Christmas

Ex Libris

RUPERT HART-DAVIS

* with love

For Rupert Hart-Davis from William Nicholson
1931

Ex Libris
The Missed Train: by Thomas Hardy
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The Mask of Michichiy: by W. J. Turner
The Hunt: Unpublished Sketches for The Queen of Hearts:
by Randolph Caldecott
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THE PRINTERS
The Illustrations by
Vincent Brooks, Day & Sons Ltd.
Parker Street, Kingsway
The Letterpress by
The Westminster Press
11 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden
1923
The Missed Train

Thomas Hardy

How I was caught
Hieing home, after days of allure,
And driven to an inn—small, obscure—
At the junction, fret-fraught!

How civil my face
To get them to chamber me there—
A roof I had passed scarce aware
That it stood at the place.

And how all the night
I had dreams of the unwitting cause
Of my lodgment. How lonely I was;
How consoled by her sprite!

Thus onetime to me . . . . .
Dim wastes of dead years bar away
Then from now! But the like haps to-day
To young lovers, may be.

Years, years as gray seas,
Truly, stretch now between! Less and less
Shrink the visions then great in me.—Yes,
Then in me. Now in these.
Rogues

W. H. Davies

The nearer unto Nature's heart I moved,
In those sweet days of old, the more I loved:
The nearer to the heart of man I move.
As days and weeks go by, the less I love;
Where can I find a true and honest mind?
Men rob me, and my Love is still unkind.

You cruel rogues, that come this day to borrow
A sum that's promised but not paid to-morrow;
That take like wasps the fruit that's on its way
Towards my mouth, and never fear my nay—
Go to that girl, and state your happy case,
That you can see more kindness in my face.

Tell her that though I kiss so wild and oft
Her flesh that's like a baby's, white and soft,
Yet kind consideration, at the back,
Can fear a kiss will bruise and turn it black:
Go to her, rogues, and show her all the signs
Where in my face a foolish angel shines.
Swinburne on blotting paper by Pelligrini
At dawn we returned a little on our tracks till we were invisible from the railway, and then marched south across a sandy plain (full of tracks of gazelle, oryx and ostrich, with in one place the pad-marks of a leopard), making for a low range of hills which bounded the far side. Zaal said that the line curved where it met these hills, and that their last spurs commanded the track and would give us good positions for our rifles and Lewis guns. So we went straight across the flat till we were in cover of the ridges, and then turned east in them till we were within half a mile of the railway. There we halted our camels in a narrow valley thirty feet deep, and six of us went forward on foot towards the line, which here bent a little eastward, to avoid the higher ground under our feet.

We found the ridge ended in a flat table, fifty feet above the line, and only thirty yards from the metals, which ran on a ten-foot bank across the mouth of the valley where our raiding party were hiding. The valley cut the line about a hundred yards north of the ridge on which we stood, and over it was thrown a bridge of two small masonry arches. This seemed an ideal place to lay the mine of high explosive with which we hoped to derail the Turkish train we had come here to attack. It was our first experiment in mining trains, and we were not sure what would happen; but it stood to reason that if the charge was laid over an arch the job would be surer: the locomotive might or might not be shattered: the bridge certainly would go, and the remainder of the train must be derailed. The ridge would make a good place for the trench mortars and the Lewis guns.

We walked back to our camels and unloaded them, and sent them away over the first three or four ridges to pasture in safety. The rest of the men (we were only a small party of one hundred Arabs of the Howeitat tribe) carried down the Stokes gun and its shells, the machine guns, the blasting gelatine, the insulated wire, the magneto and the tools. The two sergeants, Stokes an Englishman and Lewis an Australian, began to set up their toys on the higher ground, while we went down to the bridge and began to dig out a bed for the mine between the ends of two steel sleepers. The
explosive was kneaded into a lump, like Turkish delight; it just filled a fifty-pound sandbag, and made a convenient package for a man to carry.

The burying of it was not easy. The railway bank was steep, and had, sheltered on its west side, a deep hollow, which the wind had filled with sand. No one crossed this but myself, stepping very carefully, and yet unavoidably I left deep prints all over it. The ballast of the line, which had to be dug out to make a hole for the gelatine, could not be scattered on this sand without promptly attracting attention, and at last I found the easiest thing was to gather it all up in my cloak, carry it in repeated journeys along the line to a far culvert, and strew it there naturally about the bed of the stony water-course beneath. It took nearly two hours to finish the digging, and cover up the charge so that it was invisible to the most careful eye.

After that, the unrolling of the heavy wires from the detonator to the hills behind, from which we would fire the mine, was a difficult job and scarred the wind-rippled surface of the sand with long lines like the belly-marks of preposterously narrow heavy snakes. The top sand was crusted, and had to be broken through to bury the wires. They were stiff wires, and when buried in one place immediately rose into the air in another, so that at last to force them to lie still I had to make a considerable disturbance of the ground and weigh them down with rocks, which, in turn, had to be buried. Then it was necessary to go back over the ground and brush off all the marks with a sand-bag, used like a stipple to get a wave-like surface; finally, with a bellows and long sweeps of my cloak, I got it all to settle as though laid smooth by the wind. In all it took five hours before everything was finished, but then it was quite well finished and none of us could see where the charge was, or that there were double wires leading out underground from it to the ridges two hundred yards away below our gun-positions.

The wires were just long enough to cross the first ridge into a little depression a yard deep, and there I brought them to the surface and connected them with the electric exploder. It was an ideal firing point, except that from it the bridge was not visible. However, by going forward fifty yards to the peak of the ridge, a place was found from which both bridge and exploder were in easy view. I could stand there and give a signal when the engine was in position, and someone safe in the hollow could then press the button to explode the mine. Salem, the leader of the five slaves lent me by Feisal, asked for this honourable duty, and obtained it by common consent. The end of the afternoon was spent in showing him what to do with
the disconnected exploder, till at least he was act-perfect and could push
down the ratchet exactly when necessary.

We all walked back to camp together, leaving one man on watch near
the line. We arrived at our baggage to find it deserted, and could not see
the others anywhere, till by chance I looked up and suddenly there they
were, sitting all in a line in the golden light of sunset on the crest of a high
ridge just south of us. We yelled to them to lie down and come down, but
they sat there on their perch like a school of hooded crows, till I ran up and
threw them off the skyline, one by one. However, it was too late. The Turks
in a little hill-post by Hallat Ammar, four miles south of us, had seen them
and had already opened fire, in their alarm, into all the long shadows which
the declining sun was pushing gradually up the slopes towards them. Beduin
have an abiding contempt for the stupidity of the Turks, and take no care
in fighting them. Against other Arabs they are past masters in the art of
using country, but they regard the Turks as unworthy of such refinement.
This ridge was visible at once from Mudowwara and from Hallat Ammar,
and they had frightened both posts by their sudden expectant appearance.

However, it was too late to do anything but fume inwardly and rile
them outwardly by a lecture on the elementary principle of surprise in
attack—a lesson they took very smartingly from such a novice in raid-
warfare. Then the dark closed on us, and we determined to sleep away the
night patiently, in hope of a new lease of activity on the morrow. There
was just a chance that the Turks would not grasp our purpose, and would
believe us gone if they saw nothing in the morning. That would give us
time to carry out our project of destruction. So we lit fires in a deep hollow
and baked bread, and were comfortable. The common work and danger
had reconciled the three sections of which the party was made up, so that
this night we drew together into a single group, and the incident of the hill-
top shamed them, on reflection, into agreeing that Zaal, the finest fighter of
us all, should be in direct command.

Day broke quietly, and for hours we watched the deserted railway and
the peaceful camps along it. We kept safely hidden ourselves, thanks to
the constant guard of Zaal and his cousin, who managed with great diffi-
culty to limit the incurable restlessness of the Arabs. Beduin will never sit
down and be at peace for ten minutes, but must fidget about and do or say
something. In this respect they are very inferior to Englishmen for the
long strain of a waiting war, and it accounts for much of their uncertainty
in defence. To-day they made us very angry.
Perhaps, after all, the Turks saw us, for about nine o'clock a force of some forty men came out of the tents on the hill-top away to the south and began to advance in open order towards us. If we left them alone they would reach our position in an hour. If we opposed them strongly and held them or drove them back it would give the alarm to the railway and the mid-day train would be stopped till all was clear. It was a quandary, and eventually we settled it to our mind by sending against them thirty men, with orders to check them gradually and lightly, and if possible to draw them off by retiring westward, away from us and the line, into the broken hills where regular troops would not dare to follow. This might hide our main position from them.

For some hours it worked as we had hoped, and the firing grew desultory and more distant. A patrol came out confidently from the south and walked up examining the line before giving the "all clear" signal for trains to proceed. They passed our ridge and over the mine and on towards Mudowwara without noticing us or any traces of our work. There were eight soldiers and a very fat corporal, who was feeling the heat. After he had passed us by a mile or so the fatigue became too much for him. It was now eleven-thirty, and really warm. So he halted his party and marched them down the bank into the shade of a long culvert, under whose arches a cool draught from the east was gently blowing; and there in comfort they lay down on the soft sand, drank water from their bottles, and slept a little.

At noon we had a new trouble, for a large patrol of about one hundred men came out of Mudowwara station and made straight across the sandy plain towards our position. They were coming very slowly, and no doubt unwillingly, for every good Turk in Arabia likes his mid-day sleep; but they could hardly take more than two hours to reach us. The position we were in was becoming impossible; we prepared to pack up and move off, having decided to leave the mine and its leads in place in the hope that the Turks would not find them, and so we might be able to return on some later day and take advantage of all the exacting work we had put in while burying them with such care.

When we were ready we sent off a messenger to tell our covering force on the south to meet us further up. Hardly had he gone when the watchman cried out that smoke in clouds was rising from Hallat Ammar station. Zaal and I rushed up-hill and saw that there was indeed a train waiting there. We told the men to delay their start: then, as we were watching through our glasses, the train suddenly began to move out in our direction. We
yelled to the Arabs to get down to the prepared position as quickly as possible, and there was a wild scramble over the sand and rocks into place. Stokes and Lewis had boots on, so did not win the race; but they came well up. They were in luck, for the train being from the south would pass them before it was blown up. They would be just behind it, in the best firing position. The Arabs were posted in a long line on the spur running north from the guns, past the exploder, to the level of the bridge. This meant that they would fire directly into the derailed carriages from the flank at a range of less than one hundred and fifty yards.

An Arab stood up on high ground behind the guns and shouted to us what the train was doing—a necessary precaution, for had it carried troops and stopped to detrain them behind the gun-ridge we would have had to change front like a flash to cover our retreat up-hill for dear life. Fortunately it held on, at all the speed its two locomotives could make on the wood fuel. As it drew near the place where we had been reported by the Hallat Ammar garrison, it opened a hot random fire into the desert where we were supposed to be. I could hear the racket coming as I sat on my hillock waiting to give the signal to Salem, who was dancing round the exploder on his knees, crying with excitement and calling urgently on God to make him fruitful. The Turkish fire sounded very heavy; and I began to wonder with how many men we would have to deal, and if the mine would be advantage enough to enable our eighty to take them on successfully. The range was so short that an affray would be a desperate one, and I knew the Arabs were not whole-hearted. It would have been better if our first experiment had been more simple.

At that moment the engines, looking very big, rocked into view round the bend, travelling their fastest. Behind them were ten box-waggons, all obviously crowded, for rifle-muzzles were sticking through the windows and doors, and there were little sand-bag rests on the flat roofs to which Turks were clinging precariously and shooting out at us. The two engines were a surprise, and I decided on the moment to fire the charge under the second, so that however little its effect the uninjured one would not be able to uncouple and drag the trucks away. Accordingly when the first driving wheel of the second engine was on the culvert I signed to Salem, and an instant later there was a terrific roar from the line and everything vanished from sight behind a jetted column of black dust and smoke a hundred feet high and as many wide. Out of the darkness came a series of shattering crashes and long loud metallic clangings of ripped steel, while many lumps
of iron plate and one whole wheel of a locomotive whirled up suddenly out of the cloud against the sun and sailed over our heads to fall slowly and heavily into the desert beyond. Except for the whir of these, there followed a dead silence, with no cry of men or noise of shooting, while the now grey mist of the explosion drifted towards us and over our ridge till it faded into the hills.

I took advantage of this interval to get out of the way of shots and ran southward towards the sergeants, my chief responsibility. As I passed Salem, he picked up his rifle and charged forward into the murk. Before I reached the guns the whole hollow was alive with shots, and the brown figures of the Beduin were leaping forward to get to grips with the enemy. I looked back to see what was happening so quickly, and saw the carriages were being riddled through and through by our bullets, and that the Turks were jumping out from the far doors to gain the shelter of the railway embankment. Just then the machine-guns chattered out over my head, and the long line of Turks on the carriage roofs rolled over and were swept off the top like bales of cotton; the shower of bullets drove over the roofs in a storm, splashing clouds of yellow chips from the planking. The dominant position of the guns had been a positive advantage to us so far.

When I reached Stokes and Lewis the engagement had taken another turn. The Turks—or such of them as yet lived—had got into shelter behind the bank, here about eleven feet high, and from the safe cover of the waggon wheels were firing point-blank across the sandy hollow at Beduins only twenty yards away. The enemy were now in the crescent of the curving line, secure from the machine-guns; but Stokes at once slipped his first shell into the gun, and a few seconds later there was a crash behind the bank as the shell burst just beyond in the flat desert east of the line. He touched the elevating screw and slipped in his second shot. This burst just behind the carriages, in the bed below the bridge where the remaining Turks were taking refuge. It made a shambles of the place, and the survivors broke out eastward in a panic into the desert, throwing away their rifles and equipment as they ran. The Lewis gunners now had their chance, and the sergeant grimly traversed with drum after drum into their ranks, till the open sand was trailed with dead bodies. Mushagraf, the Sherari boy with the second gun, saw that the fight was over and threw aside his weapon with a yell to dash down at full speed into the hollow and join the others, who were beginning like wild beasts to tear open the carriages and fall to plunder. The fight had taken nearly ten minutes.
I looked northward and saw the Mudowwara patrol falling back uncertainly on the line to meet the fugitives from the train who were running their fastest towards them. To the south our thirty men had broken off the action, and were cantering in upon their camels to share our work. The Turkish force in contact with them saw them go, and began to move northward with infinite precaution, firing heavy volleys as they came. It was clear that we would have half an hour clear, and after that a double difficulty, so I ran down to the ruins to see what damage the explosion had done. I found the bridge all gone, and the front waggon fallen into the hole where it had been. This waggon had been filled with sick, and the explosion had killed all but three or four, and rolled dead and dying into a bleeding heap against the splintered end. One of these men, still conscious, cried out to me that they were typhus cases. So I closed the sliding door and left them there.

All the succeeding waggons were derailed and smashed. Some had their frames irreparably buckled. The second engine was a smoking blanched pile of loose iron. The driving wheels had been blown upward, tearing off the side of the boiler, and the cab and tender were twisted into strips. The front engine was heavily derailed, lying half-over on its side with its cab burst open, but otherwise intact, and its steam still at pressure. Our greatest aim was to destroy the engines, and, to make sure, I had kept in my arms a box of guncotton, ready detonated for an emergency. I now put it on the outside cylinder and lit the fuse. It would have been better on the fire-box, but not being an engineer I feared that the boiler might explode generally, and then my men, swarming like ants over the booty, might have suffered severely. It was impossible to wait till they had finished; they would loot until the Turks came and then flee for their lives. Victory makes an Arab force cease to exist.

It was a half-minute fuse, and the explosion blew the cylinder to smithers and the axle also, but hurt no one, because I got between the charge and the plunderers and drove them a little backward before it burst. At the time I felt somewhat distressed that enough damage had not been done; but, as it turned out, the Turks failed to mend it. The engines mattered so much to us because the Taurus tunnels were not completed, and so new stock could not be brought from Germany. Each locomotive the less meant so much less food to the Turkish armies in Medina and Palestine.

The valley was an extraordinary sight. The Arabs were raving mad, and were rushing about at top speed, bareheaded and half-naked, screaming,
shouting in the air, clawing one another while they broke open the cars or staggered backward and forward with immense bales of goods. The train had been packed with troops and sick men and officers’ families, and refugees from Medina, with all their movable property. The Arabs ripped open bundle after bundle and strewed the contents over the ground, smashing everything they did not like. There were about sixty carpets lying about, dozens of mattresses and quilts, blankets in heaps, clocks, clothes, cooking-pots, ornaments, food and weapons.

To one side were thirty or forty hysterical women, unveiled, and tearing their clothes and hair, shrieking themselves distracted. The Arabs never looked at them, but went on wrecking their household goods, looting their absolute fill for the first time in their lives. Camels had become common property, and each man was loading the nearest with all it could carry and then shoving it off westward while he turned to his next fancy. Everybody seemed to be snatching everybody else’s pet treasures. The women saw me tolerably unemployed, and rushed yelling at me and caught at me with howls for mercy. I told them it was all going well, but they would not get away till at last I was freed by their husbands, who in yet stronger panic knocked and kicked away the women, and themselves seized my feet in agonised terror of instant death. When a Turk breaks down it is a nasty spectacle; I let out as well as I could with my bare feet and escaped.

Then a group of Austrian gun-instructors, including officers, appealed to me quietly in Turkish for safe conduct. I replied in very halting German, whereupon one of them rushed into fluent English and begged for a doctor to attend to his wounds. I assured him we had no doctor—not that it mattered, for his wound was mortal and he was dying—but that we would leave him there untouched, and in an hour the Turks would return and care for him. However, he was dead before that; for a few minutes later a dispute broke out between the foreigners and some of my men, and all but three of the Austrians were killed before I could interfere.

Meanwhile Stokes and Lewis had come down to help me. This was not prudent, for the Arabs had lost their wits and were assailing friend and foe alike. Three times I had to defend myself against them with my pistol, for they pretended not to know me, and tried to snatch my arms. The Australian went out east of the railway to count the thirty men he had killed in the open, and incidentally to find a little gold and other trophies in their haversacks. The Englishman strolled under the bridge, saw there twenty Turks blown to pieces by his second shell, and retired hurriedly.
We seemed to have suffered no loss, but it was difficult to learn the facts in the excitement. There were about ninety military prisoners, whom I sent off by themselves towards our appointed rendezvous a mile to the west. Ahmed then met me with his arms full of booty. I sent him at once to fetch our camels and the camels for the guns, since the Turks’ firing was now close, and the Arabs, satiated with spoils, were escaping westward one by one, driving tottering camels before them.

Unfortunately Ahmed did not return, and no other of my servants was to be seen, and no camels. Only the sergeants and myself remained near the line, and we began to fear we might have to abandon the guns and run for it. As we were giving up hope we saw two camel-riders galloping back towards us. They were Zaal and Howeimil his cousin, who had just missed me, and returned to the rescue, since they felt themselves our road-companions. We were rolling up the insulated wire, for it was all we had, and if we lost it we could wreck no more trains for some time. Zaal jumped down from his camel and would have us mount on it, and behind Howeimil, while he ran on foot. Instead we couched the animal and put on it the wire and the exploder. Zaal found time and breath to laugh at our quaint booty, for the passengers had been full of gold and silver, and our people had carried off hundreds of pounds in their saddle-bags. Howeimil was dead lame from an old wound in the knee, so we could not dismount him; but we tied the Lewis guns neck to neck and slung them across his pommel like scissors and drove him off.

Just then Stokes reappeared, leading unskilfully by the nose a baggage-camel, which he had found straying in the valley. We packed his guns on this in great haste and sent them off inland at their fastest, while Lewis and Zaal and I made a fire of ammunition boxes and petrol and waste and threw on it all the Lewis drums, the spare small-arm ammunition, and on top, gingerly, some boxes of Stokes shell. Then we turned and ran. As the flames reached the cordite and ammonal there was a furious noise. The thousands of cartridges went off in series like nests of machine-guns, and the Stokes shell roared off in thick columns of dust and smoke. The Turks on each flank felt that we were strongly posted and in force. They halted carefully, took cover, and began to move slowly eastward to surround our position and reconnoitre it according to rule . . . and by the five hundred yard gap so left on the west we marched quietly and speedily away into concealment among the hills.
Winter Remembered

John Crowe Ransom

Two evils, monstrous either one apart,
Possessed me, and were long and loth at going:
A cry of Absence, Absence in the heart,
And in the wood the furious winter blowing.

My winter's leave was much too cold for smarting.
What bitter winds, and numbing snows and sorrows,
And wheezy pines, like old men undeparting,
To funeralize against all green young morrows!

Think not, when fire was bright upon my bricks,
And past the tight boards hardly a wind could enter,
I glowed like them the simple burning sticks,
Far from my cause, my proper heat and center.

Better to walk forth in the murderous air
And wash my wound in the snows; that would be healing,
Because my heart would throb less painful there,
Being caked with cold, and past the smart of feeling.

And where I went, the hugest winter blast
Would have this body bowed, these eyeballs streaming,
And though I think this heart's blood froze not fast,
It ran too small to spare one drop for dreaming.

Dear love, these fingers that had known your touch
And tied our separate forces first together,
Were ten poor idiot fingers not worth much,
Ten frozen parsnips hanging in the weather!
They wouldn't let me go one day at all -- so I spent two hours struggling with that tall oo. 

Owl that came here a year ago from Grosvenor Place -- and this is quite true of it (and I offer the facts to the consideration of Huxley, Tylorly Herbert). He men (Mr. Clifton) that this may I eat from it the worse it grows.

This is me from 5 to 5 1/2 the afternoon, and from 6 till 6 1/2.

...and from 5 1/2 till 6.

...and from 6 1/2 till 7.

...and from 7 till 8.

It is now ten minutes past 8 and I am going to bed.

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son Ltd.
Cascade

Edgell Rickword

Lovers may find similitudes
   To that sweet babbling girlish noise
   In the inhuman crystal voice
   That calls from mountain solitudes.

As that's but movement overlaid
   With water, a faint shining thought,
   Spirit is to music wrought
   In the swift passion of a maid.

It is her body sings so clear,
   Chanting in the woods of night;
   On Earth's dark precipice a white
   Prometheus, bound like water here.

The winged joys towards their task
   From dusky veins beat up in flocks,
   But still her curious patience mocks
   The consummation lovers ask.

Lying on ferns she seems to wear
   The silver tissue of the skin
   Radiant with the fire within
   Light as her weed and shade for hair.

Wrapt in communion so intense
   The nicer senses fail and she,
   Sweet Phoenix, burns on Pain's rich tree,
   Joyful in her own frankincense.

The iron beaks that seek her flesh
   Vex more her lover's quiet minds,
   In whose dim glades the hunter finds
   His own torn spirit in his mesh.
The Lost Arrow

David Garnett

Is there a cave where the echoes go on sounding between the cliffs for ever? I think there must be. There, perhaps, I could capture the voice to which I did not listen. There I could learn if it ever spoke at all. Somehow fancy tells me that there was something, some sentiment checks me in my stride for a moment, then I plunge again into where the traffic is thickest.

I was all eyes and ears for life then; I was agog with curiosity. Was that why I was deaf when something spoke? But perhaps there was no voice at all, and yet I swear I almost heard it.

Something was happening to Christina, to my sister. My sister—I remember her before that—but hardly since, because now I don't like to, for what was happening happened and we can never go back.

But before then—what a smooth, unruffled flow of water we were in above the weir!

I see the fresh mornings, the guinea-pig jumping backwards and forwards over a stick, and Christina talking to it in its own language. For the guinea-pigs were her passion, her occupation, and her chief study. She had discovered their language and learnt eighteen words of Guinea-pig, which is very nearly, but not quite, all there is.

But what was it? What happened to Christina?

That I can't say, except that it was very ordinary; it seemed to us then something in the drab world round us like writing to Aunt Molly or going to church. Not like the guinea-pigs and ourselves. It isn't just that she got married or even whom she married.

Father was dead. Mother was anxious to go off to the Leeward Islands, where she married the Governor. A fine chap he is, my step-father. The old home was breaking up under our feet. Every day something happened. Father's books were sold, the silver went to Christie's, the vicar took the plants in the conservatory. Every day something was seized, something old and familiar vanished, and every day he came.

I admired him. I admired him because he was rich, clever, handsome, well-dressed, because after all he had got the hang of life. He knew the world. He was a doctor, on his holiday, and he came in a little motor-car. Sometimes I went with them whirling through the country, up and over
the downs, catching a glimpse of the coast, with the cliffs jutting out all
the way past Kimmeridge to St. Alban's Head.

No doubt he was in love with her, but I can't speak of that. That is
outside me, beyond me, strange and forbidden to me. I did not, I cannot,
I never shall understand him. Neither did Christina. But I admired him
more than she did.

Mother and he had somehow, between them, put his visits on a basis.
And then Mother did something more,—but of course it was disin-
terested. It made things, at all events, so much simpler all round. He had
proposed. He proposed again. Christina married him.

But what I want to get is the melody of what at the time I ignored.
The sound of it is ringing in my ears now, but then all was silence as
I hurried about the garden. Yes, that last morning there was something,
something I might have heard, something which made me pause for a
moment, as I pause now.

There was a cry, a voice, a sound that shot through the air and was lost
until it came to the cliffs and the cave where a whisper of it will always
echo. I ignored it. I did not hear. I went on looking for my arrow in the
sage bush, and even if I stood with my head up, listening for a moment,
listening like a deer when the bullet whisks past it to kill its mate a hundred
yards away, when I bent my head again I forgot everything but the smell
of the sage, and the grey curled-in leaves, and the fallen leaves like dry
tea under the bush.

Oh, yes ! Oh, yes ! If I could only have listened there was something
then. What was it ? What was I going to write about, my lost arrow or my
sister ?
The Safe, or Erewhon Redivivus

John Doyle

(Being a detailed Phantasmagorical Study of the Vicarious Existence of Samuel Butler in 1922)

I was dreaming a dream that was not of merry May
With Flora and Venus and white lambs at play.
Nor yet of plague and famine, oil wells aflame.
But across a world in little
An arras strained and brittle
The rending progression of an angry Name.

Blunden wore the sunset hues of a landed bream,
A shoal of Oxford minnows followed upstream,
Edward Marsh was poised on the edge of a sofa,
Hardy dribbled his umbrella,
Belloc danced the tarantella,
Aldous Huxley juggled up a skull and a loofah.

But, 0, the FitzWilliam, and, o, Samuel Butler,
Subtlest of writers by death made subtler,
He’s bequeathing a safe from the Musical Banks,
And Mr. Sidney Cockerell
To whom I dedicate this doggerel
Is accepting it with thanks.

No knob here nor handle, keyhole nor key,
Butler has vanished with a gleam of glee;
“Open Sesame, Open Lilies”; they did no such thing.
The bearded curators
And literary spectators
Drone—“Ichabod, Ichabod” in the voice of Dean Inge.

Follows discussion and Gossip and trouble
Babel and lobby-talk, confused hubble bubble.
Force the lock, how, why? Why not, or whether?
But Messrs. Ellis and Yeats
Observed two curious copper plates
Which Mr. Gosse slid back with an oiled goose-feather.
Mr. Belloc
Two keyholes were revealed
By these covering plates concealed
    With tantalising promise for futurity,
    Sir Sidneys Colvin and Lee
    Raised up a mottled calf to see;
    Which, peering in, remarked on a sad obscurity.

Keyless but not hopeless at this impasse,
The Faithful murmured rapidly Ça passe, Ça passe, Ça passe!
    (Here I apologise for a sleepy rhyme)
    While Mr. Lytton Strachey
    With his skeleton latchkey
    Picked first one lock then t'other in less than no time.

We rushed, pushed, looked in—but as I saw myself
Not even a camphor marble on a bottom shelf,
    Not even a torn sheet of an empty note-book found
    Until T. S. Eliot, from an upper bracket,
    Pulled down a stud and a dusty ping-pong racquet
    And Joyce pinged one on the other with a dismal sound.

I awoke at the noise of this priapic pinging,
Tomtoms beaten distantly for Handelian singing,
    Then the voice of Middleton Murry
    Said "He ought to have looked higher,"
    And the voice of J. C. Squire
    Came blurred and thick and furry.

The disciples of Freud
    Were quite overjoyed
    At this typical bit
Of tendency wit,
The disciples of Jung
    All put out their tongue
    At this symbolological misfit.

Where are the straighteners that Erewhon prophesies?
    Analyse, gentles, analyse!
Fish for the Society's annual prize.
Tracked
Enoch Soames

An unpublished sonnet by Enoch Soames

(Communicated by Max Beerbohm)

He raked the ashes from the rusty grate,
Coaxed the dull embers to a tremulous flame,
And laid thereon the ashes of his shame.
They burned in wreaths and spirals delicate,
They vanished. That was done at any rate.
Still, 'twixt the curtain and the window-frame,
Lurked that soft other thing of evil name
Which was less easy to annihilate.

And what if—— Hark! He stood erect and still,
Then tip-toed noiselessly across the floor
And listened. What if long-lipped Radziwill
Knew? He knelt down, a man most loth to die,
And, peering through the key-hole of the door,
Saw there the pupil of another eye.
William Nicholson
(last century)
The Pietist

Philip Guedalla

IT was one of those large rooms, all corners and chiaroscuro, which are not so much furnished as stocked with an assortment of rather strident historical allusions. The most respectful observer could hardly avoid noticing that the "periods" had got a trifle mixed. It was all a little like the local colour in a costume novel by a popular favourite whose heart had got the better of her head, or the historical references of an impulsive statesman when his private secretary is away in the country.

The room had undeniably an air; but the air converged upon it from so many quarters as to amount almost to a succession of draughts. The more subdued bric-à-brac was of Greek origin. But it was almost effaced by the high colouring of the Della Robbia family; and on the walls behind it there was a loud suggestion of tapestry. There were a few prints from another century; and in one corner of the room, where the ornaments stood in deep shadow, one detected the familiar whisper of the last enchantments of the Middle Age. Even the books were bound in bright parchment anachronisms; and the gilding on the chairs, in this pleasant welter of Florence and Tanagra and Hampton Court, was a gracious reminiscence of King Louis XVI. It was, in fine, just such a symphony of discordant styles as had tempted the poor lady in the story to "finger fondly the brasses that Louis Quinze might have thumbed, to sit with Venetian velvets just held in a loving palm, to hang over cases of enamels and pass and repass before cabinets." And, as at Poynton, one hardly noticed the people, unless indeed one was so sensitive that one could not bear to look at the furniture. It was "the Things, always the splendid Things," that held the centre of the stage.

But there were a few people besides. They lurked about among the furniture, and for the most part they said extremely little. There was a young man, who said at intervals "Cher maître"; and the whole group converged visibly, with the respectful convergence of coryphées upon the prima ballerina, on an arresting figure. It was dressed with some care in the attractive uniform of a Continental sage. That is to say, it wore a dressing-gown of some bright colour with a gay silk skull-cap, which sat merrily above a long, familiar face. The face was old and a little sad, but rather charming; and a narrow beard made it still longer. He moved
about the room and talked at random; and at intervals the young man said "Cher maitre."

That expression has always seemed to be the compensation maliciously provided by an all-seeing Providence for the undue felicity of French men of letters. They have an assured standing; an admirable and uniform prose style may be acquired at almost any school; and their bedsides are frequently enlivened by the impending presence of a Minister of Fine Arts or even the President of the Republic, prepared to attach the insignia of the Légion d'Honneur to the night-clothes of the happy sufferer. They enjoy wise criticism, discreet publicity, and an Academy. But it is decreed by the mysterious checks and balances which order the universe that young men should address them as "Cher maitre." Almost tolerable, by comparison, is the ruder destiny of writers in an adjacent island, who travel through the dark void of English letters to the deeper obscurity of the Order of Merit. Ignored by a busy race which can memorise its Derby winners with its Kings of England, unknown to native statesmen who never hesitate for a batting average, they seem as insubstantial as the squeaking wraiths of Penelope's suitors. Their shadowy figures flit about the suburbs; their faint names are spoken uncertainly in circulating libraries. No Academy crowns their works; no critics "place" them unerringly in an exact hierarchy of letters; no respectful deputations crowd their obscure death-beds. Theirs is a singularly humble lot. But when their fellow-countrymen speak to them (to ask the time, it may be, or to invite their opinion on Cup-tie prospects), they call them by their own names. For, by the great mercy of Heaven, there is no English for "Cher maitre."

One seems always to detect something a shade depressing about the flavour of the incense that is offered to successful men of letters. There, in the large room, was an inimitably frivolous old gentleman who had smiled discreetly at half the things in life. He had smiled at learning. He had smiled, a little bitterly, at love. He had smiled, in two large volumes, at Joan of Arc; and he had smiled, in a parable of bird life and an exquisite tetralogy, at the history of his own country. When he came to his own memories, he almost forgot to smile. But during a long life he had abounded in irony, in that quality without which (as he once wrote) "le monde serait comme un forêt sans oiseaux," which is (as he defined it) "la gaieté de la réflexion et la joie de la sagesse." He had reflected his mood in the still waters of a perfectly transparent style, which was like "une
...grande glace sans défaut dont le mérite est de laisser tout voir sans paraître elle-même.” And yet, at the end of it all, he was discoursing vaguely in a large room to a respectful company, which tried hard to remember each of his sayings and took them quite literally. Approving Boswells beamed at the end of every sentence, and eternal truths were detected in each casual reply. That was, perhaps, the greatest irony of all.

There is something almost tragic about the old age of humourists. This, one always feels, is the kind of figure about which they could have been so funny twenty years ago. And now they no longer see, because they have themselves become, the joke. The delightful greybeard strayed about among his bric-à-brac and talked profoundly, whilst the young man in the corner called him “Cher maître.” Was it for this, one wonders, that he had pointed fingers of polite derision at smart ladies and grubby poets, that he smiled that sharp smile of his at the Republic itself and even at the sacred Revolution from which it sprang? He seems so mild, surrounded by his visitors. Yet he has shrugged amiably at love and death. He has been disrespectful about fashion and M. Émile Zola. He has smiled at pride and pedantry and faith.

But when he smiled at faith, it was an indulgent smile. His wit was rarely cutting with a Bishop; and he becomes almost tender with a Father of the Church. These simple figures may provoke him to a mild regret: “les martyrs manquent d’ironie et c’est là un défaut impardonnable.” But he seems to finger their copes and their chasubles and their rags with a lingering affection. How often he has returned from other fields to their quiet neighbourhood. He would write about the great world and all the clever gentlemen up in Paris. But at the end of it he seemed always to escape with visible relief into the less exacting company of a saint. He was more at ease in the bright sunshine and simple notions of the Third Century; and although he might sometimes get as far as Florence, he was generally to be found in the Thebaid.

It is a queer predilection; and one is a little apt to stare, as the erudite unbeliever prostrates himself with earnest regularity at the empty shrines of other men’s beliefs. “Son athéisme,” as he once wrote of a dull poet, “est si pieux, qu’il a semblé chrétien à certaines personnes croyantes.” Indeed the casual reader of his work might well mistake him for a Christian apologist with an unusual turn of style. He is always murmuring the blessed catalogue of the martyrs, and he deviates at the least excuse into the early history of the religion to which he has vowed disobedience. There is
something odd about the weakness which irreligious men feel for religion. Almost invariably it becomes their favourite topic. When a novelist abjures the Church, one may be certain that his future work will teem with martyrs and pullulate with theological finesse. The literary Thebaid is full of the lonely cells of unbelieving and almost intolerably holy men. Religion, by some queer revenge, seems to haunt them perpetually; and these unbelievers return to it with the harping eagerness of a missionary, until to the normal man their obsession becomes almost monotonous.

So much of his work is touched with that quaint infection that this piety of his—son athéisme si pieux—becomes its foremost feature. One half forgets the ambling charm of his humour and the fine sweep of his vision of history in this continual fingering of Early Christian relics. The indefatigable pietist is perpetually rolling out his deep Gregorians or polishing the jewels on his reliquary. His lively fancy flits from saint to saint, and Church music is the constant accompaniment of his anti-clericalism. He is a persevering unbeliever and a regular non-attendant at public worship. Yet, in spite of it all, this conscientious secularist cannot help intoning À bas la calotte in antiphones. It is an odd Nemesis.

One is left wondering how that enlightened imagination got its queer twist, why this fine intelligence is haunted by the unfascinating little figures which populate the early history of the Church. Perhaps they have one attraction which might draw a Frenchman. Almost incapable of realising any foreigner and always prone to envisage the East as a comprehensive and mysterious region known as les Indes, the Gaul is infinitely sensitive to any product of French territory. That may explain his predilection for the early phase of Christian history, when the holy men sat in the sunshine by the Nile and the little white shrines took the African glare at midday. For Christianity, in that stage, was almost an Algerian phenomenon. St. Anthony was an inspired fellah; and one may nearly see the early Fathers as Christian marabouts. The hot, still distances of the Thebaid have the true flavour of North Africa, and a Frenchman might safely investigate its queer inmates without finding himself in unfamiliar country.

But even that can hardly explain the strange attraction. The problem still remains of the wise, eclectic modern staring in fascination at the gesticulating little figures in the sunshine of the Third Century. There is nothing Athenian about them, and not much that is Roman. They have no style, and very little logic. But something in them appears to stir a vague envy in their sage posterity . . . “la foi s’en est allée. Nous n’avons
plus d'espérances et nous ne croyons plus à ce qui consolait nos pères. Cela surtout nous est pénible. Car il était doux de croire même à l'enfer.” The irony seems to fade out of it; and one is left with the dejected heir of all the ages, craving for one, just one untruth to shield him from the naked and intolerable glare of reality. That, perhaps, is why he haunts the unenlightened company of bigots. He might have moved among his own omniscient contemporaries or the wise men who twisted words in Athens. But he preferred the saints. They have the primitive virtues; and life is, for them, so infinitely more simple. Car il était doux de croire même à l'enfer. So, by a pleasant irony, the unbeliever turned pietist. And perhaps the irony was not his own.
First Rhymes

Edmund Blunden

In the meadow by the mill
   I’d make my ballad,
Tunes to that would whistle shrill
And beat the blackbird’s ringing bill.—
But surely the innocent spring has died,
The sultry noon has hushed the bird,
The jingling word, the tune untried,
All in that meadow must have died.—
For that, the fuller speech of song
   Has charmed me,
And lulled my lonely hours along;
Though beauty’s truth that leads to-day
   My longing trials
Shone then like dewdrops in my way,
When “Nature painted all things gay.”
Gyp
Solar Eclipse
Siegfried Sassoon

Observe these blue solemnities of sky
Offering for the academes of after-ages
A mythologic welkin freaked with white!

Listen: one tiny tinkling rivulet
Accentuates the super-sultry stillness
That drones on ripening landscapes which imply
Serene Parnassus plagued with amorous goats.

* * * *

Far down the vale Apollo has pursued
The noon-bedazzled nymph whose hunted heart
Holds but the trampling panic whence it fled,
And now the heavens are piled with darkening trouble
And counter-march of clouds that troop intent
Fire-crested into conflict.

Daphne turns
At the wood's edge in bronze and olive gloom:
Sickness assails the sun whose blazing disc
Dwindles: the Eden of those auburn slopes
Lours in the tarnished copper of eclipse.

Yet virgin in her god-impelled approach
To Græco-Roman ravishment, she waits
While the unsated python slides to crush
Her lust-eluding fleetness. Envious Jove
Rumbles Olympus. All the classic world
Leans breathless toward the legend she creates.

From thunderous vapour smites the immortal beam...
Then, crowned with fangs of foliage, flames the god.

* * * *

"Apollo!"... Up the autumn valley echoes
A hollow shout from nowhere. Daphne's limbs
Lapse into laureldom: green-shadowed flesh
Writhes aborescent; glamour obscures her gaze
With blind and bossed distortion. She escapes.
Interchange of Selves

B. K. Mallik

(An Indian Actionless Drama for three actors and a Moving Background)

PROLOGUE

THE PHILOSOPHER. You ask me to write a short story or drama for The Owl? I have never written a story in my life; but still—

THE POET. Can you do it?

THE PHILOSOPHER. It is curious that you should make this demand of me as I have lately been aware of a fantastic drama enacting itself obscurely in my dreams, and if I should be able to express it on paper I believe that it would be of great assistance in the development of my philosophic system, as you say that your philosophic talks with me are similarly of assistance to you in your writing of even romantic poetry.

THE POET. Can you give a hint as to the form the drama will take?

THE PHILOSOPHER. The setting may be a fantastic recollection of Nepal in the rainy season, but it will be a Nepal that marches with the city of Oxford. As for the content, I can only make a negative statement, that the plot will not conform with the European and Asiatic tradition of allotting a definite character to each individual which he must wear unchanged until the end, nor will the drama allow any one opinion to triumph over another and remain unchallenged happily ever after. If I show you a conflict of views between a practical man, a mystic, and a man with your English genius for compromise, these men will not remain true to character for long. In the end, when each has momentarily dominated and been defeated by the others, there will be no practical man, no mystic and no compromiser left on the stage. Neither virtue nor villainy will prevail.
Kitchen Life

by Pamela Bianco
But you will still have three actors. Then, please, though your three men change character like chameleons, let the historic continuity of each individual be apparent throughout: let Practicus sail under the revenue-flag of Practicus, even when he has turned most piratically a mystic, or adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards revenue-men and pirates alike.

The Philosopher. I am a philosopher, you are a writer; you must see to these details and others for me; but respect the broad scheme.

(The poet did so; and here is the play, which was handed to him without dramatis personæ, title, punctuation, or paragraphs, and not divided into scenes. The philosopher was not interested in approving the alterations, as the play, he said, had already accomplished its purpose, that of informing him of the nature of a series of metaphysical cruxes.)

SCENE I

A wild, mountainous country, the outskirts of a forest gradually sloping down to a lake. Dawn just struggling to break through a dense fog. Beads of dew gliding down the tree trunks and dropping from their leaves. Perfect stillness except for this slow drip of water returning whence it came. Three travellers sitting round a fire on stage, apart.

Mysticus. Surely you heard the shriek in the night? It broke from the uttermost Eastern sky, travelled fast westward and then, screaming up to the northern point, struck like a thunderbolt the placid surface of the lake. The stars grew red and the pale moon shivered till it seemed to melt into a cloak of fog slowly dropping on the earth. What does it all mean? Is the world coming to its end? Has it lived too long in iniquity to escape its doom?

Liberalis. I heard no shriek. No! for I was dreaming, and what did I not see in my dreams? Huge animals and giant men locked jaw to jaw. I saw ravages, plunders, massacres. I saw earthquake, deluge, conflagration, horrors treading on each others’ heels. Then indeed I shrieked and shrieked; you heard me shriek?
PRACTICUS. You are both of you crazed. You with your ghostly uncanny shriek and you with your childish fear of dreams. I can swear there was no shriek, not a sound until you started your nightmare and made your neighbour hear the shriek. Even I felt disturbed; for how could I sleep with two such overgrown children by my side? If you had not eaten all that meat overnight and drowned it in pints of wine, the world would have been a different world for us all. The moon would have shone kindly instead of melting into a fog (what a horrible illusion), and the innocent lake would have been spared the thunderbolt. Ridiculous!

MYSTICUS. It is wiser, I know, to trust to your senses and perhaps to senses alone, for it is wisdom, they say, to live. Those who depart from this path and seek other lights depart from wisdom. But is it a duty always to be wise, to sacrifice everything for life? Might not a few of us try to look behind the scenes at times, to be deliberately foolish, building our homes on the marsh or doing our pilgrimages by night? May not the moon, the stars and the sky possess souls like ours or different from ours, share our joys and sorrows, tell us by signs when the drought will come to burn up our corn, and the floods to drown our cattle? May not Space be housing and sheltering millions of other beings like us, or different from us, who are in daily, hourly contact with us, yet not knowing what we are about since we do not know even if they exist? All this is not wise talk I know, not even rational; it cannot be tested and affirmed by the senses, but senses are thereby proved unworthy to record experience with which they have no contact. Is the life known through our senses the only obligation we owe to ourselves? Is the test of the senses enough even for that life? I do declare still that I heard the shriek and I do repeat that it conveyed a dark omen for the human kind. Something catastrophic is going to happen.

LIBERALIS. I have sympathy with much that you say; I would even go further and add that it is not wisdom to judge by what
one can see and handle. That way one can only focus the present—a limited present, though of scraps and shreds; and once one has started on the scraps where is it possible to stop? Human history is wider and bigger; it has run for centuries, steadily grown. Can the senses or even our intuitions record that history, come anywhere near its beginning or prime? No! No! You must resort to dreams, you must dream while sleeping, dream while you are awake, if you would feel that history, recognise it, live it over again. You need a hundred times, a thousand times more meat and drink than our meal last night for a dream of that quality—if these really were the cause of my nightmare—and those who share your camp fire would pass a most disturbed night. But I do not see how anything could communicate with us which never had any part to play in our history. And how could we believe that the air or space is full of beings who help us or harm us, and that the moon and the stars have souls? We must be liberal and broad in our outlook indeed, but must we be positively unbalanced?

Practicus.

This is not the first time that there have been complaints against common sense, nor will it be the last that new-fangled theories are offered in its place. So long as the human mind lies exposed to illusions there will be no surer guarantee against it hearing shrieks, when after all it is only a gentle neighbour in the superfluity of comfort starting a nightmare, than against it concocting theories to satisfy the instinct of vanity. Where on this earth is the man who will deny that the human world has a history as old as the hills, or as wide as the sky, if you like? or that the stars, the moon and the sky are but little known, not so well as we know our fellow men and women? But is there any sense in believing that the air and Space are shrieking with spirits when all that you know for certain is that your neighbour started a nightmare? Or is it even wise to resort to dreams when all that you know about dreams is that they are either the gift of your superfluous meat and drink or a deliberate diminishment of these?
Mysticus. I daresay it is not safe to forsake the world of sense or the path of certainty. There is the only solid ground for those who desire to live. Perhaps it is even just to consider that, as the world of sense is not an event of yesterday, its main plank must have been hewn out of some primeval wood. There might well be some soundness in it or how else has it stood the shock of centuries? Perhaps it means more than it has said. Perhaps it has a deeper and more dignified aim at heart, but by some cruel fate or other it has never failed to lose its name with those who have seen only its face but have never known that it has a heart. What comfort could it bring to humanity when of set purpose it has either denied, even defied the world-wide span, or shrunk into the cribbed compass of eyes and ears? If only it had discovered all the world that there is, as it proves and maintains the one it lives in; if only it had shown that there could be no other world as it disproves so many others offered in its place! But by the decree of some mysterious power we live in constant dread of worlds there might be, of things that might come upon us at night and choke us in our sleep. Why, even the best of our ideas and the richest of our delights thrive not on what we have known and tasted but on what we devoutly cherish in hope. If life has still some dignity left to it, if we do not resolve in a body on immediate suicide, it is not because the promises of dull uniformity are fulfilled in the electrified compactness of routine, or because our sensibilities hold us, but because events still happen, however occasionally, which shoot through the sky or pass over the earth like the meteor of my dream or like a strange light which dances on the sea. I repeat to you again, I solicit you, to take heed of the warning which my dream portended for the world.

Liberalis. You speak very wisely, and say things which I feel most prone to believe. Truly what is there in the world of sense to hold us? What is its setting? What context does it show? It is the immediate, the apparent, and the obvious. It is dull, colourless, and unromantic. The real world is
immensely bigger, it is the world which began in the
dawn of a golden age. It is the recorded and the unrecor-
ded happening, both. The present age is the age of
the vulgar mind. It has stifled all romance, all breadth,
all humanity. It is the age of stupidity as it is the age of the
sense of power. Just think of it, think of the way that even
recent history has been made after all the idealistic pro-
fessions of ages: we fought a war: why? To end all
war, yet the wonder is not that war has not ended but that
we believed that we could end it by war. We chose our
villains, discovered our saints, and built shrines where
the fallen and the unfallen heroes were to find their eternal
peace; and when all this was neatly done, we started
fighting again. We met and talked so that we might not
have to meet and talk again. But the wonder is not that
the talk has not ended, but that we believed we could end
it by talk. Meanwhile the old villains, those that survived,
refused to decline as we commanded them, while the old
saints to our utter surprise began everywhere to droop.
What is the total result?—not one of our projects has
been realised and we are left a hundred times worse
than ever; and this is common sense, the cult of the
immediate, the apparent and the obvious! But the irony
is that in spite of its continuous failures in the history of
the human race there should still be enough men and
women to advocate the cause of common sense. There
is something seriously wrong with the human race, and
unless we take drastic steps to cultivate a wider outlook,
deliberately to go back to the beginning of things, read
the historic evolution through the rationalisation of
dreams, there will be no surprise if the human race comes
to total extinction some day soon.

Practicus.
The war was fought; I admit it as a fact; and nobody
who believes in common sense would ever deny the fact.
The fact is really the essential point; I admit again that
some of the old saints are declining, in fact one never
knows whether any of them will be surviving when we
reach the stage of settlement and peace. But I do not like
such petulant distinctions, as between saints and villains. We are members of the same human family, and perhaps there is not much of a muchness amongst us all, as the vulgar saying is. But what is the real reason of the failure you are so loudly lamenting? Who has failed? or what has failed? Nothing has failed, but something has happened. Some people did not believe in common sense, could not; mixed up theology, psychology and occultism with reason and common sense. In consequence, the war was fought; and as if that was not a sufficient calamity for the human race, it was not fought throughout on a scientific and common-sense basis. Some said it was a war between civilisation and barbarism: others called it a moral fight, a fight between the good and the evil; still others claimed the monopoly of God and denounced their opponents as children of the Devil. But it was all the time, as a matter of fact, a clash of interests which any economist in the country can explain to you, or at best a clash of manners, taste and temperament, perhaps; and so needed a purely scientific treatment, a common-sense solution in spite of your derision. If only we had kept our heads and fought on no other lines it would have been finished long ago, and we would have been in a world altogether different from the present one. It is our want of common sense, I tell you, that accounts for our failure to end war.

SCENE II

The fog has lifted and the sun has begun to shine. A large number of people are seen moving in the background. Dumb Show. Everybody is on the move; but nobody seems to know exactly where he is going, there seems to be work and occupation for all in the distant hill-city beckoning above the forest, and in the villages and towns beyond the lake, but nobody seems to care for anything except proving that there is no work to be done or that nobody is fit to do it. Our travellers, who have all along kept aloof from the main body, rise to join those who are going towards the lake, but hardly have they risen when the sun disappears as suddenly as it appeared. Rain hisses down and fills the path
across the forest with pools, and the hillside with streams. Rushing to the lake the whole party has to take shelter on the brow of the nearest hill, and from slight squabbles about sites for bivouacking, serious quarrels arise. Our travellers as before stand aloof.

PRACTICUS. What can one do with such hot-headed impetuous men as these? They cannot sit still nor walk in peace, but must quarrel with somebody or something. This age of ours is as restless as it is stupid. It has lost all common sense. Why can people never see that it is much better to cooperate and live together in peace than to quarrel and go on quarrelling. What does one accomplish by quarrelling? And yet nothing is easier than to live in peace or with goodwill! Do we not all desire it, all need it? After all, the human race is fundamentally the same. We must have come from the same house of God some time or other, or evolved, if you like, from the same primeval stock. If there happen to be differences or even difficulties why not get round them? Surely we have lived long enough to cultivate the art of compromise? Besides, there is always this consideration to fall back upon in times of great distress; that we can always live on less if we have not more. What can prevent people from living if they really want to live? But so dead people are to common sense that they will eternally quarrel about what they call principles, ideals and what not. Just look at those poor mad people yonder; we are all faced by the not very wholesome prospect of making a temporary home in this damp and inhospitable wood to-night, and, as if that were not enough for our trials, they start a quarrel to stimulate our humour. Why cannot they keep quiet? We are not quarrelling; we have only differed in our views; our immediate neighbours are not quarrelling either, but the others are fools with not a grain of common sense left in their heads.

LIBERALIS. There is much in what you have said with which I cannot help agreeing. What after all is life for if not to live in peace? And what is the verdict of history? The one aim of life has been to build up human society and not to destroy
it when it has been built, to bring together those who need and ought to live; while all those who ran counter to this aim have been weeded out and swiftly destroyed. But you do not seem sufficiently to appreciate the fact that all conflicts and quarrels in our society have their roots in past history. They are not resultant on events which happened only yesterday. And as for ideals, they are very well in their way: we can no more do without them than we can do with them alone. But if you really mean to build a society or whatever you may like to call it which will be as respectable as it will be peaceful, you must discover the roots of all the disintegrating forces, all the storm centres that ever arose in the past, and then only you can achieve your end. But who can say we can get at them except through our dreams?

Mysticus.

Was there ever a man or a woman who wanted a philosopher or a historian to be told that a well-ordered society with goodwill for its motto and peace as its aim is a desirable goal! It is a strange commentary on common sense that it should be preaching this doctrine so late in the day, or on the historian that he should have taken all these centuries to discover that conflicts are primeval and deep-seated after all. Neither the disease nor the need for a cure are important discoveries. What does require discovering is the means of the cure, the treatment. The patient has been lying on the table all these centuries, and his neighbours have even prayed for his speedy cure, but while common sense has steadily said: "Why be ill? Be recovered!" Like the old lady in the boat who shouted to the crew: "Get to the shore, get to the shore"—while the boat was capsizing in the middle of the storm-tossed bay—the historian kept on repeating that it was a chronic and very serious disease after all. The fact of the matter is that our fates are not in our hands. We are ruled and dominated for good or evil by other agents and spirits who live unseen in the surrounding air and in space, by plant and animal souls, by the spirit of the rocks and oceans, by myriad other beings whom we cannot even
contemplate. No doubt the disease of the human society is conflict, conflict between any and every form of life, between the good and the evil, the right and the wrong, the virtue and the vice, the reason and the appetite, but man is weak, a creature of flesh; he must seek communion with the higher spirits, endow his soul with their blessings before he can stay the evil and reassert the good.

SCENE III

Night has come, but neither the rain nor the bitter disputes have ended. Gradually both spread over the whole camp. Our travellers have found that they must either give up the place they are occupying or fight for it. With the night the fog reappears, the wood casts its terrible shadow on the scene; the birds and animals set up a concert of howls not far away. A most weird night, not quite pitch dark but not grey enough either to see the outlines of things. Darkness like a mountain torrent speckled with foam; darkness peaty-brown, catching in its python coils a mixed multitude of stars and shadows.

MYSTICUS. I shall fight to the last before I give up the small space we have chosen for our shelter to-night. To give it up would mean either suicide in the floods or a still more dreadful end in the haunted forest. I am resolved rather to enter on a conflict with my fellow men whom I know, than on an uncertain and mysterious feud with the powers of nature. Alas! that God should have made this world so full of strifes and quarrels! That men and women should give their lives for fighting for what they call ideals and principles! That it should never enter their heads that they might find some other means of living in amity and peace. Oh, are we not all men, members of the same human family? Are not the birds and beasts even at this moment living apart, loudly screaming or monotonously lamenting their lot, but not in our company? I would give anything for us all to have our sense of proportion restored, to see things in their proper perspective, to keep our balance and be cool!

LIBERALIS. There is a good deal of truth in all that you say. It would be an act of suicide to yield our ground. Why should we?
If it costs us our lives, there will be nothing left after we have yielded it, but I would much rather find out first if there is not another way out of this dilemma. If it is even necessary for us to risk going into the woods, I should go. We need not go in very far, we may still hear human voices, and whatever terrors beset us we can always encourage ourselves by shouting as loud as we like. There is always a morning after the night, always a to-morrow, as history has abundantly shown, but I would not for anything part with life, the waking, conscious life—the only time when we are truly ourselves and can feel our way and act judiciously.

**Practicus.**

What a commentary on human existence! We are only three, the smallest minority in the place, and have for our share the tiniest spot on the slope of this hill. We are lucky in that grove of pines dividing us from our fellow sufferers. We chose this spot, the most difficult of access, as well for their sake as ours. We wanted quiet after all the rain and misery, and especially seclusion from those interminable disputes. We wanted to live and let live. But, as if that was not as much as anybody could do for anybody else in the regulated order of God's universe, we are being treated as if we were criminals and usurpers. Our neighbours, who are now more numerous and better armed than ourselves, have given us ten minutes to pack up and to seek what comfort we can either in the rushing floods below, or in the beast-ridden depths of the forest. What a sad commentary on human achievement! We are at the mercy of whims and passions. We are fools if we think we have built our houses on the rock because we reverence the authority of tradition. In a moment a single wave of petulance sweeps away all our treasured heritage and drowns all our ancient pride. No matter what we may do to live in peace and in goodwill, no matter how we may try to build on safe and neutral ground, no matter how we may glow with the sanctity of age, we are at no time more secure than the scattered leaves floating on the lake, nor any sounder at heart than this rotten tree stump. It is not the
structure of the human community alone that lies exposed
to such ravages of passion, there is not one spot in the
wide universe which is proved immune from this fate.
While man is struggling to demolish what little order and
peace has been raised on this friendly hill, the world of
animals and birds is at this moment equally determined
to extinguish itself. Look at that beautiful pigeon at your
feet—could you think of a more beautiful, more delicate
creature—can you think of it in the act of cruelty or wanton­
ness? It is beauty's own creation, but how has beauty
been served and rewarded? It has been choked to death
and flung aside and disregarded; all this to satisfy a mad
passion which knows no law nor order and lives only to
accomplish ruin. I cannot make up my mind whether it
is worth while making any effort to live. What is the value
of life if it has to be bought at so heavy a cost? Who can
say, again, what prospects are in store for such a life?
There is nothing in life which reads easily or shows a clear
future; everywhere it is mystery, mystery, mystery.

The floods rise higher and higher and a gale begins to blow; trees are crash­
ing overhead, and a dense fog settles leech-like on the mountain side. In one
moment the men, the animals and the birds stand together faced by death; all
the quarrels and disputes end, all rights and privileges are forgotten; theories,
principles and views clash no longer, only a brooding sense of ruin prevails.
It is too late even to think of pulling together for the common security. Time
seems to stop still. Man and beast are paralysed by the vastness of the cata­
strophe. Suddenly the eastern sky flushes with the dawn, suddenly the clouds
break and the fog lifts. The gale dies into a breeze and the driven trees spring
back upright; the floods recede as fast as they rose, and the warm breath of
life blows into every nook and corner. In quiet and silence the party descend
from the hill like pilgrims returning from a distant land after hearing from a
windy oracle the unguessed mysteries of life. To the city most of them go, by the
forest path; a small number embark on the lake for a town not far distant, a
small place noted for its learning where students came from different parts of
the world to taste its wisdom and leave their own mark on it after tasting. In
a noted house in the town with a window overlooking the lake our travellers
are sitting again by the fireside amongst a band of friends.
Mysticus. I still feel like one in a trance. I found my way with difficulty even in these familiar haunts. I feel as if I have never known what is true or what is false. I seem to have lost my bearings; but it is difficult for me, still, not to believe that the unseen and the mysterious are with us; difficult for me to forget the shriek which heralded the stormy night or the spectre of death which held us in its grip; but I have no mind to say that I know what they mean. It is difficult for me even to deny that my views on life clash with yours—you with whom I passed through the shadow of death; but I have no heart to claim that they are any more right than yours. I know and feel convinced that I did not for one moment swerve from the path of strict conviction; what I said and did, I said and did as I felt sure I must, and yet when I look at my life from the moment that I heard the shriek to the moment when the sun came out to restore the world to life again, I am ashamed to see it has been nothing but a series of wrecked professions. Is the world then a mere stage for the pranks of a demon who makes us profess what we may violate in practice, and advance ambitions only to be crushed in conflict? Does caprice rule the world and settle the primary need? Or is it perchance an incident, perhaps a necessary accident on the way? Do good and evil stand on either side when interests clash with interests, and men and women fall out? Or are we all incarnate evil when we stand opposed? I told you I cannot think; I feel as if I never knew what was true or what was false, but my heart’s cry is to believe that our enemies are not our enemies, that those with whom we differ are no more in the wrong than we are, nor are we any more in the right than they are; that the whole gospel of the inequality of merit is a myth, a myth which the human race would do well to dispel from its memory if it chooses to live.

Liberalis. I still feel, I should say, that my heart goes out in agreement with you. I still feel that I should spare all that my fellow travellers have held; but I no longer feel that I have preserved my former self. Never before did I know
what life in its gruesome, serious mood might mean. I am a different man, even my desire to live has changed; but my old faith is not gone. I am rooted in my belief in history and dreams more firmly than ever. To me they are neither what you two hold, nor even free from a clash with yours, but, God bless me if I know what they mean! God bless me, if I claim they are better than yours! To think that I have been saving my face by platitudes from daybreak to dawn and playing the part of the clown, it breaks my heart! Are we mere tools in the hands of a destiny, mere pawns; is life only a dream of contradictions in which professions always fly from practice, an eternal conflict of grades in which the weaker claim is kept alive only to feed the "sacrifice"? I would much rather put an end to such a life as being a mere jest for fate.

Practicus.

It would be absurd to hold that I retained my balance where you two failed, that I can still formulate judgments when you two cannot. My life also has changed and I have not the strength to hold a view which claims to be decisive. Could anybody have conceived a darker night or a storm more severe? Could even a dream paint a picture more gruesome or nightmarish? All my life I have built on fact, I never set my face against it, and to think that I nearly ended it by clean denial makes me feel as if there never was anything in life after all. What could wound one's feelings more than to find that from daybreak to dawn one has done nothing but change and change about, forgetting every profession in the moment of practice, or changing as one changes dress? Not one of us carried his profession into practice, not one of us kept his true colour to the end. We changed hats and gestures as if life was no better than a frolic or a dance. Yet it was not a dream; those broken trees yonder and that dead pigeon in your wallet will remind you what passed over our heads, the hell life was. Could it be then that our deeds and misdeeds are nothing but the sport of some deep-laid scheme or the fantasy of some starving soul?
I have no power to judge; I cannot think, but it seems fatal to hold that wickedness in its brutal wanton mood can serve our primal needs. There must be a meaning even in this devastating tomfoolery. Whatever place caprice or its nearest ally "righteous wrath" may hold in life it cannot be anywhere near the central theme. The differences which give rise to ugly deeds, the conflicts which end in devastation, the cross purposes which breed dark hatred and darker deeds must serve another purpose and cannot reveal its sacred light. To think or believe that this is the central theme, that life is nothing but one round of caprice rolling on from eternity to eternity is to cultivate madness, deliberately to take leave of the senses; it cannot be done; it ought not to be tried; it is the one thing inconceivable. But woe betide the soul who will paint the picture of life with not a touch of caprice in it, who will relegate it to eternal death as people of old incarcerated evil! It is a fact, the most gruesome and insistent fact, that caprice turns the wheel of life as reason does. There is a moment when it is all dark, all uncertain; we grope in despair and knock against each other's heads, when every face that we see looks the picture of evil and every light that shines is false; when we either writhe in agony amid the débris of ruin or ride triumphant over it. Why it should be so or what universe it portrays, or what image of God or what dignity of the human self—that is for the philosopher to say; but for us it is a fact, which any man of sense can see. But equally a fact it is that the caprice-laden moment must live only to die; its mission is fulfilled when all the evils have been overcome; when there is not a speck of ugly cloud to cover the brilliant sky, when no shriek survives even as a whisper. I do not know what I am talking about; all this is beyond my depth. I never dared to plunge into the mysteries of life before. I suspected witchcraft there; all the world outside the span of sense was ghostly, uncanny to me, and if anybody tells me that my semi-prophetic speech only makes the evil confirmed, rooted in its place, I may not
know what to say to meet the charge. But I feel very strongly that to recognise the place of caprice and evil in life in the way I have outlined is not to establish it but to uproot it from its present hold. So long as we called it "the evil" fighting with "the good," so long as we found in each conflict and quarrel nothing but a struggle between "the good" and "the evil" we did the evil deeds that we hated and wanted to banish. We knew neither "the evil" so that we could kill it, nor did we know "the good" so that we might establish it; we passed through "the evil" in its darkest phase, when warfare with its clear or muffled notes paraded the streets of life. But to follow the evil to its den, to trace it to its original home is to begin its destruction; to make the first valiant effort to lay it. Nothing but good can come out of this, and none of those dark misdeeds that shocked and deadened the sense of humanity for centuries can recur. No sooner did men and women realise that in the moment of clash and conflict they both equally stand condemned, that neither upholds "the good" nor "the evil" in parts, that both are out and out and wholly diseased and wrong, than they would leave their old habit of solving conflicts by force or what amounts to force and resort to some stricter and more promising path. They would neither insist on false co-operations or on reparations which, as such, can never be realised.
Full Moon

Robert Graves

As I walked out one harvest night
About the stroke of One,
The Moon attained to her full height
Stood beaming like the Sun.
She exorcised the ghostly wheat
To mute assent in Love’s defeat
Whose tryst had now begun.

The fields lay sick beneath my tread,
A tedious owl let cried;
The nightingale above my head
With this or that replied,
Like man and wife who nightly keep
Inconsequent debate in sleep
As they dream side by side.

Your phantom wore the moon’s cold mask,
My phantom wore the same,
Forgetful of the feverish task
In hope of which they came,
Each image held the other’s eyes
And watched a grey distraction rise
To cloud the eager flame.

To cloud the eager flame of love,
To fog the shining gate:
They held the tyrannous queen above
Sole mover of their fate,
They glared as marble statues glare
Across the tessellated stair
Or down the Halls of State.

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And now cold earth was Arctic sea,
   Each breath came dagger keen,
Two bergs of glinting ice were we,
   The broad moon sailed between;
There swam the mermaids, tailed and finned,
And Love went by upon the wind
   As though it had not been.
An American Addresses Philomela

John Crowe Ransom

Procne, Philomela, and Itylus,
Your names are liquid, your improbable tale
Is recited in the classic numbers of the nightingale.
Ah, but our numbers are not felicitous,
It goes not liquidly for us!

Perched on a Roman ilex and duly apostrophised,
The nightingale descanted unto Ovid;
She has even appeared to the Teutons, the swilled and gravid;
At Fontainebleau it may be the bird was gallicised;
Never was she baptised.

To England came Philomela with her strain,
Fleeing the hawk her husband; querulous ghost,
She wanders when he sits heavy on his roost,
Utters herself in the original again,
The untranslatable refrain.

Not to these shores she came, this other Thrace,
Environ barbarous to the royal Attic;
How could her delicate dirge run democratic,
Delivered in a cloudless boundless public place
To a hypermuscular race?

I pernocitated with the Oxford students once,
And in the quadrangles, in the cloisters, on the Cher,
Precociously knocked at antique doors ajar,
Fatuously touched the hems of the Hierophants,
Sick of my dissonance;

I went out to Bagley Wood, I climbed the hill,
Even the moon had slanted off in a twinkling,
I heard the sepulchral owl and a few bells tinkling,
There was no more villainous day to unfulfill,
The diurnal was still;
Up from the darkest wood where Philomela sat,
    Her fairy numbers issued; what then ailed me?
    My ears are called capacious, but they failed me,
Her classics registered a little flat!
I rose, and venomously spat.

Philomela, Philomela, lover of song,
    I have despaired of thee and am unworthy,
    My scene is prose, this people and I are earthy;
Unto more beautiful, persistently more young
Thy fabulous provinces belong.
The Mask of Michichiyō

W. J. Turner

(A Fairy Story)

THERE lived in the year 1360 in the reign of the Shogun Moto-uji, in the land of Awa, a gardener named Onami, who had two sons. The elder was called Rosei and the younger Michichiyō. Onami was the cleverest of all gardeners in the land of Awa; he was the first to catch water and put mirrors among the hills; he grew the convolvulus, the laurel and the calabash, and princes came from Korea and China to see the bloom of his chrysanthemums as they hung silently upon the hill-sides like feather-cloaks left by departing angels.

In the gardens which he made for the Shogun there were pine-forests and waterfalls; by the side of miniature lakes stood dark dwarf forests under whose pygmy branches millions of tiny needles crackled beneath the feet of birds. In autumn the noise of their falling was like rain on the sea of Suna. Their branches were no longer than a man's arm, but they were knotted and gnarled with the flight of centuries, and when the moon crept among their reflections in the water they seemed the shadows of crabbed and senile forests growing upon the edge of its craters.

Onami was a stranger in the land of Awa. Men still remembered how some villagers had met him coming down from the mountains, a boy of fourteen and of extraordinary beauty. Under one arm he carried a dwarf cherry-tree, under the other a dwarf plum-tree. The trees were fully grown and yet no bigger than a gooseberry-bush. They were snow-white with blossom and the roar of melting torrents shook the air between them among the hills. The villagers stopped, and some had gazed at the boy and some at the trees, for no one in the land of Awa before that time had seen either a dwarf cherry-tree or a dwarf plum. The noise of water, the brightness of the blossom and the countenance of the boy filled the valley. A dark, wondering group, the men of Awa stood still in their footsteps.

When they spoke to him he replied in their own tongue, but could only inform them that he had been brought up in a garden in the mountains, and that five days ago he had been instructed to descend into the valley and told that he himself would never return. He knew neither the name of his father nor who had sent him, and when questioned whereabouts the
The Hunt

Randolph Caldecott's unused drawings for "The Queen of Hearts"

Vincent Brooks, Day & Son, Ltd.
garden lay pointed vaguely up the valley where innumerable white mountain-peaks shone in the blue air. One of them had filled the garden with its bright reflection, it was called, he said, *Hatsuyuki* : *Early Snow*.

With the coming of Onami war ceased in the land of Awa. Not in the memory of the living had there been a spring so beautiful as that which came slowly up from the sea as though to meet Onami descending from the mountains. It came so slowly that the buds on the cherry-trees broke one by one; and in a calm tranquillity of light the waves along the beach foamed and hung suspended.

Not a petal dropped from the plum or the cherry. Slowly they grew bright like thousands of moons among the leafless trees, and slowly they waned as the moon wanes in the brightness of the morning sky. The mountains projected into the dreamy air as though they had been hewn by an axe of jade. The yellow-hammer, the warbler and the wren flitted in and out of the leaves along the countryside like motes dancing in a calm sempiternal sunlight. Without a sigh or a ripple of dust, old men sitting at their cottage doors passed away into everlasting silence.

That spring ripened into summer as the youth of the tortoise that lives a thousand years ripens into age; and still it seemed summer when, on a day like another, the autumn deer were heard crying in the mountains. Men listening in the gold sunshine of the lands saw as in a dream those shadows wandering among the trees. They could not think them real until slowly the leaves began to fall. When winter came by the sea of Suna the wild geese had long flown south, and the land of Awa, now buried in snow, shone among the provinces of Nippon like a white camellia lying in dark water.

The fame of the gardener Onami spread through the world. Men travelled from the remotest countries to learn from him, and the gardens he made for the Shogun Moto-uji were so beautiful that strangers on entering them held their breath in awe. The years passed peacefully in the land of Awa, the seasons fading one into another as though mellowed in the blaze of some far-away splendour; but as Onami grew old the brightness of the cherry-trees in the spring grew imperceptibly dimmer, and upon the still magnificence of summer drew an invisible haze.

Onami lived to a great age, and when in his hundred and eighth year he lay dying, the tides of spring and summer, winter and autumn had sunk to their ancient level, and in the minds of men the memory of some far-away splendour lingered with the uncertainty of a dream.
Rosei succeeded his father as head gardener to the Shogun; he was a master among clever gardeners, cunning in hand and stored with rare and curious knowledge; but he was not a gardener like his father. Taciturn and grave in manners, squat and severe in appearance, he was held in great favour by his master the Shogun Yoshimitsu, whose subtle and flexible temper took pleasure in the rigid and unalterably gloomy disposition of his servant.

Rosei was not popular among the people; he lived apart, spending his days in stubborn labour like a man from whom some great marvel has mysteriously departed. In a small bamboo house in a quiet and beautiful corner of the famous gardens that his father Onami had built for Moto-ushi, he lived alone with his son Genji. Less than three miles away upon a hill in the same gardens stood the palace of his master Yoshimitsu, who had succeeded Moto-ushi as Shogun.

Rosei never spoke of his brother Michichiyo. When Rosei was within a few days of his fifteenth birthday, Michichiyo, who was thirteen months younger, brought to him one spring morning as he sat reading in a room of his father's cottage a beautiful young tomato plant in a small earthenware pot. Michichiyo said nothing, but Rosei understood that it was his birthday present, and they had gone out together and planted it in the garden by the wall of the house.

There was not a cloud in the sky, and though it was an hour before midday the leaves of the tomato plant began to droop in the still air. They dug a hole in the shade of the wall, and Michichiyo found a watering-can and, removing the rose, filled the hole with water. It sank immediately into the ground with an exhalation of indescribable fragrance.

When they had pressed down the earth around the plant and again watered it, Rosei returned eagerly to the coolness of his room. He was reading the story of the battle of Ichni-no-Tani, and had got to the point where Kumagai slays Atsumori near the woods of Ikuta, and finds lying by his side a bamboo flute wrapped in a piece of beautiful brocade. His brother called to him cheerily as he disappeared into the cottage; but, already absorbed in his story, he did not answer. He never saw Michichiyo again.

At this time Michichiyo was well known throughout the villages of Isawa. Slender, his delicate features carved in a strange purity of outline, he moved with the deep tranquillity of a desert flower surrounded by impenetrable mountains. When he passed, men would stop at their work...
and spellbound gaze at the boy until he was lost to sight, as they would
gaze at the sun sinking behind a flower-clad hill. The gates of Yugen would
silently fly open. It was the voice of Kalavik, sacred bird of Heaven, that
faded upon their ears. . . . When they returned, and looking down saw
the spade half-lifted in their hands, or the sheaf still uncut in their grasp,
they mechanically completed movements they seemed to have begun
thousands of years before.

Three days before Rosei’s birthday, on that afternoon when the newly-
set tomato plant, now reached by the sun, lay drooping upon the edge of
the shallow scooped by their watering, Michichiyo had vanished. In vain
he was sought for through all the neighbouring villages and in the country
round. In the thirty years that followed, when working in the gardens,
when lying in bed at night, when sitting at table with his son Genji, Rosei
was to remember the clear voice of Michichiyo that called to him that
morning as he returned impatiently to his reading. He could not remember
his brother’s words, he could only remember the sound of his voice and
how clear and cheerfully it rang.

As the years passed, his grief that he had not replied became more pro-
found. Often when inspecting a freshly-grafted cherry or a new chrysan-
themum, his gaze would fall abstractedly into space, and he would see the
boy of thirty years ago reading in the shaded room and hear outside in the
still sunshine that clear tranquil voice: Michichiyo! his lips would frame
tremblingly, but not a syllable would shake the petals of the flowers that
hung silently about him, tier upon tier in the vast empty beauty of the
gardens.

When Genji was about twelve years old he came back to the cottage
one day after playing in the gardens, and, lifting the bead curtain, found
his father seated within, holding in his hand a mask. By his side lay a scrap
of yellow paper, on which Genji, failing to attract his father’s attention,
read in faded but still quite legible characters: To my brother Rosei, the
mask of Michichiyo. Genji never knew until then that his father had a brother,
but from that day, being a solitary child, he was to think often about him.
Whenever, tired of invention that had become too remote and unsub-
stantial, he put a timid question to his father, Rosei would pause in what
he was doing as if to answer, and then sink immediately into an abstraction
which Genji feared to disturb, so that, sitting motionless there, he was set
day-dreaming too. If at such a moment anyone had chanced to pass, he
would have seen father and son, unconscious of the house around them or
of his presence, gazing with open eyes into another world, a world in which neither he, nor the honeysuckle flowers by the doorway, nor the bird that hopped soundlessly across the path, had even a phantasmal existence.

Kantan, or Land of the Pillow, as the people sometimes called the gardens of Onami, was Genji’s delight. Before dawn he would leap up from his bed, and by the light of the stars make his way across the ford and through the lower Pine Forest to Floating Cloud Bridge. The ford was by large circular stones across the first of the five streams that crossed the garden, tributary to the river Isawa, which flowed from east to west for about five miles throughout its whole length. The entire garden was surrounded by a great wall seven feet thick at the base and tapering upwards to a width of about thirteen inches. It was fourteen feet high, so that one man standing upon another’s shoulders could not see over the top. There was no entrance to the garden except by the seven river gates, and of these the western gate was least accessible, since to enter it meant going up stream against the current, which, however, was at no time very strong. On feast days, when the Shogun Yoshimitsu entertained the people, giant barges brightly painted blue and yellow and gay with streamers, carrying thousands of villagers and peasants from the surrounding country, would collect in the river outside the eastern gate long before sunrise. As the stars faded and the sky grew pale above the mountains, the figureheads carved upon the prows threw enlarged shadows upon the river-mists of fire-spitting dragons, hissing serpents folded in gigantic coils, and the staring, wide-mouthed faces of innumerable demons, among whom high out of the water gaped Aborasetu and Shakara, King of the Dragons of the Sea. A low babble of voices came from the multitude assembled in the barges, their pale faces, gathered in thousands against the sides, hanging over the dark river like a bank of flowers reflecting the pallor in the east. In the dim light the smell of water mingled with innumerable scents from the dew-drenched fields. A sudden hush fell upon the multitude as it stared at the ridge of eastern mountains.

A rim of pure gold silently projected above the outline of the earth and streams of ethereal fire poured down all the valleys. A great shout simultaneously went up from the crowded decks, the high carved river-gates swung slowly open and the flotilla of barges and smaller boats with streamers fluttering, to the noise of innumerable flutes, harps and zithers and a babel of voices, floated gaily along the stream into Kantan, Land of the Pillow.

When Genji reached the ford, he would often stop and watch the little
ayu leaping in the stream. The water was so clear above its gravel bed that he could see every one of their fins waving. They were always going upstream towards the valley, outside the garden, which entered the northern mountains. He wondered what was the end of their journey, and how many waterfalls they had to jump on their way. Perhaps they went on and on until they came at last to that waterfall, where if they jumped successfully they were turned into dragons—great water-dragons that lived in caves and belched forth wind and rain into the valleys and even ventured sometimes down in the meadows, breathing out before them low rolling clouds of fog and vapour.

Crossing the ford he would enter the Lower Pine Forest. The trees stood tall and silent on either side as he made his way between them, the dry needles crackling under his feet. Through their tops he could see the sky growing brighter and brighter, and now and then he would come into a long lane thinly arched overhead by their branches. Along that dim avenue sank the tiny swirl of his footsteps. Far off in the distance a pine-needle slowly fluttered to the ground.

When he emerged it would often be daybreak. He would run swiftly across the lawns past beds of azaleas and chrysanthemums down to the edge of the lake and up Floating Cloud Bridge, which stretched in a single arch to the Island of Grottos in the middle of the water. On the highest point of the bridge he would sit down, dangling his feet over the water, and watch the sun rise. It would often come slowly over the Eastern Mountains, crawling to some refuge in the sky, a huge, headless dragon, its crimson life-blood gushing out all over the earth.

As Genji sat and watched the moon fade at the end of the valley and the woods, forests and ridges grow so clear and vivid that he could see the pine branch hanging above the mountain-path and its shadow lying on the ground below, he felt a boundless exhilaration. At each breath he took in miles of air, filling his body with the scent of mountain pines, of ferns trembling in the spray of far-off torrents, of acres of deep dewy meadow grass all bathed in a pure tranquil light into which he floated.

His joy was so intense that presently he longed to give expression to it, and it was then, on one occasion, it flashed into his mind that the ecstasy he was feeling was carved upon the mask of Michichiyo. It came back to him vividly as it hung in his father’s room smooth and inscrutable as a wave-worn pebble, but now startling in the calm violence of its hollow eyes and wide-open mouth.
For a moment the divine rapture of Michichiyo dwelt upon the face of Genji. The gold and white blooms of the water-lilies slowly opened in the lake below, the tall purple and yellow iris hung silently in the air and the water waved in undulating lines of gold and silver under the bridge. With a sudden cry of joy Genji kicked off his garments and dived into the lake.

It was the third day of the third month, the day of the Feast of Floating Cups, and for more than three weeks Rosei, as head gardener to the Shogun, had been preparing the grounds for the festival. Hundreds of workmen had been busy erecting marquees and tents on all the lands between the Lower and the Dwarf Pine Forests and from Floating Cloud Bridge to the Lake of Paper Boats. At dawn the eastern river gates had been opened, and a multitude of craft of all colours and shapes had floated along the river into the lake surrounding the temple, where the bowstrings of their masts vibrated in myriad soft musical tones to the bells of the temple. Here they cast their anchors and turned swinging to the breeze with streamers and pennants fluttering. The people, landing in thousands, flocked across the grass to Fourfold Bridge.

Sitting on the emerald terrace of his palace, Yoshimitsu saw the bright-coloured crowds streaming towards the river between the dark of the Upper Pine Forest and the faintly stirring snow-clouds of the Cherry Orchards. On a small jade table before him stood a silver gong, and in his hand he held a stick exquisitely carved with the figures of birds.

The immense expanse of lawn between the Temple lake and Fourfold Bridge was a bright blur of moving figures. When they drew near the bridge Yoshimitsu lifted his stick and, as the first man stepped on to it, in honour of the arrival of his guests, he arose and struck the gong. Immediately from all the turrets and battlements of the palace were set loose flocks of tasselled doves that soared and circled in the air, the clapping of their wings sounding like a great noise in the sudden silence of the multitude.

For, at the sound of the gong and the rising of Yoshimitsu, the people of the Land of Awa stopped each man where he was and lifted his right hand in greeting. Standing alone upon the emerald terrace, Yoshimitsu gravely bowed. From all the tents and marquees scattered over the lawns broke thousands of fluttering flags. The Feast of Floating Cups had begun.

Genji sat in the shade of a black rock at the bottom of a cup-shaped hollow in Dwarf Pine Forest. In the stillness of the heat he could hear the water falling among the miniature lakes; and far off and very faintly the murmur of the people as they wandered over the lawns in and out of the
marquees, tasting the tall, coloured ices and the sparkling drinks in which the rivalling cooks of Yoshimitsu strove to surpass one another.

It was early afternoon, and in the burning sun and clamour that had filled the garden all morning had sunk to a darker tone. Weary of swimming, racing and feasting, Genji sat as still as the rock itself against which he leaned. Its irregular black shadow lay sharply against the ground. On all sides the dwarf pine trees projected from the rocky basin into the air, their tiny withered branches thrust crookedly into the bright sunlight. Cut into hard, sharp outlines, patterned with a thousand pygmy trees, stiff and shadeless as crags, that place seemed desolate of hope or promise. Genji lay in it strangely harmonious.

All his old pleasures had become wearisome. He had long since given up going to Floating Cloud Bridge to see the sun rise, and he walked now through the gardens completely indifferent to their beauty. He had looked forward to this festival, hoping that it would arouse him from his dejection, but, although a temporary excitement had lasted through the morning, the reaction had come quickly, and he was sunk in a gloom as profound and pervasive as the sunlight that steeped the rocks about him.

As he sat staring at the lengthening shadows in which he lay, he suddenly became aware that someone had stepped into it straight out of the sunlight. Looking up, he saw an old woman about four feet high with wild, white hair hanging over her thin face. It was, he recognised at once, Yamauba, the fairy of the mountains. Not a twig stirred, not a sound fell in that calm, sun-filled basin. It seemed to him that without moving he spoke to her, but try as he might he could not grasp the meaning of what he was saying. The words faded upon his mind at the very moment they were formed upon his lips. Concentrating with all the energy of which he was capable against what seemed some insuperable barrier, he made an intense sustained effort to hear her speak. Whether her voice was pitched so high that it could reach no human ears or whether it lay so low that only stones and trees could respond to its slow vibrations he could not tell, but he listened in an agony of expectation until, suddenly, he knew that she had finished and—he stared before him in astonishment—she was gone.

Everything was as before. The dwarf trees projected into the still, unruffled sunlight. The rocks stood upright among their shadows. The sound of water falling among the miniature lakes grew clear again, and from far away, in one long, slow, returning wave, came back the faint murmur of the multitude. But for Genji everything had changed. Grave and alert,
he rose to his feet, brushing the dust from the wide sleeves of his embroidered coat. Then, with one quick glance around him, he began to climb out of the hollow.

As he came out of the forest and began to cross the lawns between the Palace of Yoshimitsu and the Lake of Paper Boats, he saw that the ceremony of Floating Cups had already begun. A wide ribbon of people stretched on both sides of the river from Fourfold Bridge to Floating Cloud Bridge, thickening to a dense cloud around the lake in front of the Palace. Thousands of paper cups in all shades of pink, green, red, yellow and blue were floating down the river from the Upper Pine Forest, and as they passed they were seized by damask-sleeved hands and the contents drunk to the chanting of impromptu poems. An indescribable gaiety filled the air circling with doves and fluttering with myriads of bright flags.

Without pausing, Genji pressed on towards the auditorium of the Sarugaku no No. He had never seen one of these dramatic performances, and he could not have told why he wished to see one now; certainly he had had no intention of going there when he had left home that morning, and he was even dimly conscious of feeling surprised that he should know exactly whereabouts the No actors had built their enclosure. He had left the hollow in Dwarf Pine Forest without any definite purpose, and it was only when he had gone some distance that he realised he was walking straight to the Sarugaku auditorium and that he intended to see the performance there.

Genji sat among the spectators motionless, as though he feared that at his slightest breath the scene before him would vanish. In a deep, delicious trance he had watched the fishermen rowing through the storm-swept bay and landing at the pine-woods of Mio. As he heard the words of Hakuryo: Now I have landed at the pine-wood of Mio and am viewing the beauty of the shore. Suddenly there is music in the sky, a rain of flowers, unearthly fragrance wafted on all sides, he trembled in every limb; closing his eyes, he heard Hakuryo continue: These are no common things; nor is this beautiful cloak that hangs upon the pine tree. I come near it. It is marvellous in form and fragrance. This surely is no common dress. I will take it back with me and show it to the people of my home. It shall be a treasure in my house. Opening his eyes, Genji saw the curtain brushed aside and the Angel slowly entering: Stop! that cloak is mine. Where are you going with it? This is a cloak I found here. I am taking it home. It is an angel's robe of feathers, a cloak no mortal man may wear. Put it back where you found it. How? Is the owner of this cloak an angel of the sky? Why, then, I will put
it in safe keeping. It shall be a treasure in the land, a marvel to men unborn. I will not give you back your cloak.

Oh pitiful! How shall I cloakless tread
The wing-waves of the air, how climb
The sky, my home?
Oh, give it back, in charity give it back!

Genji heard the chorus singing slowly:

Then on her coronet
Jewelled as with the dew of tears
The bright flowers drooped and faded,

followed by the voices of Hakuryo and the Angel: Listen.

Now that I have seen you in your sorrow
I yield and would give you back your mantle.
Oh, I am happy! Give it me then!
Wait. I have heard tell of the dances that are danced in heaven. Dance for me now, and I will give you back your robe.

I am happy, happy. Now I shall have wings and mount the sky again.
And for thanksgiving I bequeath
A dance of remembrance to the world,
Fit for the princes of men:
The dance-tune that makes to turn
The towers of the Moon,
I will dance it here and as an heirloom leave it
To the sorrowful men of the world.

The Angel took the robes in both hands and slowly began to dance. Genji sighed involuntarily, for there floated from those movements of unearthly beauty a divine exhalation, a fragrance as of water poured out upon the parching earth. A turn of the head brought the mask of the Angel before him. The mask was the Mask of Michichiyo.

Centuries ago was that day of the Feast of Floating Cups. As a white colt flashes past a gap in the hedge, even so the days of Rosei and the Shogun Yoshimitsu passed. Generations of men toiled in the fields, and Shogun
after Shogun feasted in the Palace of Yoshimitsu. Then a change came, and
the palace crumbled slowly into dust and the gardens returned to their
native wildness.

Late one autumn afternoon a priest who had crossed the mountains on
a journey through the ancient land of Awa was descending the valley skirting
the great Pine Forest. The sun had fallen, and he was still some distance
from the nearest village when he came to a heap of stones that looked like
the ruins of an ancient wall. Weary from the heat of the day and his long
journey, he sat down upon a stone to rest for a little while. As he watched
the moon grow ever brighter in the tranquil sky, throwing faint shadows
along the ground, a sensation of inexpressible peace and beauty filled his
heart. The wild landscape, with its ruined contours bathed in that clear
silver light, had an unearthly aspect. Suddenly there was music in the air
and a delicious fragrance floated from the sky. Hearing footsteps, he turned
and saw a boy of about fourteen, carrying a pail. He beckoned him to
approach. “What do you call this place?” he asked. “Onami’s gardens,”
replied the boy, briefly. “Onami’s gardens!” exclaimed the priest, look­ing
around. “Why so? They say there were gardens here once upon a
time. Ah! It must have been very long ago; let me have a drink from
your pail.” The boy lifted his pail and brought it towards the priest. “Look!
there is a moon in your pail!” “Why, yes,” said the boy, gazing down
joyously at the water, in which lay a bright silver moon. “It is the Mask
of Michichiyo!”
Knowledge of God

Robert Graves

So far from praising he blasphemes
Who says that God has been or is,
Who swears he met with God in dreams
Or face to face in woods and streams,
    Meshed in their boundaries.

"Has been" and "is" the seasons bind,
    (Here glut of bread, there lack of bread).
The mill-stones grumble as they grind
That if God is, he must be blind,
    Or if he was, is dead.

Can God with Danae sport and kiss,
Or God with rebel demons fight,
Making a proof as Jove or Dis,
Force, Essence, Knowledge, that or this,
    Of Godhead infinite?

The caterpillar years-to-come
    March head to tail with years-that-were
Round and around the cosmic drum,
To time and space they add their sum
    But how is Godhead there?

Weep, sleep, be merry, vault the gate
    Or down the evening furrow plod,
Hate, and at length withhold your hate,
Rule, or be ruled by certain fate,
    But cast no net for God.
Lady Jekyll’s Plum Pudding

The better the ingredients the better the result—practise no false economies this Christmas time, but get all of the best:

- ⅔ lb. of stale breadcrumbs
- ⅔ lb. of sifted flour
- 1 lb. of best raisins, stoned
- 1 lb. of picked sultanas
- 1 lb. of choice currants
- 1 lb. of mixed peel chopped fine and mingled with
- 1 lb. of the best Demerara sugar

Choose 2 lbs. of juicy cooking apples, which must be peeled, cored, and chopped small. Rub off the zest of two fine lemons, and take half a grated nutmeg, with a dessertspoonful of freshly ground mixed spice; ⅔ lb. of the best beef suet chopped very small.

Mix all these ingredients thoroughly in a large basin.

Whisk eight whole eggs till stiffly frothed, then add to them gradually a pint of Devonshire cider and a tablespoonful of old brandy. Pour these slowly into the dry ingredients and thoroughly incorporate all together. Grease with fresh butter and afterwards dust with brown sugar a nine-inch white pudding-basin and fill with the mixture, covering it in with a clean pudding-cloth. Boil for ten hours.
Athenian fowl with feathered legs
Stand emblem of our will
To hunt the rat that sucks the eggs
Of virtue, joy, and skill.

Published by
Cecil Palmer
49 Chandos Street
Covent Garden.

Edited by Robert Graves and William Nicholson