate, thereupon he became so interested in the operation that, forgetting his original intention, he hurried home just in time to notice his wife hide the sandwiches behind the parlour clock.

A Frosty Night

Mother. “ *Sweet, my dear, what ails you,
Dazed and white and shaken?
Has the chill night numbed you?
Is it fright you have taken?* ”

Alice. “ *Mother, I am very well ;
I felt never better.
Mother, do not hold me so,
Let me write my letter.*”

Mother. “ *Alice, love, what ails you?* ”
Alice. “ *Nay, but I am well.
The night was cold and frosty ;
There’s no more to tell.*”

Mother. “ *Ay, the night was frosty,
Coldly gaped the moon ;
But the birds seemed twittering
Through green boughs of June.*

*Soft and thick the snow lay,
Stars danced in the sky :
Not all the lambs of May-Day
Skip so bold and high.*

*Your feet were dancing, Alice,
Seemed to dance on air,
You looked a ghost or angel
In the starlight there.*

*Your eyes were frosted starlight,
Your heart, fire and snow ;
Who was it said ‘ I love you ? ’ ”*

Alice. “ *Mother, let me go !* ”

Robert Graves

Sporting Acquaintances

*I watched old squatting Chimpanzee : he traced
His painful patterns in the dirt : I saw
Red-haired Ourang-utang, whimsical-faced,
Chewing a sportsman's meditative straw :
I'd met them years ago, and half-forgotten
They'd come to grief (but how, I'd never heard,
Poor beggars !) ; still, it seemed so rude and rotten
To stand and gape at them with never a word.*

*I ventured "Ages since we met," and tried
My candid smile of friendship ; no success.
One scratched his hairy thigh, while t'other sighed
And glanced away. I saw they liked me less
Than when, on Epsom Downs, in cloudless weather,
We backed The Tetrarch and got drunk together.*

Siegfried Sassoon

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNICAL
INSTRUCTION FOR IRELAND.
METROPOLITAN SCHOOL OF ART,
KILDARE STREET, DUBLIN.



in den Robin Lepps - this to show you my life in Dublin - and it's
a grand life surely - when the grey mist does be crossing the
hills of an evening - it would be hard to find a happier
boy than meself walking the four roads of meath or
in any of the great cities of the world for that matter
love to see both Wm. Williams & P. & C.

What the Captain said at the Point-to-Point

*I've had a good bump round ; my little horse
Refused the brook first time,
Then jumped it prime;
And ran out at the double,
But of course
There's always trouble at a double :
And then—I don't know how
It was—he turned it up
At that big, hairy fence before the plough ;
And some young, silly pup,
(I don't know which),
Near as a toucher knocked me into the ditch ;
But we finished full of running, and quite sound ;
And anyhow I've had a good bump round.*

Siegfried Sassoon

Love Impeached

*Listen for pity—I impeach
The tyrant Love that, after play,
Dribbles on Beauty's cheek, and still
Refuses to be moved away.*

*That, not content with many a kiss,
Plays with his fingers on her lip ;
And if she turns her back to him,
Drums with his hand on either hip.*

*Sometimes he squeezes, then he slaps,
I've heard he even bites her breast.
Now, how can Beauty keep her charms,
If she gets neither sleep nor rest ?*

*Is there no punishment, I ask—
No small corrections, soft and mild :
For let us never once forget
That, after all, he's but a child.*

W. H. Davies



Vincent Brooks.

Careless Lady.

Lady lovely lady careless and gay!
Once when a beggar called she gave her child away.
The beggar took the baby and wrapped it in a shawl.
'Bring her back,' the lady said, 'next time
you call.'

The Ape

*The trees dream all night on the tops of the hills,
The ghostly water a dark hollow fills,
Its long white shadow falling through the trees
Where the Ape squats silent, his hands on his knees.*

*The white shadow shines in that small dim mind ;
The Moon travels there ; the star-hordes wind
With pin-head lamps through the dark dark blue
Where faint, cloud-like thoughts collect and pursue.*

*The scent of the forest, the rippling streams ;
The butterflies flitting through the shaking tree-dreams ;
The twittering of birds and the smell of carrion ;
The pale morning sky and the roar of a lion. . . .*

*I see and I hear, I awake in the night,
And the Asian forests are dark in my sight,
With slow bright patches in the drifting gloom
Where Stars, Sun and Moon soundlessly bloom.*

*The Sun hangs low, a great, dim flower,
A bloom without stalk ; and hour by hour
The sharp cries of birds and the shrieks of the slain
Are tearing the quiet with bright gashes of pain :*

*And that Flower bleeds out, wildly staining the sky ;
And the lions roar to see the day-flower die—
They roar together on the tops of the hills
While with little pale blossoms the dark sky fills.*

*In the gloom under heaven, clasping my knees—
That long white shadow still falling through the trees,
The lions roaring their music in my brain—
Alone on that boulder I am sitting once again.*

W. J. Turner

Three Songs of the Enigma

I.

SOMETHING

*How long I have wished for something I know well,
But what that something is I cannot tell.*

*So often at sunrise in sad tears I wake
Shivering with longing for its sake ;*

*So often at noontide when the house is still
It sickens me with its unbidden ill ;*

*So often at twilight it does not seem far,
Not further than the first and far-off star ;*

*All, all my life is built towards its token
Yet by its near far-offness I am broken.*

*For I am ever under something's spell,
But what that something is I cannot tell.*

II

A WANDERING THING

*The hopeless rain, a sigh, a shadow
Falters and drifts again, again over the meadow,
It wanders lost, drifts hither . . . thither,
It blows, it goes, it knows not whither.*

*A profound grief, an unknown sorrow
Wanders always my strange life thro',
I know not ever what brings it hither,
Nor whence it comes . . . nor goes it whither.*



The Owl
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III

MODERN LOVE SONG

*Now that the evenfall is come,
And the sun fills the flaring trees
And everything is mad, lit, dumb,
And in the pauses of the breeze
A far voice seems to call me home
To haven beyond woods and leas.*

*I feel again how sharply stings
The spell which binds our troubled dust
With hint of divine frustrated things,—
The Soul's deep doubt and desperate trust
That She at sunset shall find wings
To bear her beyond NOW and MUST.*

*So place your head against my head,
And set your lips upon my lips
That so I may be comforted,—
For Ah ! the world so from me slips,
To the World-Sunset I am sped
Where Soul and Silence come to grips
And Love stands sore-astonished.*

Robert Nichols

LOVE—A Dream

*In a deep mountain lake there sailed a swan,
Far, far away from any human soul ;
And daily swam with her a speckled trout,
Who only left her when deep thunder rolled—
Sinking far down where that swan could not dive,
So that she tasted bitterest pangs of love
And drooped upon the water like to die.
And when that trout came near with the blue sky
She brightened over the water like a sail
Set for the harbour after a winter gale.
No solitary ship sailing a land-locked sea
With her own shadow, and no lonely cloud
In water moored, abandoned by the wind,
To substance and to spirit cloven, seemed
So deeply one as that strange pair I dreamed,
Among the mountains woven in my mind. . . .
Morning and evening her song filled the hills ;
The shepherds in the lowland heard her cry,
Sitting like stones amid their scattered sheep,
And stood and gazed into the distant air.
The mountains sunk under grey woods of sleep
In spring would wake, and shake a million leaves,
Flashing gold signals to the speechless sky,
Stirring uneasily in their mould-deep beds
Until the fickle fires crept away
And Autumn found them cloudier than before,
Breathed on the shining lake a phantom shore . . .
And years went by, and never dimmed their love ;
Her plumage shone as bright as winter snow,
And her bright image when the high stars gleamed
Still followed that frail shape that moved below,
Which could not cry nor utter sounds of love,
But silent at her feet did ever move.
There came no herald crying : “ Dream no more ! ”
But the Night flew with large and glittering eyes,
Brushing its purple wing through the dark pines,*

*And when the day gleamed on the mirrored hills
No Shadow flitted through the water's ghosts ;
For it had passed to some close-shuttered realm,
Some country fainter and more dim than theirs.
But on the lake a thing of fading snow
Glimmered away from that sky-covered world
Of air-drawn rock and hill, and breathing wood.
Trembling it stretched its snowy wings to rise,
Flashing bright shapes upon the calm, blue air,
Then drooped, and dimly sailed down those bright skies,
Sailed slowly on, in the cold, voiceless hills,
Singing aloud until the lake did cry
With quivering mouth up at the empty sky,
And darkness soft as dew came dropping down . . .
Into deep silence climbed the Hunter's Moon.*

W. J. Turner

“A Clergyman”

FRAGMENTARY, pale, momentary—almost nothing—glimpsed and gone—as it were, a faint human hand thrust up, never to reappear, from beneath the rolling waters of Time, he for ever haunts my memory and solicits my weak imagination. Nothing is told of him but that once, abruptly, he asked a question, and received an answer.

This was on the afternoon of April 7th, 1778, at Streatham, in the well-appointed house of Mr. Thrale. Johnson, on the morning of that day, had entertained Boswell at breakfast in Bolt Court, and invited him to dine at Thrale Hall. The two took coach and arrived early. It seems that Sir John Pringle had asked Boswell to ask Johnson “ what were the best English sermons for style.” In the interval before dinner, accordingly, Boswell reeled off the names of several divines whose prose might or might not win commendation. “ Atterbury ? ” he suggested. “ JOHNSON : Yes, Sir, one of the best. BOSWELL : Tillotson ? JOHNSON : Why, not now. I should not advise anyone to imitate Tillotson’s style ; though I don’t know ; I should be cautious of censuring anything that has been applauded by so many suffrages.—South is one of the best, if you except his peculiarities, and his violence, and sometimes coarseness of language.—Seed has a very fine style ; but he is not very theological. Jortin’s sermons are very elegant. Sherlock’s style, too, is very elegant, though he has not made it his principal study.—And you may add Smalridge. BOSWELL : I like Ogden’s Sermons on Prayer very much, both for neatness of style and subtilty of reasoning. JOHNSON : I should like to read all that Ogden has written. BOSWELL : What I want to know is, what sermons afford the best specimen of English pulpit eloquence. JOHNSON : We have no sermons addressed to the passions that are good for anything ; if you mean that kind of eloquence. A CLERGYMAN, whose name I do not recollect : Were not Dodd’s sermons addressed to the passions ? JOHNSON : They were nothing, Sir, be they addressed to what they may.”

The suddenness of it ! Bang !—and the rabbit that had popped from its burrow was no more.

I know not which is the more startling—the début of the unfortunate clergyman, or the instantaneousness of his end. Why hadn’t Boswell



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told us there was a clergyman present ? Well, we may be sure that so careful and delicate an artist had some good reason. And I suppose the clergyman was left to take us unawares because just so did he take the company. Had we been told he was there, we might have expected that sooner or later he would join in the conversation. He would have had a place in our minds. We may assume that in the minds of the company around Johnson he had no place. He sat forgotten, overlooked ; so that his self-assertion startled everyone just as on Boswell's page it startles us. In Johnson's massive and magnetic presence only some very remarkable man, such as Mr. Burke, was sharply distinguishable from the rest. Others might, if they had something in them, stand out faintly. This unfortunate clergyman may have had something in him, but I judge that he lacked the gift of seeming as if he had. This deficiency, however, does not account for the horrid fate that befell him. One of Johnson's strongest and most inveterate feelings was his veneration for the Cloth. To any one in Holy Orders he habitually listened with a grave and charming deference. To-day, moreover, he was in excellent good humour. He was at the Thrales', where he so loved to be ; the day was fine ; a fine dinner was in close prospect, and he had had what he always declared to be the sum of human felicity—a ride in a coach. Nor was there in the question put by the clergyman anything likely to enrage him. Dodd was one whom Johnson had befriended in adversity ; and it had always been agreed that Dodd in his pulpit was very emotional. What drew the blasting flash must have been not the question itself, but the manner in which it was asked. And I think we can guess what that manner was.

Say the words aloud : “ Were not Dodd's sermons addressed to the passions ? ” They are words which, if you have any dramatic and histrionic sense, *cannot* be said except in a high, thin voice.

You may, from sheer perversity, utter them in a rich and sonorous baritone or bass. But if you do so, they sound utterly unnatural. To make them carry the conviction of human utterance, you have no choice ; you must pipe them.

Remember, now, Johnson was very deaf. Even the people whom he knew well, the people to whose voices he was accustomed, had to address him very loudly. It is probable that this unregarded, young, shy clergyman, when at length he suddenly mustered courage to “ cut in,” let his high, thin voice soar *too* high, insomuch that it was a kind of scream.

On no other hypothesis can we account for the ferocity with which Johnson turned and rended him. Johnson didn't, we may be sure, mean to be cruel. The old lion, startled, just struck out blindly. But the force of paw and claws was not the less lethal. We have endless testimony to the strength of Johnson's voice ; and the very cadence of those words, " They were nothing, Sir, be they addressed to what they may," convinces me that the old lion's jaws never gave forth a louder roar. Boswell does not record that there was any further conversation before the announcement of dinner. Perhaps the whole company had been temporarily deafened. But I am not bothering about *them*. My heart goes out to the poor dear clergyman exclusively.

I said a moment ago that he was young and shy ; and I admit that I slipped those epithets in without having justified them to you by due process of induction. Your quick mind will have already supplied what I omitted. A man with a high, thin voice, and without power to impress anyone with a sense of his importance, a man so null in effect that even the retentive mind of Boswell did not retain his very name, would assuredly not be a self-confident man. Even if he were not naturally shy, social courage would soon have been sapped in him, and would in time have been destroyed, by experience. That he had not yet given himself up as a bad job, that he still had faint wild hopes, is proved by the fact that he did snatch the opportunity for asking that question. He must, accordingly, have been young. Was he the curate of the neighbouring church ? I think so. It would account for his having been invited. I see him as he sits there listening to the great Doctor's pronouncement on Atterbury and those others. He sits on the edge of a chair in the background. He has colourless eyes, fixed earnestly, and a face almost as pale as the clerical bands beneath his somewhat receding chin. His forehead is high and narrow, his hair mouse-coloured. His hands are clasped tight before him, the knuckles standing out sharply. This constriction does not mean that he is steeling himself to speak. He has no positive intention of speaking. Very much, nevertheless, is he wishing in the back of his mind that he *could* say something—something whereat the great Doctor would turn on him and say, after a pause for thought, " Why yes, Sir. That is most justly observed " or " Sir, this has never occurred to me. I thank you "—thereby fixing the observer for ever high in the esteem of all. And now in a flash the chance presents itself. " We have," shouts Johnson, " no sermons addressed



to the passions, that are good for anything." I see the curate's frame quiver with sudden impulse, and his mouth fly open, and—no, I can't bear it, I shut my eyes and ears. But audible, even so, is something shrill, followed by something thunderous.

Presently I re-open my eyes. The crimson has not yet faded from that young face yonder, and slowly down either cheek falls a glistening tear. Shades of Atterbury and Tillotson! Such weakness shames the Established Church. What would Jortin and Smalridge have said?—what Seed and South? And, by the way, who *were* they, these worthies? It is a solemn thought that so little is conveyed to us by names which to the palæo-Georgians conveyed so much. We discern a dim, composite picture of a big man in a big wig and a billowing black gown, with a big congregation beneath him. But we are not anxious to hear what he is saying. We know it is all very elegant. We know it will be printed and be bound in finely-tooled full calf, and no palæo-Georgian gentleman's library will be complete without it. Literate people in those days were comparatively few; but, bating that, one may say that sermons were as much in request as novels are to-day. I wonder, will mankind continue to be capricious? It is a very solemn thought indeed that no more than a hundred-and-fifty years hence the novelists of our time, with all their moral and political and sociological outlook and influence, will perhaps shine as indistinctly as do those old preachers, with all their elegance, now. "Yes, Sir," some great pundit may be telling a disciple at this moment, "Wells is one of the best. Galsworthy is one of the best, if you except his concern for delicacy of style. Mrs. Ward has a very firm grasp of problems, but is not very creational. Caine's books are very edifying. I should like to read all that Caine has written. Miss Corelli, too, is very edifying. And you may add Upton Sinclair." "What I want to know," says the disciple, "is, what English novels may be selected as specially enthralling." The pundit answers: "We have no novels addressed to the passions that are good for anything, if you mean that kind of enthrallment." And here some poor wretch (whose name the disciple will not remember) inquires: "Are not Mrs. Glyn's novels addressed to the passions?" and is in due form annihilated. Can it be that a time will come when readers of this passage in our pundit's Life will take more interest in the poor nameless wretch than in all the bearers of those great names put together, being no more able or anxious to discriminate between (say) Mrs. Ward and Mr. Sinclair than we are to set Ogden above

Sherlock, or Sherlock above Ogden ? It seems impossible. But we must remember that things are not always what they seem.

Every man illustrious in his day, however much he may be gratified by his fame, looks with an eager eye to posterity for a continuance of past favours, and would even live the remainder of his life in obscurity if by so doing he could insure that future generations would preserve a correct attitude towards him for ever. This is very natural and human, but, like so many very natural and human things, very silly. Tillotson and the rest must not, after all, be pitied for our neglect of them. They either know nothing about it, or are above such terrene trifles. Let us keep our pity for the seething mass of divines who were *not* elegantly verbose, and had no fun or glory while they lasted. And let us keep a specially large portion for one whose lot was so much worse than merely undistinguished. If that nameless curate had not been at the Thrals' that day, or, being there, had kept the silence that so well became him, his life would have been drab enough, in all conscience. But at any rate, an unpromising career would not have been nipped in the bud. And that is what in fact happened, I'm sure of it. A robust man might have rallied under the blow. Not so our friend. Those who knew him in infancy had not expected that he would be reared. Better for him had they been right. It is well to grow up and be ordained, but not if you are delicate and very sensitive, and happen to annoy the greatest, the most stentorian and roughest of contemporary personages. "A Clergyman" never held up his head or smiled again after the brief encounter recorded for us by Boswell. He sank into a rapid decline. Before the next blossoming of Thrale Hall's almond trees he was no more. I like to think that he died forgiving Dr. Johnson.

Max Beerbohm



Drawn & Etched by George Decher May 1918

Mrs HARRIS
OF
FOLLOP YARD
taken from Life.



The Sun

A Girl sits crouched over her knees on a stile close to a river. A Man with a silver badge stands beside her clutching the worn top plank. The Girl's level brows are drawn together ; her eyes see her memories. The Man's eyes see the Girl ; he has a dark, twisted face. The bright sun shines ; the quiet river flows ; the CUCKOO is calling ; the mayflower is in bloom along the hedge that ends in the stile on the towing path.

THE GIRL. God knows what 'e'll say, Jim.

THE MAN. Let 'im. 'E's come too late, that's all.

THE GIRL. He couldn't come before. I'm frightened. 'E was fond o' me.

THE MAN. And aren't I fond of you ?

THE GIRL. I ought to 'a waited, Jim ; with 'im in the fightin'.

THE MAN. (*passionately*) And what about me ? Aren't I been in the fightin'—earned all I could get ?

THE GIRL. (*touching him*) Ah !

THE MAN. Did you——? (*He cannot speak the words*).

THE GIRL. Not like you, Jim—not like you.

THE MAN. Have a spirit, then.

THE GIRL. I promised him.

THE MAN. One man's luck's another's poison.

THE GIRL. I ought to 'a waited. I never thought he'd come back from the fightin'.

THE MAN. (*grimly*) Maybe 'e'd better not 'ave.

THE GIRL. (*looking back along the tow path*) What'll he be like, I wonder?

THE MAN. (*gripping her shoulder*) Daisy, don't you never go back on me, or I should kill you, and 'im too.

The Girl looks at him, shivers and puts her lips to his.

THE GIRL. I never could.

THE MAN. Will you run for it ? 'E'd never find us.

The Girl shakes her head.

THE MAN. (*dully*) What's the good o' stayin' ? The world's wide.

THE GIRL. I'd rather have it off me mind, with him home.

THE MAN. (*clenching his hands*) It's temptin' Providence.

THE GIRL. What's the time, Jim ?

THE MAN. (*glancing at the sun*) 'Alf past four.

THE GIRL. (*looking along the towing path*) He said four o'clock. Jim, you better go.

THE MAN. Not *I*. *I've* not got the wind up. I've seen as much of hell as he has, any day. What like is he ?

THE GIRL. (*dully*) I dunno, just. I've not seen him these three years. I dunno no more, since I've known you.

THE MAN. Big or little chap ?

THE GIRL. 'Bout your size. Oh ! Jim, go along !

THE MAN. No fear ! What's a blighter like that to old Fritz's shells ? We didn't shift when they was comin'. If you'll go, I'll go ; not else.

Again she shakes her head.

THE GIRL. Jim, do you love me true ? (*For answer the Man takes her avidly in his arms*) I ain't ashamed—I ain't ashamed. If 'e could see me heart.

THE MAN. Daisy ! If I'd known you out there, I never could 'a stuck it. They'd 'a got me for a deserter. That's how I love you !

THE GIRL. Jim, don't lift your hand to 'im ! Promise !

THE MAN. That's according.

THE GIRL. Promise !

THE MAN. If 'e keeps quiet, I won't. But I'm not accountable—not always, I tell you straight—not since I've been through that.

THE GIRL. (*with a shiver*) Nor p'raps he isn't.

THE MAN. Like as not. It takes the lynch pins out, I tell you.

THE GIRL. God 'elp us !

THE MAN. (*grimly*) Ah ! We said that a bit too often. What we want, we take, now ; there's no one else to give it us, and there's no fear'll stop us ; we seen the bottom of things.

THE GIRL. P'raps he'll say that too.

THE MAN. Then it'll be 'im or me.

THE GIRL. I'm frightened.

THE MAN. (*tenderly*) No, Daisy, no ! The river's handy. One more or less. 'E shan't 'arm you ; nor me neither. (*He takes out a knife*)

THE GIRL. (*seizing his hand*) Oh, no ! Give it to me, Jim !

THE MAN. (*smiling*) No fear ! (*He puts it away*) Shan't 'ave no need for it like as not. All right, little Daisy ; you can't be expected to see things like what we do. What's life, anyway ? I've seen

a thousand taken in five minutes. I've seen dead men on the wires like flies on a flypaper. I've been as good as dead meself a hundred times. I've killed a dozen men. It's nothin'. He's safe, if 'e don't get my blood up. If he does, nobody's safe ; not 'im, nor anybody else ; not even you. I'm speakin' sober.

THE GIRL. (*softly*) Jim, you won't go fightin' in the sun, with the birds all callin' ?

THE MAN. That depends on 'im. I'm not lookin' for it. Daisy, I love you. I love your hair. I love your eyes. I love you.

THE GIRL. And I love you, Jim. I don't want nothin' more than you in all the world.

THE MAN. Amen to that, my dear. Kiss me close !

The sound of a voice singing breaks in on their embrace. The Girl starts from his arms, and looks behind her along the towing path. The Man draws back against the hedge, fingering his side, where the knife is hidden. The song comes nearer :

“ I'll be right there to-night,
Where the fields are snowy white.
Banjos ringin', darkies singin',
All the world seems bright.”

THE GIRL. It's him !

THE MAN. Don't get the wind up, Daisy. I'm here !

The singing stops. A man's voice says : “ Christ ! It's Daise ; it's little Daise 'erself ! ” The Girl stands rigid. The figure of a soldier appears on the other side of the stile. His cap is tucked into his belt, his hair is bright in the sunshine ; he is lean, wasted, brown, and laughing.

SOLDIER. Daise ! Daise ! Hallo, old pretty girl !

The Girl does not move, barring the way, as it were.

THE GIRL. Hallo, Jack ! (*Softly*) I got things to tell you.

SOLDIER. What sort o' things, this lovely day ? Why, I got things that'd take me years to tell. Have you missed me, Daise ?

THE GIRL. You been so long.

SOLDIER. So I 'ave. My Gawd ! It's a way they 'ave in the Army. I said when I got out of it I'd laugh. Like as the sun itself I used to think of you, Daise, when the crumps was comin' over, and the wind was up. D'you remember that last night in the

wood? 'Come back and marry me quick, Jack.' Well, here I am—got me pass to heaven. No more fightin', an' drillin', no more sleepin' rough. We can get married now, Daise. We can live soft an' 'appy. Give us a kiss, old pretty.

THE GIRL. (*drawing back*) No.

SOLDIER. (*blankly*) Why not?

The Man with a swift movement steps along the hedge to the Girl's side.

THE MAN. That's why, soldier.

SOLDIER. (*leaping over the stile*) 'Oo are you, Pompey? The sun don't shine in your inside, do it? 'Oo is he, Daise?

THE GIRL. My man.

SOLDIER. Your—man! Lummy! 'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief!' Well, soldier? So you've been through it, too. I'm laughin' this mornin' as luck will 'ave it. Ah! I can see your knife.

THE MAN. (*who has half drawn his knife*) Don't laugh at me, I tell you.

SOLDIER. Not at you, soldier, not at you. (*He looks from one to the other*) I'm laughin' at things in general. Where did you get it, soldier?

THE MAN. (*watchfully*) Through the lung.

SOLDIER. Think o' that! An' I never was touched. Four years an' never was touched. An' so you've come an' took my girl! Nothin' doin'! Ha! (*Again he looks from one to the other—then away*) Well! The world's before me! (*He laughs.*) I'll give you Daise for a lung protector.

THE MAN. (*fiercely*) You won't. I've took her.

SOLDIER. That's all right, then. You keep 'er. I've got a laugh in me you can't put out, black as you are! Good-bye, little Daise!

The Girl makes a movement towards him.

THE MAN. Don't touch 'im!

The Girl stands hesitating, and suddenly bursts into tears.

SOLDIER. Look 'ere, soldier; shake 'ands! I don't want to see a girl cry, this day of all, with the sun shinin'. I seen too much o' sorrer. You and me've been at the back of it. We've 'ad our whack. Shake!

THE MAN. Who are you kiddin'? You never loved 'er!



To/ Nancy
from J. Crumfall

Wash. Brooks, July 2000



SOLDIER. Oh ! I thought I did.

THE MAN. I'll fight you for her. (*He drops his knife*).

SOLDIER. (*slowly*) Soldier, you done your bit, an' I done mine. It's took us two ways, seemin'ly.

THE GIRL. (*pleading*) Jim !

THE MAN. (*with clenched fists*) I don't want 'is charity. I only want what I can take.

SOLDIER. Daise, which of us will you 'ave ?

THE GIRL. (*covering her face*) Oh ! *Him !*

SOLDIER. You see, soldier ! Put your 'ands down. There's nothin' for it but a laugh. You an' me know that. Laugh, soldier !

THE MAN. You blarsted — ! (*The Girl springs to him and stops his mouth.*)

SOLDIER. It's no use, soldier. I can't do it. I said I'd laugh to-day, and laugh I will. I've come through that, an' all the stink of it ; I've come through sorrer. Never again ! Cheer-o, mate ! The sun's shinin' !

He turns away.

THE GIRL. Jack, don't think too 'ard of me !

SOLDIER. (*looking back*) No fear, old pretty girl ! Enjoy your fancy ! So long ! Gawd bless you both !

He sings, and goes along the path, and the song :

“ I'll be right there to-night
Where the fields are snowy white ;
Banjos ringing, darkies singing—
All the world seems bright ! ”

fades away.

THE MAN. 'E's mad.

THE GIRL. (*looking down the path with her hands clasped*) The sun has touched 'im, Jim !

John Galsworthy

Trivia

CADOGAN GARDENS

Out of the fog a dim figure accosted me. "I beg your pardon, Sir, but could you tell me how to find Cadogan Gardens?"

"Cadogan Gardens? I am afraid I am lost myself. Perhaps, Sir," I added (we seemed oddly alone and intimate in that white world of mystery together) "perhaps you can help me to find the Gardens I am looking for . . . ?"

"Hesperian Gardens?" the voice repeated. "I don't think I have ever heard of Hesperian Gardens."

"Oh surely!" I cried, "the Gardens of the sunset and the singing Maidens."

"But what I am really looking for in the fog," I confided to that dim-seen figure, "what I am always trying to find is the Happy Valley, the Fortunate Abodes, the Paradise our parents lost so long ago."

FACES

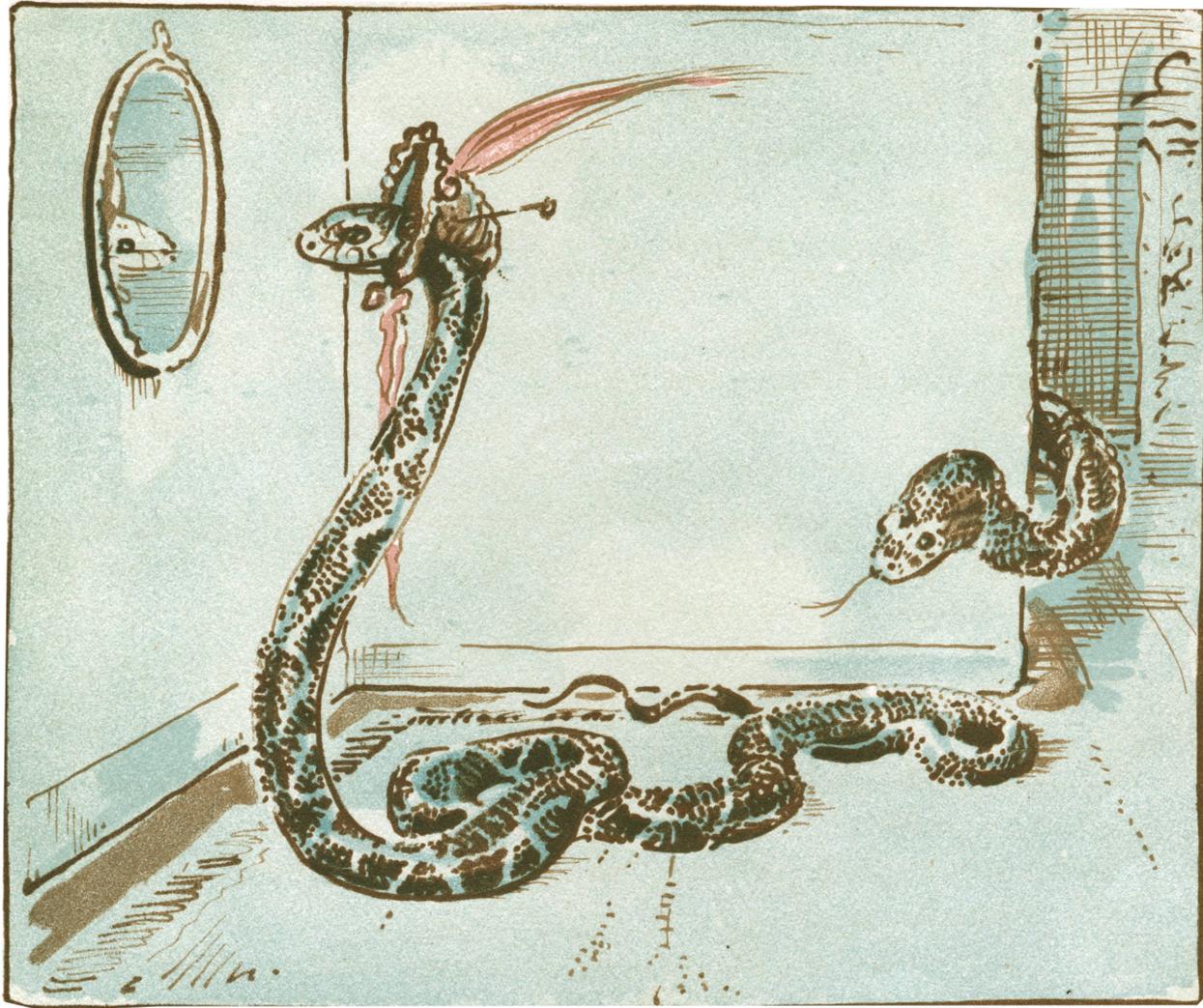
Almost always the streets of London are full of only dreary-looking people; sometimes for weeks on end the poor face-hunter returns unblest from his expeditions, with no provision with which to replenish his daydream larder.

Then one day the plenty is all too great: there are Princesses at the street-crossings; Queens in the Taxi-cabs; Beings fair as the dayspring on the tops of buses; and the Gods themselves can be seen promenading up and down Piccadilly.

MISAPPREHENSION

People often seem to take me for someone else; they talk to me as if I were a person of settled views and serious convictions. "What is your opinion of Democracy?" they ask; "Are you in favour of the Channel Tunnel?" "Do you believe in Existence after Death?"

I assume a thoughtful attitude, and by means of grave looks and evasive answers, I conceal—or at least I hope I conceal—my discreditable secret.



Fable

The Serpent and her Mother

One day a young Adder was caught by her Mother in the act of trying on a new bonnet "where are you going" asked the fond parent "O nowhere at all" replied the startled daughter "not even into the garden"

'—'

ASK ME NO MORE

Where are the snows of yesteryear? Ask me no more the fate of Nightingales and Roses, and where the Old Moons go, or what becomes of last year's Oxford poets.

THE LATCHKEY

I was astonished, I was almost horror-struck by the sight of the New Moon at the end of the street. In bewilderment and Blake-like wonder I stood and gazed at it on my doorstep. For what was I doing there; I a wanderer, a pilgrim, a nomad of the desert, with no home save where the evening found me—what was my business on that doorstep; at what commonplace had the Moon caught me, with a latchkey in my hand.?

L. Pearsall Smith

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Athenian fowl with feathered legs
Stand emblem of our will
To hunt the rat that sucks the eggs
Of virtue, joy, and skill.