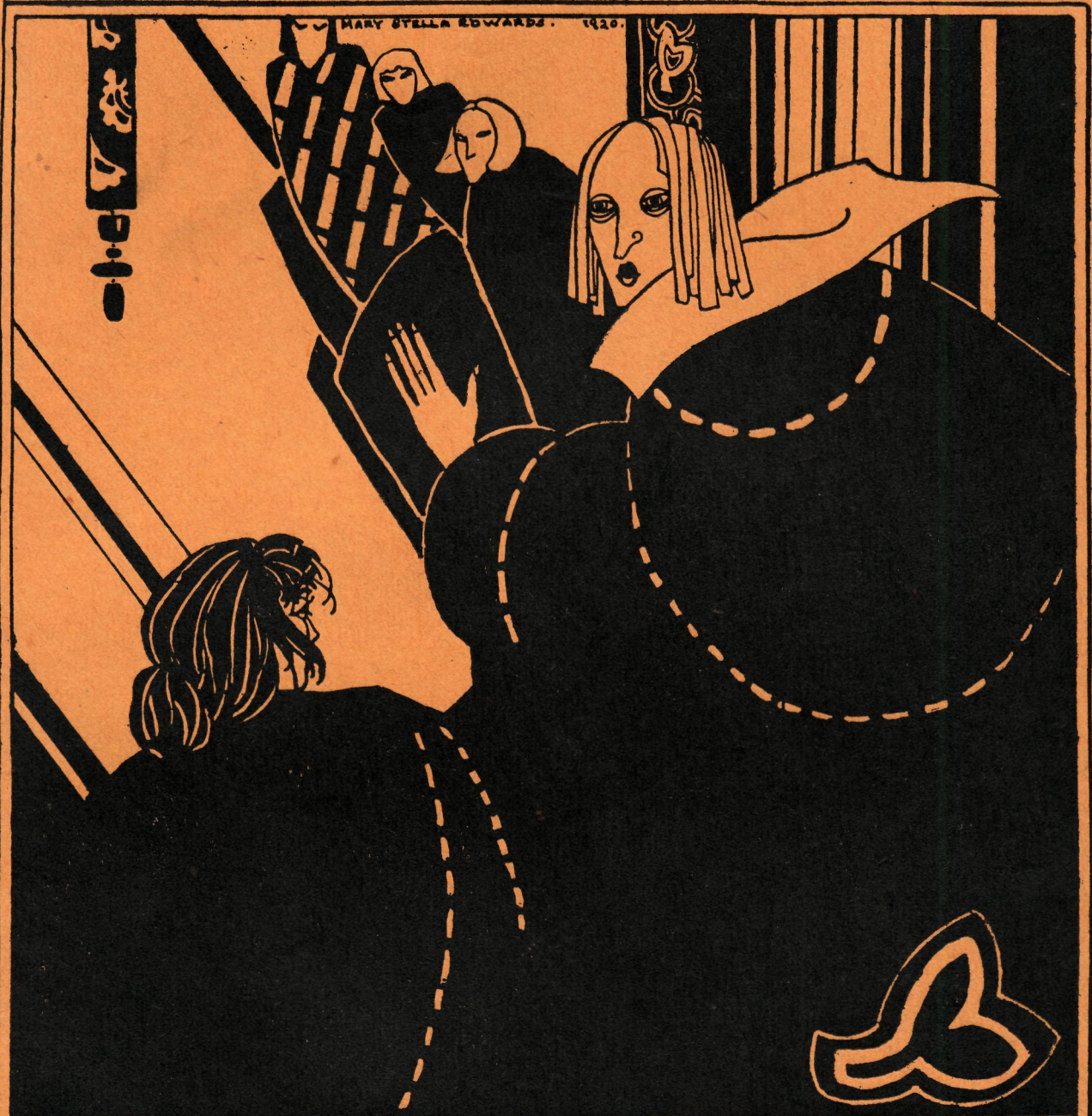


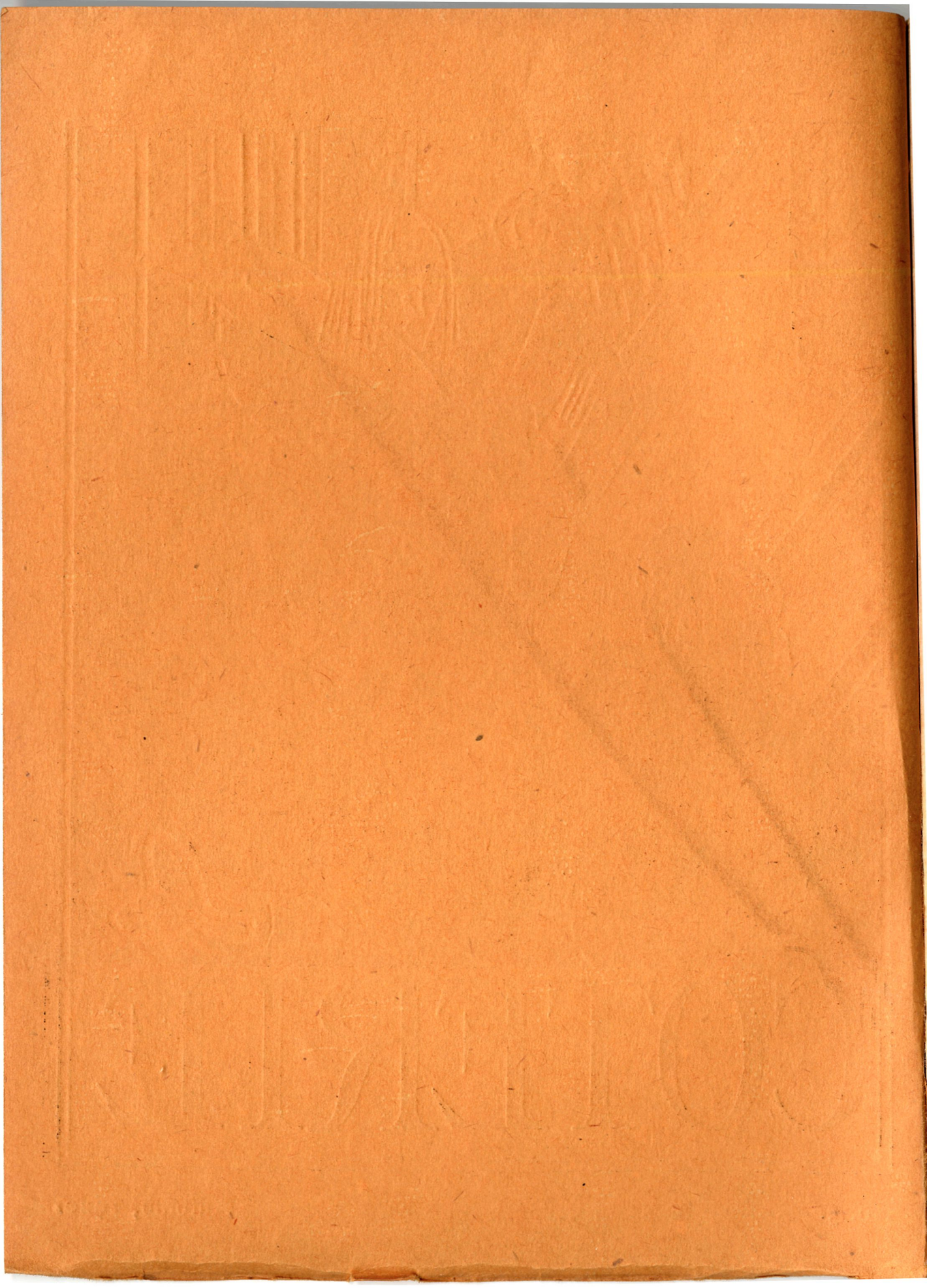
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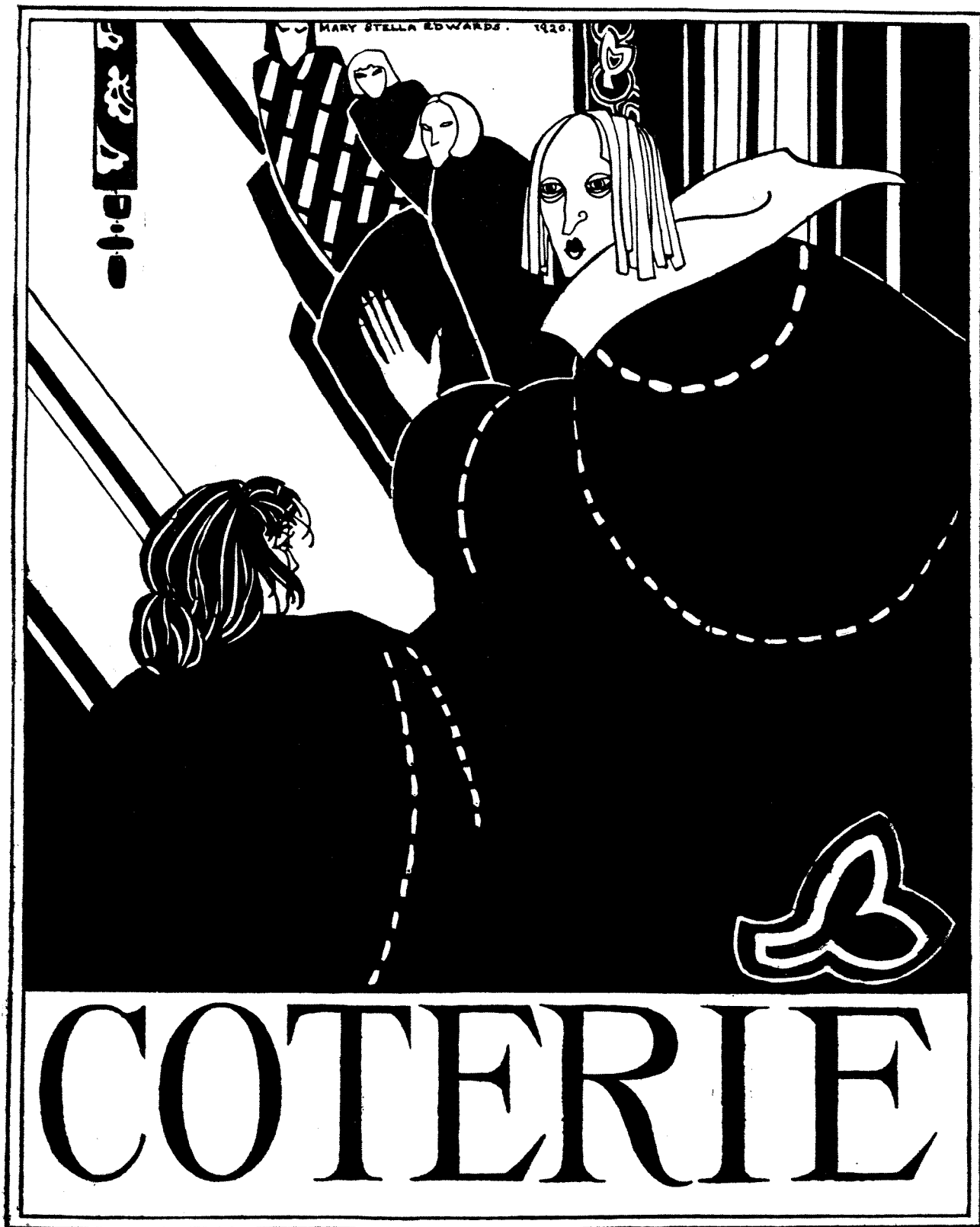
COTERIE

No. 5.

Autumn, 1920.



COTERIE



MARY STELLA EDWARDS. 1920.

COTNERIE

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CONRAD AIKEN

PALIMPSEST: A DECEITFUL PORTRAIT

WELL, as you say, we live for small horizons:
We move in crowds, we flow and talk together,
Seeing so many eyes and hands and faces,
So many mouths, and all with secret meanings—
Yet know so little of them; only seeing
The small bright circle of our consciousness,
Beyond which lies the dark. Some few we know—
Or think we know. . . . Once, on a sun-bright morning,
I walked in a certain hallway, trying to find
A certain door: I found one, tried it, opened,
And there in a spacious chamber, brightly lighted,
A hundred men played music, loudly, swiftly,
While one tall woman sent her voice above them
In powerful sweetness. . . . Closing then the door
I heard it die behind me, fade to whisper—
And walked in a quiet hallway as before.
Just such a glimpse as through that opened door
Is all we know of those we call our friends. . . .
We hear a sudden music, see a playing
Of ordered thoughts—and all again is silence.
The music, we suppose (as in ourselves)
Goes on forever there, behind shut doors—
As it continues after our departure,
So, we divine, it played before we came. . . .
What do you know of me, or I of you? . . .
Little enough. . . . We set the door ajar
Only for chosen movements of the music:
This passage (so I think—yet this is guesswork)
Will please him—it is in a strain he fancies—

More brilliant, though, than his; and while he likes it
He will be piqued. . . . He looks at me bewildered
And thinks (to judge from self—this, too, is guesswork)
This music strangely subtle, deep in meaning,
Perplexed with implications; he suspects me
Of hidden riches, unexpected wonders. . . .
Or else? I let him hear a lyric passage,
Simple and clear; and, all the while he listens,
I make pretence to think my doors are closed.
This, too, bewilders him. He eyes me sidelong,
Wondering, “Is he such a fool as this?
Or only mocking?” There I let it end.
Sometimes, of course, and when we least suspect it—
When we pursue our thoughts with too much passion—
Talking with too great zeal, our doors fly open
Without intention, and the hungry watcher
Stares at the feast, carries away our secrets,
And laughs . . . but this, for many counts, is seldom.
And for the most part we vouchsafe our friends,
Our lovers too, only such few clear notes
As we shall deem them likely to admire:
“Praise me for this,” we say, or, “Laugh at this,
Or, “Marvel at my candour” . . . all the while
Withholding what’s most precious to ourselves—
Some sinister depth of lust or fear or hatred,
The sombre note that gives the chord its power;
Or a white loveliness—if such we know—
Too much like fire to speak of without shame.

Well, this being so, and we who know it being
So curious about those well-locked houses
The minds of those we know—to enter softly,
And steal from floor to floor up shadowy stairways,
From room to quiet room, from wall to wall,
Breathing deliberately the very air,
Pressing our hands and nerves against warm darkness

To learn what ghosts are there—
Suppose for once I set my doors wide open
And bid you in. . . . Suppose I try to tell you
The secrets of this house, and how I live here;
Suppose I tell you who I am, in fact . . .
Deceiving you—as far as I may know it—
Only so much as I deceive myself.

If you are clever you already see me
As one who moves forever in a cloud
Of warm bright vanity: a luminous cloud,
Which falls on all things with a quivering magic,
Changing such outlines as a light may change,
Brightening what lies dark to me, concealing
Those things that will not change. . . . I walk sustained
In a world of things that flatter me; a sky
Just as I would have had it; trees and grass
Just as I would have shaped and coloured them;
Pigeons and clouds and sun and whirling shadows,
And stars that brightening climb through mist at nightfall—
In some deep way I am aware these praise me:
When they are beautiful, or hint of beauty,
They point, somehow, to me. . . . This water says—
Shimmering at the sky, or undulating
In broken gleaming parodies of clouds,
Rippled in blue, or sending from cool depths
To meet the falling leaf the leaf's clear image—
This water says, there is some secret in you
Akin to my clear beauty, beauty swaying
To mirror beauty, silently responsive
To all that circles you. This bare tree says—
Austere and stark and leafless, split with frost,
Resonant in the wind, with rigid branches
Flung out against the sky—this tall tree says
There is some cold austerity in you,
A frozen strength, with long roots gnarled on rocks,

Fertile and deep: you bide your time, are patient,
Serene in silence, bare to outward seeming,
Concealing what reserves of power and beauty!
What teeming Aprils! Chorus of leaves on leaves!
These houses say, such walls in walls as ours,
Such streets of walls, solid, and smooth of surface,
Such hills and cities of walls, walls upon walls,
Motionless in the sun, or dark with rain;
Walls pierced with windows where the light may enter;
Walls windowless where darkness is desired;
Towers and labyrinths and domes and chambers—
Amazing deep recesses—dark on dark—
All these are like the walls which shape your spirit,
You move, are warm within them, laugh within them,
Proud of their depth and strength; or sally from them,
When you are bold to blow great horns at the world.
This deep, cool room, with shadowed walls and ceiling,
Tranquil and cloistral, fragrant of my mind,
This cool room says: just such a room have you,
It waits you always at the tops of stairways,
Withdrawn, serene, familiar to your uses,
Where you may cease pretence and be yourself. . . .
And this embroidery, hanging on this wall,
Hung there forever—these so soundless glidings
Of dragons golden-scaled, sheer birds of azure,
Coilings of leaves in pale vermilion, griffins
Drawing their rainbow wings through involutions
Of mauve chrysanthemums and lotus flowers—
This goblin wood where some one cries enchantment—
This says, just such an involuted beauty
Of thought and coiling thought, dream linked with dream,
Image to image gliding, wreathing fires,
Soundlessly cries enchantment in your mind;
You need but sit and close your eyes a moment
To see these deep designs unfold themselves. . . .
And so, all things discern me, name me, praise me—

I walk in a world of silent voices praising ;
And in this world you see me like a wraith
Blown softly here and there, on silent winds.
“Praise me!” I say ; and look, not in a glass,
But in your eyes, to see my image there—
Or in your mind ; you smile, I am contented ;
You look at me, with interest unfeigned,
And listen—I am pleased ; or else, alone,
I watch these bubbles veering brightly upward
From unknown depths—my silver thoughts ascending :
Saying now this, now that, hinting of all things—
Dreams, and desires, velleities, regrets,
Faint ghosts of memory, strange recognitions—
But all with one deep meaning : this is I,
This is the glistening secret holy I,
This silver-wingèd wonder, insubstantial,
This singing ghost. . . . And hearing, I am warned.

You see me moving, then, as one who moves
For ever at the centre of his circle :
A circle filled with light. And into it
Come bulging shapes from darkness, loom gigantic,
Or huddle in dark again. . . . A clock ticks clearly,
A gas-jet steadily whirs, light streams across me ;
Two church bells, with alternate beat, strike nine ;
And through these things my pencil pushes softly
To weave grey webs of lines on this clear page.
Snow falls, and melts ; the eaves make liquid music ;
Black wheel-tracks line the snow-touched street ; I turn
And look one instant at the half-dark gardens
Where skeleton elm-trees lean with frozen gestures
Above unsteady lamps, with black boughs flung
Against a luminous snow-filled grey-gold sky.
“Beauty!” I cry. . . . My feet move on, and take me
Between dark walls, with orange squares for windows.
Beauty : beheld like some one half-forgotten,

Remembered, with slow pang, as one neglected. . . .
Well, I am frustrate: life has beaten me,
The thing I strongly seized has turned to darkness,
And darkness rides my heart. . . . These skeleton elm-trees—
Leaning against that grey-gold snow-filled sky—
“Beauty!” they say, and at the edge of darkness
Extend vain arms in a frozen gesture of protest. . . .
A clock ticks softly; the gas-jet steadily whirs:
The pencil meets its shadow upon clear paper,
Voices are raised, a door is slammed. The lovers,
Murmuring in the adjacent room, grow silent,
The eaves make liquid music. . . . Hours have passed,
And nothing changes, and everything is changed.
Exultation is dead; Beauty is harlot—
And walks the streets. The thing I strongly seized
Has turned to darkness, and darkness rides my heart.

If you could solve this darkness, you would have me.
This causeless melancholy that comes with rain,
Or on such days as this, when large wet snowflakes
Drop heavily, with rain . . . whence rises this?
Well, So-and-so this morning, when I saw him,
Seemed much preoccupied, and would not smile;
And you, I saw too much; and you, too little;
And the word I chose for you, the golden word,
The word that should have struck so deep in purpose,
And set so many doors of wish wide open,
You let it fall, and would not stoop for it,
And laughed at me; and would not let me guess
Whether you saw it fall. . . . These things, together
With other things, still slighter, wove to music,
And this in turn drew up dark memories;
And there I stand. This music breaks and bleeds me,
Turning all frustrate dreams to chords and discords,
Faces, and griefs, and words, and sunlit evenings,
And chains self-forged that will not break nor lengthen,

Just wondering where we'd be two years from now,
And what we might be doing." . . . And then remorse
Turned sharply in my mind to sudden pity,
And pity to echoed love. And one more evening
Drew to the usual end of sleep and silence.

And, as it is with this, so too with all things.
The pages of our lives are blurred palimpsest:
New lives are wreathed on old lives half-erased,
And those on older still; and so forever.
The old shines through the new and colours it . . .
What's new? what's old? All things have double meanings,—
All things return. I write a line with passion
(Or touch a woman's hand or plumb a doctrine)
Only to find the same thing done before,—
Only to know the same thing comes to-morrow . . .
This curious riddled dream I dreamed last night.—
Six years ago I dreamed it just as now;
The same man stooped to me; we rose from darkness,
And broke the accustomed order of our days,
And struck for the morning world, and warmth, and freedom . . .
What does it mean? Why is this hint repeated?
What darkness does it spring from, seek to end?

You see me, then, pass up and down these stairways,
Now through a beam of light, and now through shadow,—
Pursuing silent ends. No rest there is,—
No more for me than you. I move here always,
From secret room to room, from wall to wall,
Searching and plotting, weaving a web of days.
This is my house, and now, perhaps, you know me . . .
Yet I confess, for all my best intentions,
Once more I have deceived you. . . . I withhold
The one thing precious, the one dark thing that guides me:
And I have spread two snares for you, of lies.

No, I shall not say why it is that I love you—
Why do you ask me, save for vanity?
Surely you would not have me, like a mirror,
Say “Yes,—your hair curls darkly back from the temples,
Your mouth has a humorous, tremulous, half-shy sweetness,
Your eyes are April-grey... with jonquils in them?”
No, if I tell at all, I shall tell in silence...
I'll say—my childhood broke through chords of music—
Or were they chords of sun?—wherein fell shadows,
Or silences; I rose through seas of sunlight;
Or sometimes found a darkness stooped above me,
With wings of death, and a face of cold clear beauty.
I lay in the warm sweet grass on a blue May morning,
My chin in a dandelion, my hands in clover,
And drowsed there like a bee... blue days behind me
Stretched like a chain of deep blue pools of magic,
Enchanted, silent, timeless... days before me
Murmured of blue-sea mornings, noons of gold,
Green evenings, streaked with lilac, bee-starred nights.
Confused soft chords of music fled above me.
Sharp shafts of music dazzled my eyes and pierced me.
I ran and turned and spun and danced in the sunlight,
Shrank, sometimes, from the freezing silence of beauty,
Or crept once more to the warm white caves of sleep.

No, I shall not say, “This is why I praise you—
Because you say such wise things, or such foolish...”
You would not have me say what you know better?
Let me instead be silent, only saying—
My childhood lives in me—or half-lives, rather—
And, if I close my eyes, cool clouds of music
Blow up to me... long chords of wind and sunlight...
Shadows of intricate vines on sunlit walls,
Deep bells beating, with æons of blue between them,
Grass blades leagues apart with worlds between them,
Walls rushing up to heaven with stars upon them...

I lay in my bed, and through the tall night window
Saw the green lightning plunging among the clouds,
And heard the harsh rain storm at the panes and roof.
How should I know—how should I now remember—
What half-dreamed great wings curved and sang above me?
What wings like swords? What eyes with the dread night in
them?

This I shall say.—I lay by the hot white sand-dunes...
Small yellow flowers, sapless and squat and spiny,
Stared at the sky. And silently there above us,
Day after day, beyond our dreams and knowledge,
Presences swept, and over us streamed their shadows,
Swift and blue, or dark... What did they mean?
What sinister threat of power? What hint of beauty?
Prelude to what gigantic music, or subtle?
Only I know these things leaned over me,
Brooded upon me, paused, went flowing softly,
Glided and passed. I loved, I desired, I hated,
I struggled, I yielded and loved, was warmed to blossom.
You, when your eyes have evening sunlight in them,
Set those dunes before me, those salt bright flowers,
These presences... I drowse, they stream above me.
I struggle, I yield and love, I am warmed to dream.

You are the window (if I could tell I'd tell you)
Through which I see a clear far world of sunlight.
You are the silence (if you could hear you'd hear me)
In which I remember a thin still whisper of singing.
It is not you I laugh for, you I touch!
My hands that touch you, suddenly touch white cobwebs,
Coldly silvered, heavily silvered with dewdrops;
And clover, heavy with rain; and cold green grass...

OTAKAR BRÉZINA

ETERNAL YEARNING

(TRANSLATED FROM THE CZECH BY P. SELVER.)

[Otakar Brezina was born fifty-two years ago in what is now Czechoslovakia. His five volumes of poems—*Secret Distances* (1895), *Western Dawning* (1896), *Polar Winds* (1897), *Temple Builders* (1899) and *The Hands*, (1901)—with their strikingly individual style, mark the development of Brezina's attitude towards the universe and the mystery of life. They range from the subjective pessimism of the first collection to the objective optimism of the last. Brezina has also published *Music of the Springs* (1903), a series of prose essays which repeat and amplify the ideas contained in his poetry. It is from this volume that the following translation has been made.—P. S.]

ACROSS all distances of time and space the brethren of a single kindred yearn one for the other. Every response which they surmise from silence of earth, every secret which has remained mute to them, every dream to which they dreaded to avow themselves, draws them together. As if they were performing the behests, issued by them amid hypnotic sleep in another life, they approach one to the other upon paths of all spring-tides, through stillness of all night-times. They were born at the same hour in eternity. The images of their spiritual countenances are mirrored side by side, when they quaff weariness from a single fount of eternal waters. They are predestined to toil for themselves and to pass their uncompleted labour on from hand to hand. Dying, they bequeath one to the other the wealth of their kindred, their secret places of treasure-trove, the unatoned guilt, the ungained victories, the infirmity of their gaze. Their destiny is fulfilled, when they have found each other amid radiance of earth; and even when it seemed as if they parted, yet do they never part. Only from each other do they receive gifts without humiliation. Only with the

wounds which they inflict one upon the other are they wounded to the death. Their hopes are common to them as a hiding-place known to all, which they discover by instinct when they have been overtaken by a storm or hounded by hunters. And convulsively huddled together amid frost of ages, they warm each other with their breath, and look steadfastly towards the one bright place in the heavens, whence they await the sun. Their common annals extend throughout all creation even to the secret beginnings of life upon earth and beyond the earth. In common amid the ranks of their ancestors they have martyrs, conquerors, law-givers, singers, creators of symbols, founders of cities. Their destinies upon earth have kinship. Their bodies ripen by a single law of sorrow and rapture. From words of all earth's languages they fashion a secret speech of the spirit which the uninitiated cannot comprehend. Quivering of trees, weeping and laughter of waters, whisper and passion of winds, glitter of stars and soaring of clouds are the medium by which they converse together from distances of all lands and ages. Their silence seems to be only an ecstatic suspense of their most fervid embrace. Their will labours in a single sphere amid a hierarchy of wills.

For it is by the will that kindreds of spirits are distinguished one from the other. Words have their treacherous concealments, glances can contrive to evade a fixed gaze, but the will is naked as a blazing fire. In their sudden flashes they reveal the silent and tragic world of our depths, and betray our cosmic kinship. But the will, however powerful it be, always adjusts even as a wind the unequal warmth of atmospheres above regions of the spirit. Its glances would not have the magical power which makes them omnipotent, if they were not made lustrous with the phantom of another earth, another cosmos, other possibilities of life.

Every kinship of spirits lives from age to age with a single yearning:—to hold supreme sway over all the earth, to shatter all powers by the potent urge of its eddies, to render its will a stream of living waters, which, though led away into a wilderness,

bestows growth upon the dazzling herbage of the shores throughout its course age after age ;—all that is invisible to render visible by their breath ;—in a kingly procession to twine their way amid multitudes who step aside with a whisper of reverence in abject awe at the splendour of the court ;—to constrain every pair of hands to toil on their behalf throughout the whole expanse of the earth, to grasp all its fields, to impose their symbols upon thought, to set their aims upon toil, their stamp upon tradition, their meaning upon love, to give vindication to their prevailing passion, their interpretation to life and death ;—with royal bounty to amass all earth's treasures, and to bestow ; for to bestow from one's own, to bestow throughout ages, all eternity to bestow, is the spirit's loftiest bliss and pride, its exalted tenderness, the secret cause of all contest.

But even when geniuses have achieved power for their spirit-kindred, and when by their will they victoriously impinge upon the toil of myriads, they dwell rejected in the depths of life, and labour in concealment. With ardent labour do they come to know one the other before works of their forgotten masters. Their trembling, shadow-whitened hands turn over pages of their annals, they strengthen with new consciousness of earth and wait till conquerors become weary, till their own day arises, till government falls drunken, till they enter the building-places which shall be the bliss of their builders.

Thus does the kindred of spirits alternate at the unending labour, even as implements of husbandry alternate with the poise of the earth towards the sun and with the advance of the seasons. And even as the lower humus, which has to be upturned by the plough, that it may spread its living stuff for the growth of life, so do hidden powers wait throughout the whole girth of the world for the whirlwind plough of the will. But even the will is subject to a statute, in accordance with which the lower forms toil for the higher, all hands for delicate, potent spirit-hands, fathoming sense and coherence of the whole labour. Is not the acme of earth's hope that the highest kindred of spirits should gain sway over the earth ?

They passed through the world, subjugators, martyrs, and fanatics of the will. Between their strong hands nations were kneaded like dough, cities blazed, sorrow seethed. And at the last they sank down, weakened, broken beneath the burden of the super-human task of welding into unity the shattered multitudes, and of bracing the whole earth for ages within the frame of a single law. They came to grief, because their labour was destroyed in the depths of life by inchoate struggles of spirits. But the eternal thirst for unity which, though they knew it not, gave rise to their tragical frenzy, is preserved from age to age in the will of myriads. It shall seethe amid spirits as it has seethed, and it shall send forth great unifiers to their own age as it has sent them forth. It desires the whole earth, the whole cosmos, the whole of eternity amid struggles of religions and languages. Upon remains of cities and temples will blossom the gardens of the wise, that they too may labour in the spirit-world at the holy toil of unity. For the sake of their dream, fires of all forges blaze, toilers of science struggle in laboratories, slaves in mines, commissioners of fleets, princes of marts; its radiance flashes from the feverish gaze of inventors, who are ever seeking fresh paths that bring nations closer across oceans, that bear the voice into distant places, that bind ever more delicate links between beings. Poets dream over ruined statues of bygone conquerors, over inscriptions covering walls of royal palaces. Music and image bestow strength on their verses, wherein are revived anew the gestures of the triumphant, who vainly with too daring a hand desire to entrap myriads in meshes contrived through ages.

The most fateful pain of earth arises from constraint and irresistible drooping of the will, that it cannot enfold the magical exercise of its growth and fruition, and join in the labour of its spirit-kindred. It is the sorrow of a wound, which has maimed the hand of the Creator, the sorrow of impotence and decay. Bodily pain of man seldom thrusts its axe so deep as to hinder the ascent of the sap to the loftiest branches of the spiritual tree. Often it lops only the side branches, and like a husbandman

guides its crown to a height which it otherwise would not attain. But if a secret wound penetrates to the soul and fills it with lethargy and somnolence, there arise plights of the spirit which have been fathomed to such depths by religious geniuses of all ages with the vision of seers. These are relapses of mute despair which change the dance of worlds and spring-tides into a burial procession, and the age-long endeavours of nations into meaningless play. Vainly do you then search amid all frenzies of the senses and amid all venoms of oblivion. You will not overcome the horror of emptiness wafted to you as if from a colossal tomb by icy darkness from the cosmos ablossom with stars.

Ages wane, wills and beliefs toil engulfed by higher beliefs, and all by the belief through which worlds are enraptured. Who has grasped the marvels of their unceasing motion? Upon what joyful stars does their splendour proceed, when even upon the poverty of our earth we pause in awe before the dazzling possibilities of life and of dream?

There are grades upon which the will knows neither hatred nor contest. In delicate glittering of compassion it fills glances with radiance. It has fathomed everything, and it broods in a brooding boundless as the universe. Its yearning goes no higher. Glow of higher worlds is quenched because of it. What is the harmony of the spheres beside the grievous music of suffering hearts? In meekness it descends amid throngs of brethren, and with the strength by which it attained its lofty place, it yearns to sever the shackles clasping the numberless. But if it is possible to share one's bread with hungry lips, is it also possible to share one's visions of the world with hungry gazes?

But even above this will, princely and humble, which desires to see naught beyond earth and toil upon the fields of brethren, there are yet other grades. Grades, when the will ceases to be affrighted by the infinity of pain, when it grasps the mystical need for ages of transition, and in its thirst it craves to have thousands of lives that it might know all suffering, thousands of hands, that it might know all toil, thousands of senses, that it

might possess all things, thrust life forward into all flames, sharpen and quicken its spiritual contests and soar with all wings of thought and reverie until it had achieved the quest whose glory it forebodes, although it could not frame words for it. But the whole heaven of stars, all secrets of time, like springtide mists, concealing magical gardens not yet in blossom, lie between it and its quest. And yet its gaze does not lose the feverish ecstasy of the warrior in the advance, and though perpetually deluded, it does not cease to sing, to love, to believe and to create.

“The Music of the Springs.”

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

PASTICHES

I.—FOUR O'CLOCK: MEN AS TREES WALKING.
(T. S. E——.)

MOCKING from a plush trapeze
Arabella hunts for fleas,
Gravely quiescent Jumbo lies
Contemplating mysteries.

Mrs. Geoghegan rustles in
As if she had a secret sin,
But Rumpelmayer rushes out
And then it all becomes a rout.

If the sad shade of Œdipus
Were reborn in an octopus,
Complexities would soon arise,
But children are without surmise.

Decorum marches them out of the room
And turns them over to a groom.
Life dines out on curried eggs,
Served by Burmese with tattooed legs.

But a funeral drives down the street,
Last obsequies of a parakeet,
Whose ruffled feathers sneered at people,
And a bell tolls in the Methodist steeple.

Rumpelmayer rushes in
Calling for redbreast and the wren.
Mrs. Geoghegan flutters out
Trailing a green and purple clout.

I'm going to the South Sea Islands
Or else to the Montmartre highlands,
To have a cup of tea with Gauguin
Or mould museum groups for Rodin.

II.—HOMAGE TO LAFORGUE.

(E. P——.)

Grave medicoes hint
The decease of my maternal parent due to sentimental disturb-
ances.

Ha-ha!

My deplored parent.

They murmur that my passing
To similar shades is, on the whole, imminent.
That the fluttering of my heart's core
Is a maternal summons.

Pundits suggest when I leave my nursery
A proximate collapse.

“By Pluto's wounds,
A rummy beggar!”

Not a forward progression
Without path-leaving, colic of the belly, regurgitation.
And that valvular fluttering
Is a maternal summons.

I leave Piccadilly behind
With the disinterested view of approving a crepuscule.

(It is quite irregular,
But what odds!)

The sun's a heart, I may point out, not wholly unlike mine,
Filtering away its bloody sap.
Mine pulsing from coffee-time to coffee-time
Is a maternal summons.

If only Laïs
Would grasp it competently
 Before the spring snaps.
 Her dislike is futile,
Granted that Acheron *is* in the middle distance,
And that she likes cold plunges.
That rattling blood-pump (it is becoming a *cliché!*)
 Is a maternal summons.

But no, they all rub the salt in my wounds with sadistic
 pleasure,
Saving always, of course, the sun's heart,
 (Heigh-ho !)
 And my maternal parent.
I would only crave indulgent leave
To trespass in similar shades.
My heart's core flutters so !
 . . . Is it your maternal summons ?

III.—MISS SLIPPER SINGS A ROUND.

(E. S——.)

Robin redbreast in his tree
Flutes a crystal song to me.

I will dance in a fairy ring
Of oranges, and I shall sing

Of the pointillistic hoops of light
That flicker till they meet my sight

In the brazen paths of St. Giles' Fair,
And the pattern of the vermilion stair

The bourgeoisie climb to the top of a 'bus
Myopically giggling at the rest of us.

IV.—LONDON.

(J. C. Sq——.)

I.

Turn back your thoughts a thousand years, and then
Another thousand, till you see a fen.
Lit by the moon, its brackish currents swirl
To points of light that widen as they twirl.
The city was not builded that we know,
And savages adorned with woad did go
Wearily through its channels in leather boats,
Yet did the birds then sing the selfsame notes
They sing this golden day of early May
Within the Temple Gardens clear and gay.

II.

Long centuries reclaimed it from the marsh
And still the birds sang, though the wind were harsh
And still . . .

XLII.

. . . know the way
Man governed by the light of his little day
Still rears proud monuments for sifting Time
To file away to ruins gemmed with rime.

V.—CHINATOWN.

(V——L——y.)

Chinamen gathered in a big top room.
Vermilion walls and a great blue table.
Playing fan-tan with little clucking noises,
Playing fair as far as they are able.
Thick smoke raising in a dark blue cloud,
A curtain of dusk above that calm-faced crowd,
Have you heard what the papers are saying?

*With light
syncopation.*

*With a hint
of mystery.*

Chinamen from Peking and from Hong Kong too,
Chinaman from Fu Chow and from far Chefoo,

Recitative.

From the Great Wall of China and the land of Wang,
The Yenisei and the Yang-tse-kiang,
Chinamen from Frisco and from Malabar,
Chinamen from Kingston and from Panama,
All playing round a great blue table,
All playing fair as far as they are able,
BUT!

*With a sudden
loud crackling.*

Have you heard what the papers are saying?

Over the dark blue forest
Of smoke the Chinamen weave,
I see the red roofs of a village
Where all the maidens grieve,
And the night-bird with silver feathers
Sings in the heart of the night
The song of Hong
That ends ding-dong,
Bell from the watch-tower bright.

*Dreamily, but
with complete
abandon.*

Ding-dong
Rings the song
Of the daughters of Hong.
Song of wrong,
Song of wrong,
Song of wrong,
Hovering over the dark blue forest
Of smoke the Chinamen weave.

*Slowly and
plangently.*

Ding-dong
And a bell
In the downstairs room
Says: "Something's wrong,
Something's wrong
In the upstairs room."
War of 'Tong,
Ding-dong,
War of 'Tong,
Ding-dong,

*Emotional response
must here be
assumed by the
audience, who
should be children
playing pirates.*

And a pistol cracks
And a Chinaman falls,
And a sandbag whacks,
And a Chinaman falls,
And voices boom
In that terrible room
Around the great blue table.

Triumph of Tong
Over sons of Hong,
And the blue cloud hovers
Over terrible wrong.
Death of Hong
And the sons of Hong.
Had they heard what the papers were saying?

*Exultingly, with
a firm resolution
of the final
harmonies.*

VI.—CYCLE.

(A—— L—— 1.)

A sword cutting
The equal stillness,
Shafted light
Ringing metallic music,
Rising tide
Of mirrors, clamouring, calling,
Gold!

Downward javelins,
Hurling, quivering, thrusting,
Shock of bodies,
Jagged emerald flashes,
Whistle, wind.
Whisper, grass.
Curl in your sheath.
Crumble,
Crumble.

Flight of doves,
Ripple of burnished waters,
Shadow cropping the mountain-side,
Three poplars.

Over the valley,
Over the wine-foamed river,
Over the flute-player,
Over the basking lizard,
Over the grassblade,
Over the dust on the pebble,
Wings hover.
Poise, diminish,
Starry points die.

. . . Tuberoses dreaming
Under the frosty moon.

GERALD GOULD

THE UNRETURNING THING

YOU see this child
Who in to-morrow knows not yesterday :
Let him stand for the symbol of that wild
Pulse of the world's untaught unteachable heart
Where all incredible emotions start
Like dust of flowers in the sun's sudden ray.
—You know the hush before
The orchestra begins :
You shiver at the shutting of a door,
And sicken at your new-remembered sins.
—My dear,
Do you remember, in the early year,
When for a little silence we were one,
How our thought took the colour of the sun ?
The waves of apple-blossom broke
In brilliant foam against the blue :
You moaned upon my lips, and stirred, and spoke,
And then were still again. The world was you.
The world was what your loving is
—A lane of light through dust of mysteries :
The world was what your lips forgot to speak
Upon my lips. I looked up and saw wings
Like swords bare in the sunlight : black they rose,
First black, then silver—silver again, and black,
In long attenuated track
Across the thin faint daytime : love grew weak,
Sagged, and forgot its own rememberings :
Our hearts, unwilling, knew what music knows :
And you went from me as the silence goes
At that first crying of the attempted strings.
My arms were hungrier than a mother's breast

That cannot suckle the soft lips it needs.
 My hopes were bruised and broken reeds.
 My mouth said: "God knows best,"
 And my heart gave my mouth the lie.
 The black and silver wings against the sky
 Flew to the peace that you had robbed me of.
 —O unforeseen and unreturning love,
 We had had our moment! Every moment after
 Was bitter with the hint of your return,
 And you returned, and were not you. The laughter
 Of devils drowns the cries of souls that burn,
 And that's the secret dreadfulness of hell.
 Had you been harsh, it had been well;
 But you were tender when you came,
 And leant to me with the old smile and kiss;
 You said: "Do you remember that, and this?"—
 And nothing was the same.
 —You see this child. He waits,
 Unconscious, by the undivulging gates:
 His ear has heard the tuning; and, intent,
 He guesses what shall leap and flower
 To top the tall triumphant hour
 When instrument is wed to instrument.
 So is it with the childish heart of man
 That has learnt nothing since the world began.
 O infinitely touching!—pilgrim still
 Up the recurring disappointing hill!
 O heart as breakable as the first heart was
 That faltered, strange to loss!
 O heart as flower-like, with each morning new,
 Brave to drink disappointment up like dew!
 O vessel squandered on the careless sea!
 O my one love, the one love gone from me!
 —It is not age that breaks and stales:
 It is not impotence that fails:
 It is not weakness that despairs!

—The rash and splendid and impatient airs
That blow about the meadows and the shores,
And search the noon for clouds, and shake the bells
To clamour in unconquered citadels,
And take the stars and stations in their course
—These, it is these that break the heart, that lose
What they have learnt not to refuse,
Sweet dancing fools,
So large, so bold, so ignorant of the span
Set for the reach and amplitude of man!—
Ours was the summer hour: and now the tune,
Rhythmic, returns according to the rules,
And ends not late nor soon.
You see this child: he, ev'n as you and I,
Will watch that black and silver stab the sky,
Flying into the silence, flying free.
Why tell him what he will not understand?
The ship for ever puts off from the land,
And finds for ever nothing but the sea,
It burns—the flower-flame that the leaves uncover,
Setting the heart free to accept the spring
—The mendicant of morning, and the lover
Of the unforeseen and unreturning thing.

FRANK GOULDING



FRANK GOULDING



RUSSELL GREEN

THE LOVE-SONG OF A PESSIMIST : 1920

I SHALL not meet you on the painted pavement
As I go lonely through the crowded city.
You will be dining with a nameless lover,
You will be listening to his dull avowals,
You will be listening to the unconvincing
Romanticisms unfired by mental ardour
Of some anonymous and vague suburban.
And in my consciousness shall I be wandering,
Asking myself a sad eternal question,
Why I pursue you with a tale of love,
A tale to which you listen courteously,
With wistful silence, with affectionate deference—
Then turn again to your versatilities.
For when I speak of loving concentration
And when I speak of mutual servitude,
My sombre words go drifting, drifting by you
Like sombre seaweed drifting by a mermaid
Playing in the froth and foam of a sunlit sea.
On stony ground the seeds of my evangel
For ever fruitless fall—you know the parable—;
The stony ground is your void scepticism,
Silent and void as interstellar spaces,
Wherein may fall the very stars of beauty
And fall beyond the borders of the starland.
My burning words like meteoric flashes
Against the purple of a night in August
Torn suddenly by the momentary Pleiads,
Gleam and and are gone in the clear cold void abysses
Of your ingenuous cunning philistinism,
Sunk without sound in your sweet and treacherous
Dark chosen deliberate girlish shallowness.

* * * *

Love is an arc of light upon the darkness,
A phosphorescence curving like a rainbow
Of flame between conspired imaginations,
The living art of two creative artists,
The silent symphony of unheard music,
The rhythm concealed in the uncarven marble,
The only earthly transubstantiation,
Whereby the human body is commuted
Into a perfect and eternal symbol
Of incarnated beauties, permanences,
Hopes, ecstasies, abandonments, ambitions.
Here is the road that anchorites and mystics,
Philosophers and devotees and dreamers,
Have sought, foretold, imagined, lost . . .

* * * *

All this I tell you. You prefer your dances,
Your tinsel erethisms, your carousals,
Your dull, mechanical routine engagements,
Your drunken midnight revels whence you fling
Back to your suburb in a cushioned motor.
You find it so much easier to follow
Your customary stale routine engagements
Prescribed by cavaliers who rather like you.
You cannot pierce the fallacy of pleasures
That are pursued, mechanical, external.
I wish that you could see yourself as I do,
A victim bound upon the ribboned treadmill,
Whose feet will soon be wearied with recurrence,
Creaking recurrence of an endless sequence—
The serpent pleasure that devours itself
In pitiless infinities of ennui.

* * * *

I can but think your nerves are of a fibre
Too coarse to feel these delicate vibrations
Enough to reach your central ganglion

To light the flame of an ideal reaction.
I can but think your blood is far too viscous
To tremble with the shaking flame of love,
To quiver with the old ideal ardours.
I fear that you will feel no more the lovely,
Swift sweet reactions of the blood eternal
From all the fragrance of a summer morning
Washed with warm dew and south-west rain and sunshine.
You have transmuted blood into an idol
To which you offer bloated sacrifices
Of baked dead flesh and nauseous synthetic
Loud scents and artificial wines and cognac.

* * * *

Blood is a god of infinite intelligence
Mute in deliberate creative cunning,
Building the slow red coral of humanity
Into the ultimate reef that shall bar out
The ancient sullen surges of death and darkness
Beating for ages on the organic foreshore.
But in your blood, unfired by love, receding—
Receding goes my hope to be immortal.

RUSSELL GREEN

APHORISMS

ART is memory attempting immortality.

TIME is like a poor relation : it stays too long and when it goes takes something away with it.

How great the insight of the patrons of immoral novels !—they can read between the sheets.

LET us live with a will and die without one.

FREEDOM of choice is useless without the instinct of selection.

THE polygamy of the body challenges the monogamy of the heart.

ROMANCE to the imagination is distance ; to the emotions, abandonment

HUMANITY hates change and loves variety. It compromises in optimism.

LIFE is a melodrama in the evening, a farce on the morning after. Only the apotheosis of retrospect raises it to the sublimity of tragedy and comedy.

WHEN argument comes up the stairs of the past, love flies out of the window of the future.

MARRIAGE is a form of emotional insurance ; divorce a realisation of your surrender value.

KNOWLEDGE may be power, but imagination is omniscience.

EACH year one rises from the dead past to find a humorous satisfaction in dancing on one's own tombstone.

ALTRUISM is the disguise which desire steals from honour.

WOMAN is the sea of barbaric flesh beating in desire for destruction against the base of the lighthouse of the brain.

IT is because the strong eat each other that the meek shall inherit the earth.

LIFE is an experiment in the art of living.

Do not reason with the cynic ; retaliate.

How curious to imagine that one cannot be a man unless one is a devil !

THE atheist is one who cannot see wood for trees.

INDISCRETION is the name that cowards give to truth.

THE only criterion of love is the degree of impatience with which you wait for the postman.

CYNICISM is an anticipation of the historical perspective.

ONE cannot be a law unto oneself without being a lawbreaker to others.

FREE will is the refinement of anthropomorphism ; both are attempts to put God in his place.

MIND, a device to facilitate self-deception.

A CYNIC is one who tells you the truth about your own motives.

IMAGINATION is the separate memory of the senses.

A MAN wants first sympathy, then sin. A wife is a woman who gives him both.

EMOTION is the fourth dimension of the mind.

THE god of the rationalist is himself.

THE illusion of immortality is the mirage of the memory of the race.

REPRESSION is the refuge of the weak.

SENTIMENTALITY is a name given to the emotions of others.

CALL no man genius till he is dead ; it might be true.

THE divine myopia of desire is spared the vision of the ultimate horizon of despair.

BREVITY is the soul of passion.

RELIGION is more popular than art because prevention is better than cure. Imagination is the disease.

FATALISM is the tribute that indolence pays to enterprise.*

CONSERVATISM is fear masquerading as wisdom.

E. POWYS MATHERS

FREDERICK OLDING'S SONG ABOUT
WINE ISLAND

(very, very slowly.)

*SING your song,
Your only song, Frederick Olding.*

Frederick Olding
Tired er ships,
For they moans as they slips
Over seven thousand leagues, strike me, er white untidy sea,
Never holding, never holding,
Never holding at Wine Island,
Where me an' Henry Simpson went an' ghost-girl laughed at
me.

Seen God sitting down, I tell yer,
On lavender at Wine Isle
And whispering all angry: "Henry Simpson, Henry Simpson,
Leave ghost-girl with her eyes er gold,
Dirty gold, to Frederick,
And drink the green-rock pool er wine
I sell yer:
For it's mine,
Henry Simpson,
It is mine,
Which the water-beetles limps on
Drunk as swine;
And it lays beside the red rick

Of the straw that bore the stars,
And yer pays me with the scars
Of yer soul
Henry Simpson, lad, an' I will make 'em whole
In a little while."

Ghost-girl's big golden breasts
They was like to gildy cups
That you sometimes sees in churches,
And, I tells meself, they ups
And they wags as she lurches
With ole Frederick round the pool
Which is strong and red and cool;
And they drops jest a little as she rests.

It was old Jew merricles of a sort,
It was sticky like the Doctor's port;
And Harry was a red dead buffalo
In the middle rolling round,
And he would er-swimming go
Round an' round, very slow, round an' round.

Ghost-girl she was yellerish against the red an' green.
Like a naked Spanish queen
That is young,
Her hair was blue and black
Down a gold moised back,
And plucky nearly purple was her tongue,
Her tongue, her tongue,
Like a wriggling purple butterfly her tongue.

The atol it was natural-baked adobe
Where a' n'ape with parts er red would play
At half before the sun-power every day;
And clever-like I calls: George Robey.

Ghost-girl had a calling note
Like silver water laughing in a throat;

Gerobay, Gerobay.
I hear it in the Pompey pubs,
A naked golden ghost that swings
Its trollibubs
And sings:
Gerobay, Gerobay, Gerobay.

Her eyes were gold and wet and black,
Who's that er-calling?
Her hair it fell adimpsydown adimpsydown her back,
Who's that er-calling so sweet?
Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord.

Lots er bottles er beer, old lady, lots er bottles er beer:
Lots er lots er lots er bottles, lots er bottles er beer.

“MICHAL”

THE FURNITURE

SCENE: *A room; night; everything alert and murmuring.*

THE MIRROR: *A large swinging mirror, narrow oval, on curved mahogany legs, with claw feet.*

THE CHAIR: *A straight arm-chair, with spindly bars, green damask, and shiny mahogany; an imitation Sheraton.*

THE CLOCK: *An oak grandfather clock, eight feet high, its door slightly ajar and swinging.*

These pieces of furniture are quite out of keeping with each other and the room; they belong to some one who doesn't care, or even dislikes furniture.

When the clock speaks it sways a little from side to side, and the door swings. The mirror slithers on its feet, and sometimes the light of the low fire is reflected on its face, sometimes moonlight from between the curtains. The chair occasionally shivers to itself. The mirror has a very slight foreign accent.

THE CHAIR. How did she look?

THE MIRROR. She laughed and cried

And in my face her face espied,
And then unclasped the silver chain,
And sighed and turned and looked again.

THE CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock,
I'm so hungry.
Tick tock, tick tock,
Where's that little boy?

MIRROR. You always interrupt just when
I'm in the most delicious part!
You say yourself it's half-past ten,
Why, he's in bed an hour ago,
And more; because, of course, you're slow
—Perhaps you thought I didn't know?—
But I was talking to the Chair:
Where had I got to? Let me see.
The candle smoke went up quite straight

Each side of me into the air ;
With long, slim hands in front of me
She took the combs out of her hair.
That she who'd been so white of late
Was all a-tremble feet to head ;
With hasty hands she loosed her dress,
She shook her foamy petticoat
Down from her waist, her little feet
Kicked off the pointed satin shoes,
And then she slipt her bodice off,
With underneath a heart that beat
So hard her breasts shook up and down,
And half her breath was little cries ;
As her last lace she stooped to loose
He came in, quick, with laughing eyes.

CHAIR. Which he ?

MIRROR. Oh, not the usual one,
The one that married her, oh no !
This, I should think, could laugh and run.
He was quite tall and young and strong,
With his black eyes he watched her so !
She stood there, naked, soft, and round,
(How I remember it, although
It was quite fourteen years ago),
They looked and shook and made no sound ;
Then she drew off the small gold ring
And held it straight above her head,
Then let it drop ; and, opening
Wide her blue eyes to him, she said :
' I hold to you, within, without,
Witness the mirror and the clock !'
Then blew the two thin candles out.

CHAIR. And was that all ?

MIRROR. Oh, all I saw,
Only I think he didn't lie
Just like a log all night and snore

(That's what the man she married did) !
They didn't simply turn and sleep
When in the cool white sheets they slid,
Though it was quiet by-and-bye,
And when the morning light came grey
On to the pillow where they lay
—His black head rested on her fair
Masses of tangled silky hair—
They were asleep. And by the door
The little ring lay on the floor.

CHAIR. And you were witness to the pledge,
You and the Clock?

CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock.

MIRROR. So for our own, our prey, we claim
The child who from that pledging came.

CLOCK. I'm so hungry ;
Where's my little boy !

CHAIR. And did the other never know ?
The man who married her, I mean.

MIRROR. Oh no ! oh far too dull and slow !
But Robin, now, has got the keen
Bright eyes, quick body, and black head.
How I should love to scare him dead !

CHAIR. Why have you never claimed him yet ?
You stand there dozing in the shade,
And soon he'll be beyond your reach ;
He'll be fourteen before you know.
Now they let children question so
(Not like when you and I were made).

(THE MIRROR *makes a "moue" at this.*)

He's grown to doubt of both of you.
For years he's not believed in things
He's read, been told of, or half seen,
Fairies and witches, ghosts, black wings
That used to wave behind the screen.
Does he believe in God to-day ?

You know he doesn't, and of you
He dreams less often, does not stay
To glance at you across the room.
And if he altogether stops
How could you take him?

MIRROR. Yes, I know ;
We might have had him as a babe,
But then we waited, let him grow,
Oh, he'd be much more frightened now !
It will be done. But here's the rule
(Somebody's always making rules) :
His mother pledged him first with us,
And through her womb we stared at him,
So she must give him up herself.
She'll do it. Time more sureness brings ;
One knows some things are certain things.

CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock,
Big, big, little boy.
Tick tock, tick tock,
More for me !

MIRROR. Coarse thing ! He can't appreciate
The pleasure of creating fear.
He thinks of bones and blood and hate,
Great brute ! While I keep calm to hear
The breath come jerking in the throat,
See the mouth gape, eyes turned, and note
The fingers—

CHAIR. Hush ! A step is near,
Still in your place : she's coming here.

*(SHE comes in ; a woman of about thirty-five, a shawl
over her dress. She sits down on a couch, her
head in her hands.)*

SHE. God ! It is mostly now,
With Robin asleep in bed,
That I see the cheeks, the brow,
His head like his father's head.

And it all comes back, comes back,
When there by his side I stand,
And see the fingers slack,
His hand like his father's hand.

If this were only all!
But I know there is more to find
As he grows strong and tall,
His mind like his father's mind.

MIRROR. I'm sure she liked them well enough
—That father's body and his mind—
(Although you can't divide the stuff)
To live with, lie with, laugh with, love:
I'm old, perhaps, but I'm not blind!
And when he'd touched and kissed his fill,
Breast, neck, and arms, below, above—

CHAIR. Oh, hush, she'll hear you; do keep still!
*(She has not noticed; she comes forward into the
room wildly.)*

SHE. Oh, peace, oh, rest from it, oh, peace, peace, peace,
How happy one could be if children grew
Straight from oneself, not mixed with any man,
If men could go, and there'd be a white world
With only women. Or if men were clean
And kind like women. Women alone are human.
Men are half beasts: monkeys and pigs and dogs
That tear, scratch, dirty, ruin the sweet things,
Or great cold fish that flop and goggle at one!
Or if they could stay children all their lives,
But they grow up—Robin grows up—he feels
The first vague achings of his man-ness come,
Five years, ten years, and he'll be quite a man,
Horrible, horrible! And in this house
All thick with memories—that must be bad;
The treacherous mirror and the pitiless clock,

They most remind me still of those two men
Who had my young, soft body in their arms,
Ah God, they used me so, they hurt me so!

(SHE stands looking down, shaking.)

MIRROR. How white she is, how tall and white,
When she lets droop her eyelids slow,
She makes me think of evenings, bright
With many candles, years ago,
When she was only weeks a bride,
And the nights followed when she cried
And struggled like a wounded bird.
The things I've seen . . . the things I've heard . . .

SHE. Somewhere in the country
The leaves are quiet and green,
High elms in the edges
And the blue sky between . . .

No, there'd be cows there, put to any bull,
Mares to a stallion, too, ewes to a ram!

Wide sea, salt sea, and no land anywhere,
No fishes in the deep, no gulls in air,
But spray and waves unnumbered, deep and shoal,
South Pole and sweeping waters and North Pole . . .

Oh, Robin, baby, if I could take you!
No use, no use, his childhood's going, going,
To-day he watched a girl-child in the road
—Little fair Lily, with her soft, thin neck
Between the curls and frock—walk with her hoop
Past him. No doubt he had no wish, no thought,
No one desire yet to formulate,
But then his father peered out of his eyes,
Yes, and the whole fierce race of men that hunt
For women. And each man a child at first!

MIRROR. Yet she was willing to be prey
With that young hunter at her heels!

To see her now you wouldn't say
She's known, none better, how it feels—
Last dance! the hunt draws to its end:
Drive home, lean back the whirling head,
So kissable, to show that bend—
Neck, breast. Upstairs. And bed, bed, bed!

SHE (wildly). But it was not my fault—oh, not my fault!
What could I do—eighteen? My old, bad, husband's
One pleasure—hurting something, best, his wife,
Hurting me, body and mind, and laughing at me!
Then when *he* came it seemed at first escape:
Escape! There is none in a world of men.
The way they look, laugh, touch! Oh, shame, shame,
shame.

Then there was Robin, my poor baby, doomed,
My weakness and his father's evil mixed
To form a child, a man-child, who'll grow up
And bring more pain than joy, more bad than good.
Ah God, I made him; would I could unmake!
Backwards, his innocent childhood, babyhood,
Back into me, though all the pains of birth
Should leap on me again, and further back,
Unlive nine months, grow still and small and formless,
Back out of consciousness, back out of life,
Out of all self, all will, all memory,
Into the never-has-been, the never-will-be!

*(She goes out of the room, throwing up her arms; the
CLOCK ticks greedily; the MIRROR wrinkles into
a smile.)*

CLOCK (eagerly). Tick tock, tick tock,
I'm so hungry,
Tick tock, tick tock,
Now, now, little boy!

CHAIR. Oh Mirror, Mirror, will he come
To-night?

MIRROR. Be quiet!

CHAIR.

Oh! I'm dumb.

(*The BOY comes in, in pyjamas, rubbing his eyes, his hair tousled with sleep.*)

ROBIN. If I could only remember that Greek! What was it? I'll get it in a moment. I do hate waking up suddenly, half-hearing something. I wish Mother were in her room. Perhaps she's downstairs... (*calls*) Mother!... She doesn't hear.

CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock,
I'm so...

MIRROR. Hssh!

ROBIN. What on earth was that?... One does hear such queer noises in the night. Rotten being awake. Mother!... That Greek?

MIRROR (*softly*) ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ τεθυμένῳ
παραφορὰ φρενοδαλῆς,
Τόδε μέλος, παρακοπά,
ῥυμος ἐξ Ἑρινύων.

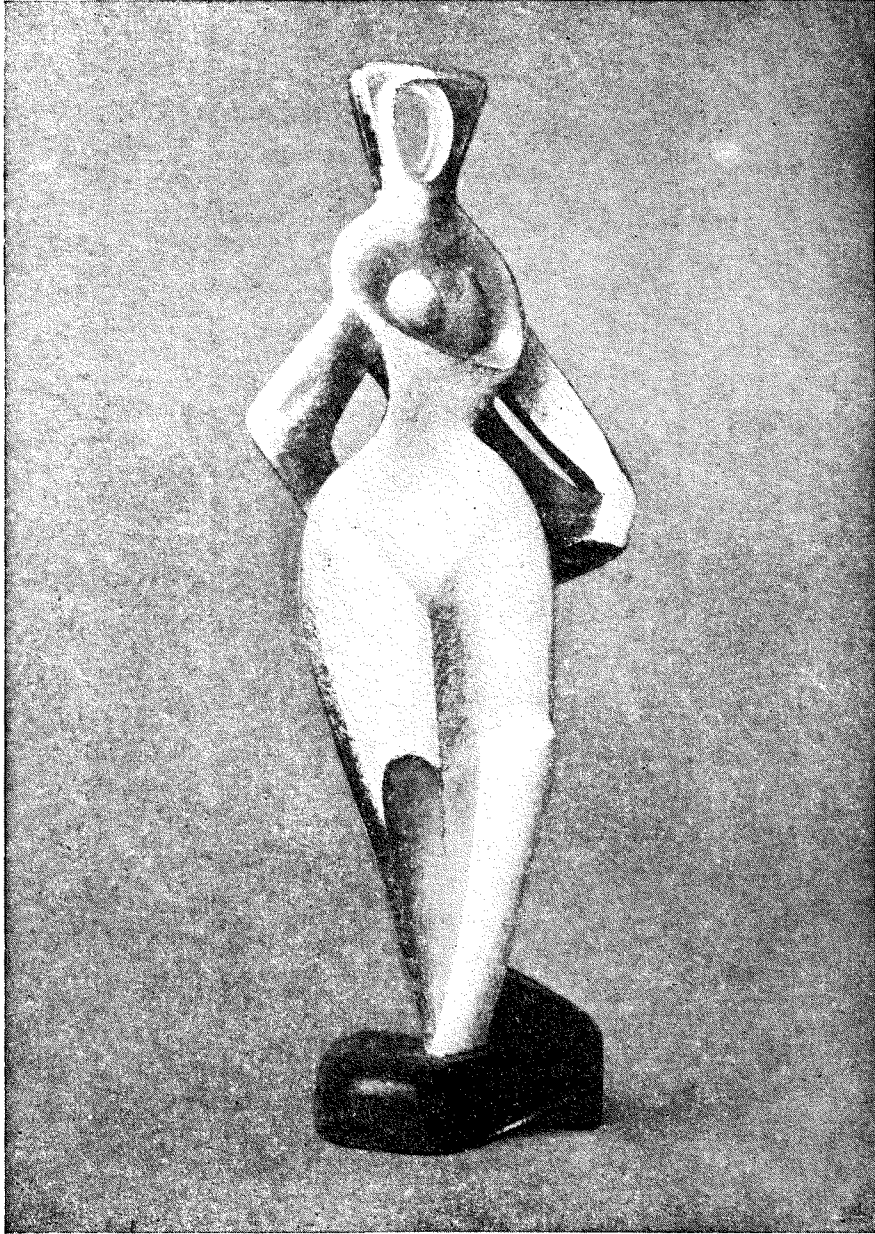
ROBIN (*dreamily*). That's it. Yes. I wonder who quoted it; it must have been someone; last week perhaps. What does it mean?... the Furies... singing over a victim... sending him mad... I wish I knew more Greek; more all sorts of things. What a horrible idea—the Furies: after all, Orestes was quite right. But it never seems to matter what people are like. Just as nasty for good people as bad—worse; that's history... ugh! I'll go to bed again. I'm glad I remembered that. (*He moves away; the MIRROR comes a little forward, so that the light shines into its face; the BOY sees it.*)

ROBIN. Hullo, that's funny... Look here, my good mirror, I don't believe in furniture that walks about!

MIRROR. Well Robin, look, our power extends:
You've always known that we could speak,
(Why, I know English, French, and Greek!)
Come, don't be frightened, let's make friends!

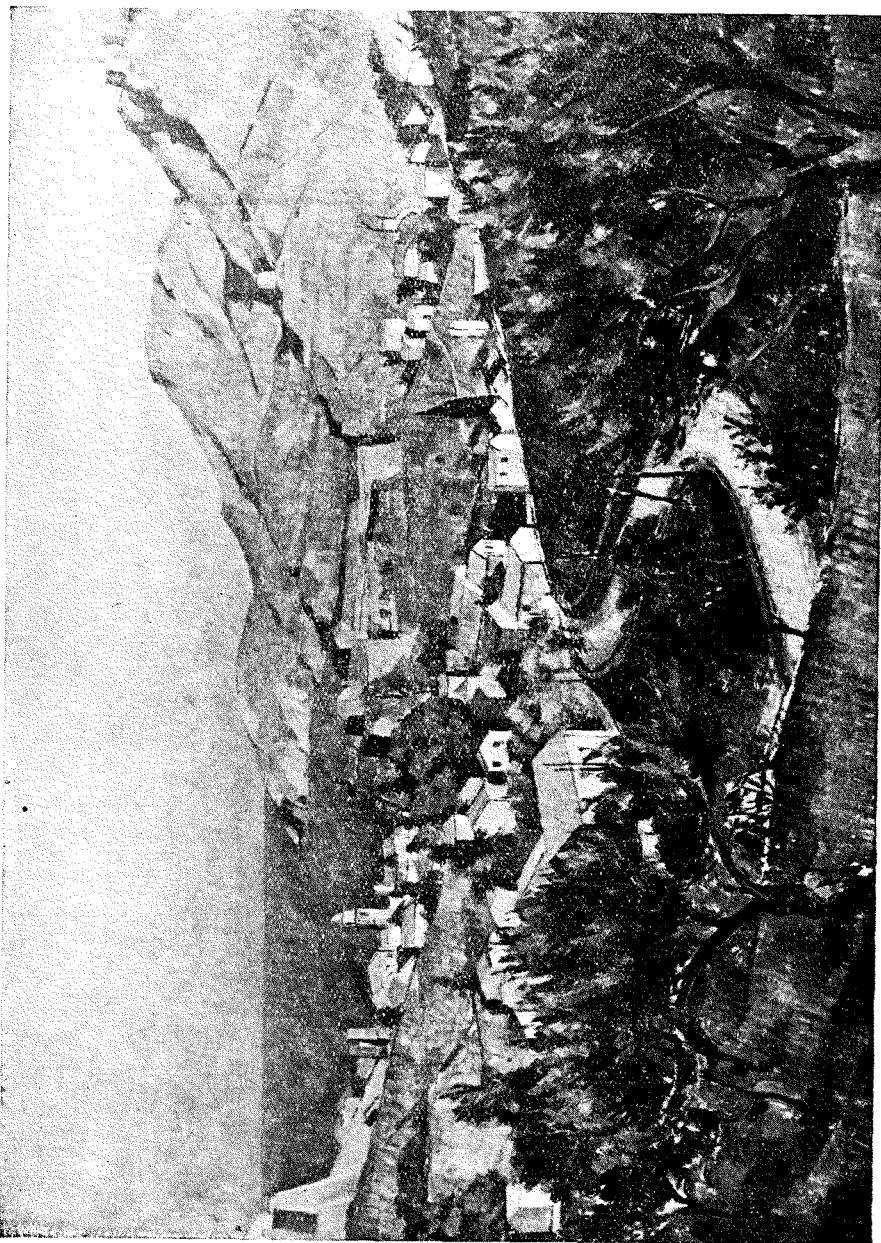
ROBIN (*rapidly*). Damn. I'm dreaming. These things happen in dreams: not really. No. I shall wake up. When

ARCHIPENKO



STATUETTE

RENÉ DUREY



one knows one's dreaming, one wakes up. Always. (*violently*)
You things—Mirror, Clock, Chair—I don't believe in you;
I'm not afraid!

CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock,
Don't you, don't you?
Tick tock, tick tock,
Aren't you, aren't you?

ROBIN. Oh, oh don't! (*much more frightened*) Oh, please
don't! I'll believe in you; I do—I'll do anything you like!
Only don't!

MIRROR (*soothingly*). There, there, the stupid, cross old thing
Won't hurt you. Only trust in me.
Look! you can't call me frightening!
I've lived so long and seen so much:
Wouldn't you like yourself to see
Some things I've seen—or well might see?

ROBIN. Oh, thank you very much; anything. Only please
don't trouble. Oh, it's beginning. (*Pictures come in the face
of the MIRROR.*) There's Lily Cavendish. How pretty! Standing
there like a flower! She's taking off her frock; I like her better
in her petticoat. She's taking off her stockings; what jolly legs
she has—Oh, Mirror, Mirror! she's taking off her petticoat!
She mustn't! It's not fair; you've never seen her undress.
She's not to go on! Very well, I won't look. (*He shuts his eyes.*)

CLOCK (*menacingly*). Tick tock, tick tock,
I'm so hungry,
Tick, tock, tick tock, . . .

ROBIN (*flinchingly*). Oh Lord, I can't stand that. I must
see what he's doing. (*Looks at the CLOCK, which has not moved,
then at the MIRROR.*) Oh really—she's quite undressed! She's
looking at the door. Oh, I say—that's me coming in! Oh,
ugh, I'm touching her! I never have, I never could have!
I don't want to! Why is she looking at me that beastly way?
Oh, oh, oh, oh, no! . . . Thank God that's gone. . . What is it
now? That's a servant . . . Oh, look here, Mirror, she's not going
to undress too! Oh, do shut up! What nasty things she wears

underneath ; I do hate pink bows, pink *dirty* bows. She has got ugly feet. Oh, do stop! I *will* shut my eyes!

CLOCK. Tick tock, tick tock . . . ! (*Comes a little nearer.*)

ROBIN. Oh, if I don't look he gets closer! It's not so unfair—not quite so unfair—looking at this though. How ugly women are! All floppy and bulgy and soft. I swear I'll never marry one. Why need there be women at all? It would be such a decent world without. . . Why on earth is she doing that? No, Mirror, I won't have it! I won't, I won't, I won't! . . . There, she's passed. . . A woman again. . . Don't women do anything but undress? . . . Isn't she excited! . . . Now she has pretty clothes, only silly ; *very* silly. Here, Mirror, there's a man coming in, and he hasn't got any clothes on either! How can they! . . . Oh, Mirror, stop it—it makes me feel so uncomfortable—oh, don't let them! Oh, they can't be! Oh, how beastly—is *that* what they do! Oh, it makes me sick. The filthy beasts! Oh, oh, oh, it's Mother! (*He shudders down on to the floor ; the Things whisper among themselves.*)

MIRROR. I thought they would have been enough
—My pictures—but he's tough, he's tough ;
Besides he doesn't understand ;
One mustn't trust what women say ;
His mother was quite wrong to-day.
He only thinks of face and hand,
Not breast and belly, hip and thigh,
When he sees women passing by.
He knows pure beauty, knows pure joy,
But he's not man yet, only boy!

CHAIR. More pictures! You must move his fears.
But suited to the fourteen years.

(ROBIN is now standing, his hands against the wall.
He winces as the mirror pictures begin again.)

ROBIN. Not more undressing! No. It's a spider. Coming towards one. (*More and more horrified.*) It was quite a little spider, but it grows. Or is it that the passage is so long? It's a hairy spider ; it moves very quickly, with legs. I couldn't

tread on it. Now it stops; it listens; still! It's mask head. No spider is as big as that, unless through a magnifying glass. A glass that magnifies some things? A glass. Is it behind? . . . It's coming on. In jerks. If it got out. . . It's at the edge. How can it see me? . . . Is it coming—is it coming—(*he flattens against the wall*). Oh, oh, one leg out! (*he screams and throws one arm over his face. Then drops it.*) Gone. Or in the room?

MIRROR (*a little menacing*).

Suppose you were to die of fright
(A thing, of course, that couldn't be),
I would absorb you all at once,
Sucking you in, out of the light,
In, where you've looked, the heart of me.
Oh, what you'd hear and touch and see!

ROBIN. No, no, no, no. I shall wake up. These things. I shall wake up in my bed. I'm getting measles; that's it . . . Oh, the pictures! The water is rising. He will be drowned. Up to his arms. He can't climb those walls. His eyes! Oh, *don't* be so afraid! It can't be real. But it is. Oh, what's that in the water, twining, black; with long arms reaching out? Big eyes, green. Oh, no, let him be drowned: the water to his neck. Oh, quick, hurry, be drowned! God, it's got him! An arm round his body. . . Oh Mirror, stop, stop, stop! Give me the women, oh please! It's eating him! I'd rather be dirty than dead like that! Won't you? (*He is sobbing violently, trying to fend off something.*)

CLOCK (*suddenly, whirring under its breath; it can, of course, speak out of rhythm just before striking*). Fool Mirror, leave him to me. Arrgh! Boy, you're mine, mine. I'll crunch you and crush you, and eat you, in my doors, in my wheels. You woke up before, but now you know you can't. I've caught you up. Are you afraid? Is your body crumbling already? Arrgh, it will! I'm coming row. The last stroke! (*He begins to strike eleven.*)

MIRROR. Behind the glass, for ever there,
I too, dear Robin, take my share!

*(The CLOCK advances at each stroke; the MIRROR
slithers forward; the CHAIR leans towards them.*

ROBIN (*forward a little from the wall*). No! I'm dreaming.
No! (*Screams*) Mother, Mother, Mother!... You shan't
get me—you can't touch me! I shall wake up—I'm waking;
there, there, there!

*(He jerks violently backwards three times, his arms up.
The third time his head hits against the wall with
a great crack and he falls limply. The CLOCK
over him strikes the eleventh time.)*

THE END.

HERBERT READ

PICARESQUE

LIMBS,
Legs of caravanners,
steam-boaters, picnickers,
Winged arms
of walkers
Are tented above the impious pools
Of memory.

HE cannot disentangle
The genesis of any scope.

HIS limbs
Dangle
Like marionettes'
Over
a
mauve
Sea.

SONNET

THIS plain is a full arena for my eyes,
Outfanning from my feet like a ribbed shell,
Its tinctures interblent in the haze
Of autumnal moistures. A rocking bell
Peals in a grey tower, filling the leafless vales
With felt sound. Falling house-reek

Scatters against the fallow fields
Or drifts into furry woods which break
The sky like black buffaloes bent
To assail the myriad-bellied clouds.
Berries in hedges are splashes spilt
In this massed conflict. Along the roads
Beech-boles evade the shuffling mists,
Bearing into vision like furled masts.

EARLY ASTIR

EARLY, early I walked in the city:
The river ran its strength from misty valleys
And the sun lit the wings of stone angels.

Yarrol! Yarrol! I cried exultingly:
Passing dogs lifted wet noses
And housemaidens the blinds of their gables.

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*Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.* W. SHAKESPEARE.

*. . . in a faded mustard livery,
Half-bravo and half-convict . . .
I shall dally with a blunderbuss
The while some simian-visaged corporal
Bloodily gibes at me . . .* P. SELVER.

BRAMARBAS with mock-awesome rites and poms,—
Brandish of bayonets, prancing musketeers,
Imbecile gabble, fuss of protocols,
And pug-dog scowls,—has thrust me in the stale
Sourish miasma of this padlocked barn,
Empty, save for a blotchy oaf, who in
Headlong abandon sleeps off nocturnal surfeit
Of swipes and jellied eels, and snores amid
A splash of his pale vomit.

I, with head
Shorn, countershorn,—behold me branded with
All serfdom's brutish badges,—now recline
Across this touzelled grabatus, until
My turnkey's next behest.

I muse upon
My fellow men-at-arms, who, for the nonce,
Cowed by a quondam footpad's h-less rant,
And semi-empty-bellied; panoplied
In suits of sorry fustian, weighted down
Like dromedaries, hunched with cargoes of
Oddest impedimenta,—canisters,
Valises, axes, muskets, pouches, sacks,
Stilettoes,—trudge and skirmish, sweat and fume

Beneath the swelter of the August sun
Whose glint darts mockingly upon the tinsel
Furbish of brassy gear. And I rehearse
In petto the bleak annals of these months,
The pangs of shackled freemen, travail of
Captives at large, a shortening tether's irk,
The swiftly tapering gulley, through whose gloom
Our lives are hounded.

We, in this open jail,
Yorkshiremen, Jews, Maltese and Muscovites,
Ticketed, numbered in a monstrous tally,
We, gyveless bondsmen, pent in our shared squalor,
Which, lavished from a cornucopia
Upon a score, upon a myriad, still
Grants an unwaning quota unto each,
Bewail our fateful lack of eld, and crave
Distemper in the lazaret, or yearn
Even more speedily to set free foot
Where with his giant pace death stalks abroad.
(For thither are we bound)

Us chafes the yoke
Of sluggard and of despot, evil twain
Of oath-bound bosom henchmen, whose raw sway
Here hatches broods of hatreds and despairs,
Of skulking rancours, and yet, willy-nilly,
Fosters new brotherhoods . . .

O, the chill ache
That curdles in the spirit at the rasp
Of slumber-slaying trumpets, whose false tunes
Mar morning's early stillnesses! The troughs,
From which are ladled out our daily draughts
Of slimy potions, nauseously mingled with
Flabby and lukewarm gobbets, pitched among
A ravening herd that brawls and snarls!

Our days
Are garish dreams that haunt our nights. Scourged, harried
With leers and threats, we scuffle through a bout

Of mad cotillions, all the motley antics
Wherewith the paths of glory may in good time
Be trod by humble heels.

And from the lips
Of domineering butchers we are taught
The hired assassin's trade, deftness in slaughter,
Prowess in maiming.—Jab the poniard deep,
Gouge entrails out, attest your gusto with
Rut's husky bellow . . . Hurl grenades, and speed
Your bullets into bowels and lungs . . . And with
Your iron-shod boots trample on faces, till
They jelly to a shapeless pulp . . . Gloat, gloat!
Revel in briny tang of blood . . .

And we
Muster each Sabbath morn, when bebies of
Beribboned, pouting scrutineers swoop down
Upon us jaunty starvelings, whom they scan
For ill caparisons, unscoured apparel,
For uncleansed napes, for polls uncropped to bare
The scalp's crude cuticle.—Prying achieved,
Remissness booked, we strut in stiff quartettes
To a low, zinc-wrought tabernacle, where
We laud our Maker's lovingkindness for
So having fashioned us, not otherwise,
As arrant heathen. Meekly we endure
A peaky, sharp-nosed presbyter, who frets
At carnal lures, and straitly bids us shun
Welters of lust that gird us, lest we wax
Unfit to die as heroes; whereupon
We bawl a brace of hymns, and drop a coin
From our mean pittances into a wallet
Alertly emptied by the man of God
Whose benison dismisses us . . .

So while
The pyre more redly flares; while ministers
More glibly prate in council-chambers; while

Nephews and bastards, brothers-in-law and cousins,
Stepsons and stepsons' stepsons of the Great
Enconce them in Whitehall, Comptrollers of
Bees'-wax and muffins; while the pontiffs yell
For gallons more of blood, lest Christendom
Wither and perish; while, to hearten us,
And terrify the foe,—our Sovran Lord
Brooks not at his repasts, in his abodes,
Vintage of grape or barley; while amid
Fleet Street's rank purlieu-strongholds vats are crammed
With oozing ordure, baled out thrice a day
By them who thrive on stench, for a witless
Chop-licking rabble; while the bygone season's
Yield of our like grows sparser, that upon
Our advent we may have due elbow-room;
In fine, while civic virtues prosper, we
Brood upon dour enigmas, and attain
Septennial transformation within scarce
The tale of weeks. For I am not the I
Who from another age, another planet,
So brief a span agone was hurled into
The simmer of this limbo.

But hark, hark,
My duress's co-inmate bates his snore,
—Haply the portent of a clarion-call
To what hereafter may ensue,—and stirs
Hobbledehoy lineaments that twitch in throes
Of nascent discourse.

Now in our blunt argot
Shall we exchange,—like visiting-cards elsewhere,—
Recitals of our several griefs, and rail
In concert on our loathings, with the zest
That comforts them who loathe the selfsame things..

NOCTURNE FOR SLOW MUSIC

“... **Y**ES, whiskey with a splash...” “...no bleeden
fear...”
“... I seh, how priceless...” “... met her at a rag...”
“... fair done him in the eye...” “... let’s ave a fag...”
“... dirt-cheap fer twenty bob...” “... that’s that, my dear...”
“... haw, haw, haw, haw, haw...” “... surest thing you
know...”
“... I can’t stand Whitman’s tripe...” “... eh, no more
gin?...”
“... dirt-cheap fer twenty bob...” “... e got run in...”
“... I soon ticked *im* orf...” “... what a rotten show...”
“... you op it quick, I ses...” “... can’t paint for nuts...”
“... ever heard this one?...” “... had a topping spree...”
“... I seh, how priceless...” “... Swinburne’s got no guts...”
“... no bleeden fear...” “... hee, hee, hee, hee, hee, hee...”
“... the stuff to give em...” “... you bet, on the tiles...”
O wave-drenched shores of lonely, distant isles.

PERPETUUM MOBILE: A PANTOUM, MORE OR LESS

PILK lauds the verse of Jobble to the skies,
And Jobble says that Bibson’s Dante’s peer;
Bibson is great on Pagg,—“What Art!” he cries,
While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer.

While Pagg is sure that Dubkin is a seer,
Dubkin swears Botchell’s odes will never wane;
Botchell commands: “Watch Pimpington’s career!”—
Pimpington writes a book on Trodger’s brain.

Pimpington writes a book on Trodger's brain,
And Trodger shrieks: "Glabb's genius stirs my soul!"
Glabb raves of Cringely's rhymes with might and main;
Cringely pens Gummitt's name on glory's scroll.

Cringely pens Gummitt's name on glory's scroll,
And Gummitt sees in Sludd new worlds arise.
Sludd bids us hear Pilk's mighty rhythms roll;
Pilk lauds the verse of Jobble to the skies...

MUSPILLI

... **A**ND a day shall dawn
Whereon this random-kindled dream shall wane;
That day shall see no sunset.

From earth's clefts
Livid and crimson gusts of fire shall dart
With sudden havoc, waxing at a pace
That outspeeds time. Their myriad forking tongues
Shall utter spells whose dreadful potency
Smelts boulders wax-like to a crackling flux,
And wrests all ores from earth's most jealous clasp
In simmering cascades. And as they sear
The fabric of the wincing world, its poise
Shall swerve, its shape shall warp.

Upon the seas
Shall frenzied archipelagoes aflame
Stampede like bergs of swimming sodium
In luminous flotillas, spilling shreds
Of coloured ferment.

Then shall earth snap and split
Unto her very sockets as the strength
Of sinews clutching her aorta droops,

And bares her glowing entrails. She shall suck
The madly eddying oceans to her core,
Then vomit in a boundless nausea
Dense, shrieking vapours to the affrighted stars.
Hissing in agonies of death, the seas
Shall yield their ancient secrets; but these things
No eye shall live to gaze upon; for man,
Beleaguered by this blinding holocaust,
Shall have returned unto his elements
Before the elements in brutish throes
Of final contest grapple and writhe.

And in

A hazard speck of time the puny world
Shall pass for ever, reeling from its orbit
With crumpled axis. All desires, all lore,
All statutes, all earth's manifold travail
Shall founder in a patch of flaky sparks
That distant, keen-eyed watchers may perchance
Against the dimness of their firmament
Fleetingly glimpse.

And this shall be the end,
Without a judgment-day, without ascension;
For when man perishes, with him shall perish
The god whom he created...

RAYMOND PIERPOINT

THE RETURN

I HAD come back—miles—and you sent down to greet me a pale young woman (the sister of a man whom I had fought beside), who was later to ask me to dine with her at her club because she thought me interesting—and, of course, because you had told her to pity me. Intensely cold; logs piled high. The girl smoked cigarettes through a long, dark amber holder. How like her brother she was: a subversive replica—the same laugh, as she laughed when I told her of my waiting on the station, where one changed, for an hour. Cold. I was hot from the warm gold of the East, and back in the flinty coldness of this Northerly village I froze. And you sent down to greet me this young girl who searches—searches life—for firstly, a man who will be violent; secondly, for mental sensations which will excite, so that the first, when found, may be the more eluctable.

I had come miles to see you—down through that narrow valley of the sand-locked river, over the sea: that toy sea of the ancients, with artificial blueness, and lake-like stupidity of motion; and lastly, up through this land of ours during the night. And you sent down this girl—I had come back to see you—why didn't you come down? I had, in the train, expected you in the doorway, with two hands outstretched, your twisted smile, and the oblique glance under the lowered lids of the eyes. You had greeted me once before like that, and I remember wondering which book it was which you had lately read that had given you the "tip"—I think you said *Welcome*. I know I wanted to kiss your hands, but that, as you had knitting under one arm, and the *Times* under the other, I could not lift them up to a high-enough level. This omission annoyed you, I know, but then you might, I think, have left the knitting and newspaper upstairs.

This time you sent me down this pale-faced girl in her knitted jersey and tweed skirt, who smoked cigarettes through a long amber tube, whilst I ate my boiled eggs. How cold it was! I had been three years in the sun—the sun tumultuously splendid, naked, flaunting powerfully its heat, unashamedly claiming surrender from the earth.

There was a new butler, too—no longer the quaint, sly man who leered with greasiness which evoked immediately scullery-sinks and the swilling of pans. As he collected my clothes for brushing, he had been used to talk out of the corner of his mouth; you often wondered how I knew so much. The new man was your husband's man; this was apparent, even more so when, later, you told me he was a perfect fool.

About mid-day you came downstairs from your room: on the way down you knew that I was waiting for you in the large hall by the fire, and you thought of what to say first, and flickerings from the biographies of the great tumbled through your mind as you searched for a formula of suitable greeting. Atop of these thoughts for me, you also thought that you would not think of me at all, that you were coming downstairs as you ever did, and that you were going through the normal process of meeting a guest.

When you reached me and held out your hand I saw that the lapse of time had left you unchanged, practically untouched. Perhaps a little reserved (yes, you were that), but the grin was the same, as was also the oblique look. This time I could see that obeisance over the proffered hand was not expected. We were not to get on any further with one another than we had ever been. At once our attitudes were struck, you with that slight lean towards me, I with a stiff spine and head tilted back. You once told me that you could trust yourself to travel round the world with me.

You sat down on the fire-seat and I too. You asked me what I was doing at "home." I very nearly told you the truth, almost told you that it was because you had written to me saying, that if I didn't hurry home I should be forgotten. I

would have made you see that wild sun, brazenly battering the decent stiffness out of the earth, and your words on the paper, written in a hurry, forgotten with the dropping of them into the house post-box. Miles of land by train, and that sea by boat. One sentence—

“You should have stayed over the winter,” you said within the first minutes of our reunion. “This climate.”

This was after I had said that I had been sent home.

After luncheon we again sat over the fire. Your husband had loomed and gone off with the pale girl into the wood. Then you produced a boy's poems over which you rhapsodized. They were good but you didn't know it, you never really knew. That is why I kept my manuscripts up in my room, locked away.

“What are you going to do now?” you asked.

The future was indeterminate, viscous, mutable. One sentence and a packet of well-told lies had landed me beside your fire. There was no future—a blue haze of shadowy hopes and unresolved desires cannot be called a future.

But I said that I should go back to the sun, the sand, the sphinx. You said that you were sure it would be better so.

Then you suddenly told me the size of the pale girl's income. I decided that it was not enough—enough for what, I was not quite sure about.

I walked through the wild air, towards evening, under a rain-washed sky, clouds flying, the bare boughs of the stark trees moaned their keen sadness, the road, full of puddles of grey glassiness, wound away for miles, climbing the countryside. Grey birds took my thoughts with them, flying. I wanted to write a poem about friends, the longed-for friends, the friends to whom one could be really true, to whom one would be a round not a flat, before whom one would stand nude, without gesture. Flocks of crows speckled the sky,—burnt paper fluttering past a white silk screen.

Of course you meant that sentence when you wrote it in your letter to me, it had been pleasant for once to sprawl a heart

across a sheet of paper. Afterwards you had forgotten—fluctuating modality. The sea running out over a long beach of wet sand, the sea a million little receding waves quarrelling . . . I ought to have known. After all, it was mostly nausea which drove me to travel those miles home ; but it was the sentence in your letter which created the awareness of the nausea. Blown sea spume before a gale. So I had lied to get to you, to sit over a fire and read another man's poems. I wanted to say that it was the sentence that sat me by your fireplace. But it would have flattered you too much, and you would so have swallowed it. Sea that can engulf a thousand ships without alteration of level.

When I returned from my walk Lady Decima had arrived. A black bulk topped with white hair, a snow-capped hill. Loquacious, painted, she asked me what I was doing. The lie piled up.

Over the dinner-table it grew larger. I sat on your right : you were at one end of the table with the husband the other. Next to me was the French governess who had lost her lover during the war, and she had therefore become a victim of cerebral onanism. On the right hand of your spouse sat Lady Decima, and on his left hand the pale girl with the named income. On your left sat your daughter, to whom you seldom gave a kind word, but were always perfectly reasonable.

We drank champagne, Lady Decima and I, the rest of you cider. As the courses followed one another she became the "life and soul of the party." She told endless tales, mostly witty . . .

How I wish I had got drunk and then had wept in your lap as we sat over coffee in the library. The others were listening to the pale girl playing Debussy, cool coloured discords strayed in through the open door, and you knitted and smiled.

Your husband and I were left alone for about a quarter of an hour, just after you had all gone to bed, diffident one of the other, staccato phrases, pusillanimity—he told me a Rabelaisian tale, at your request, about a secret agent. The lie grew.

At the end of my visit we were to go to London together, you and I; you were passing through on your way to somewhere; would I mind if we travelled together,—as your husband was remaining behind to shoot.

A wire was sent to some person in Town to meet us on our arrival at the terminus.

He was there on our reaching King's Cross.

In the cab, on the way to my rooms, where you were dropping me, this man who had met us came out of the field of memory to me. We three had formed a trio before, at some time previous to my going East—he was better-looking now, trimmed, tittivated. We three had travelled in a railway carriage together, and you two had shared a rug. I remember that between you the flow was placid, implacably onward. He had been sure and firm. I, at that time, was not concerned—never was, until I received that sentence.

Now, there he was. He was living in your Town house. This I had learned earlier, only his name had not imaged a human being to me. Now—the lie flamed, spluttered—died.

Bleak towers of granite closed their ranks, forming a solid phalanx.

A few days later you wrote asking me to assure you that you had not failed me. This assurance I gave you, swiftly.

It was then that the pale girl asked me out to dine with her.

BENJAMIN GILBERT BROOKS

AND IF SOME HARD UNLOVELY WOMAN

. . . AND if some hard unlovely woman
Acrid and stern of lip
Should suddenly wake to melody, or be caught
In such strange graciousness of mood. . . .

(As when in the winter season
Wind cuts the sea in desolate hunks, dead grey,
And lo! there comes a noon
When blue sky glows and all the waves are still
And pale fair azure, ever more lucent and dim,
Streaks its plane, and the bright toy ships move on
With a senseless joy of red paint over the sea,—
When a ghost of moon's in the air, and a scribble of
smoke
Grows faint across it from some long-spiced vessel. . . .)

. . . Aye, such strange graciousness of mood
As would set you wondering if some ancestor,
Some sweet dead woman, had not taken the body
And touched anew the fibres of its flesh
To that more exquisite tune:

You'd say, maybe,
"Ah! She's like one that's dead! . . ."
And then you'd look
Into old musty albums by the fire,
With brown and faded photographs of all the dear
forgotten dead,
And fall on discourse of them, in recall
Of that momentary likeness. . . .

Or perchance
There'd be no soul living could speak of her,
The poor dead thing,
And men would say: "Oh! An effect of light and
shade!"
And smile it off.

But yet,
How if these vagrant glimpses of our dead,
Moulding the living flesh like a mood, were all
Their immortality! . . .

I DRAW INTO MYSELF

I DRAW into myself. None of my friends
Respond. I am grown to be one, seeking his self-
formed ends
In the fastnesses of mind
Wandering to and forth, on the wind-swept borders
that fend his kind.

Hid in the rushes, I go
Against the fluttering foe
As one
Ambushed to spy the cloud-wet way of the sun.

I prowl abroad
With shot and fowling-gun,
In hopes that when a shout
Raises the birds of thought
(The chattering horde
That wheels about
Above the mist-clogged marsh, the reeds mud-caked
and brown)
With luck,
I may bring down—
One!

ALDOUS HUXLEY

A COUNTRY WALK

DENIS had made an expedition into the local metropolis and was now returning, his pockets bursting with tobacco, tooth-powder, old books, and the other spoils of a day's shopping. It was six miles from Crome to the market town, but Denis had chosen to go on foot. He enjoyed walking: it was a process which encouraged in him a kind of contemplation that came delightfully near to blankness. His mind, as he walked, was like a quiet transparent sky, through which slow clouds floated and disappeared, the woolliest and most vaporous of thoughts. How pleasant it was to go striding along on automatic legs, looking at the shadows on the trees, counting the telegraph wires, observing the dusty faces of wayside flowers, occupied not with judgments, but the merest constatations of fact. Or if he did think it was in a leisurely fashion and on subjects of a purely speculative, unactual nature, such as: What would have been the effect on the rhythms of poetry and music if man had been created with three legs? What can the derivation of "caterpillar" be? What does it feel like to be a Great Man? Ruminating thus, Denis could cover long miles in perfect happiness.

At the moment he was chiefly preoccupied by the telegraph poles. For a mile along the straight level road he could see them receding and receding. Each one punctually crossed itself three times. *In hoc signo vinces*. It was a portent. And the wires hummed nasally, like a priest intoning. The world, Denis reflected, is profoundly religious and symbolical. Even the telegraph wires affirm the glory of God to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

But all the time, in the midst of his reflections, he was

conscious of a disturbing influence. He had noticed, as soon as he got beyond the noise of the town, that a certain curious jingling and rattling sound was pursuing him along the road. He quickened his pace; but the noise was always there, just behind. One mile, two miles, three—the noise was still there, clatter, clatter, clink, at his heels. It was like a guilty conscience, a remorse, a guardian fiend, a kettle tied to his tail. Denis obstinately refused to look round to see what was chasing him; the act, he felt, would be a sign of weakness on his part, a victory for the mysterious powers of evil.

Then it was that fate undid his boot-lace. Denis tried at first not to notice the viperous thong whipping round his ankles. But it was no good; in the end, he had to kneel down and do it up. By the time he was on his feet again, he had been overtaken. The clattering had come abreast with him, resolving itself into an ancient perambulator, overflowing with parcels and propelled by a person whom he recognised as Mrs. Rowley, the mother of the odd-job boy at the farm at Crome.

Denis nodded to her, a little embarrassed, and resumed his march. Mrs. Rowley and he were walking abreast now; and a curiously assorted pair, Denis thought, they must have looked—he with his swaying elongation of form and air of melancholy distinction, Mrs. Rowley bolt upright and jerky in her rusty black clothes, with a face that looked as though it had been casually fashioned with a thumb and forefinger, and the clay daubed afterwards with an equally casual smear of low comedy red.

They entered into conversation; or rather Mrs. Rowley entered, for as she was almost totally deaf there could be no entrance, Denis found, from his side, and he speedily gave up his efforts to force one. Mrs. Rowley, however, could talk enough for two, and it was only necessary for Denis to punctuate the incessant stream of words with a few appropriate nods and becks expressive of assent, negation, sympathy, or disgust.

“It’s hot work pushing this here pram,” Mrs. Rowley began.

It obviously was, and Denis had been wondering, ever since she first forged up alongside, whether he ought, as a gallant man,

to offer to push the thing. He contented himself, however, with saying: "Yes, very hot."

Damn it all, he really couldn't push it. That was asking too much.

"It takes me the whole day to get into town and back," went on Mrs. Rowley. "Doctor says as how I ought to have a bike and go for rides on it, so as to get air into my lungs. My lungs is rotten, he says. You ought to get air into them, Mrs. Rowley, he says. Riding on a bike's the best way. I see one there to-day for two pound thirteen and six; but they want the money all at once. It's a lot to pay out all at once. I don't see as how I shall be able to get a bike."

With a growing sense of discomfort Denis listened to the details of the Rowley family's economic position. Not so bad as economic positions go among the families of agricultural labourers; but still, the bike was clearly out of the question. Two pound thirteen and six all at once—it couldn't be done. More than ever Denis felt that he ought to offer to push that hideous pram. But he didn't.

The Rowley family was a large one. Denis heard the fullest history of every member of it. Kate was married, had had two children, one of them overlaid at three weeks old; but the other was all right and had weathered the measles. Alice was in service and had been so homesick in her first place that she had had to leave and come back to Crome for a spell. Bob worked on the railway; he was getting good wages before the war and conscription came. Now he was in France, and had written only a week ago saying how much he wished he were home again. Harry—everybody knew Harry, who did the odd jobs at Mr. Wimbush's farm. He was a good boy, and let her have twelve bob a week out of his wages for housekeeping. After that came the little ones, and here Denis rather lost count. He only remembered that one of them was called Ernest and that all of them had had scarlet fever.

"There's a lot of them," Mrs. Rowley concluded, "and a deal of trouble they've been, I can tell you. And now with the war and all it's very hard. I been here twenty-four years this year,

but I don't come from these parts. My father was a farmer down Newbury way. Farmed two hundred acres, he did. If I hadn't been so deaf I'd never have married a poor labourer like Rowley. I got abscesses when I was a girl, or I wouldn't have taken a labourer. I'd never have known this place at all if I hadn't been deaf. Funny, isn't it?"

Mrs. Rowley turned her scarecrow face in his direction, and Denis nodded, repeating, "Funny, very funny."

This was the last straw; he was determined to push the pram now. But at this moment Mrs. Rowley halted.

"I'm going to take a rest," she said, and steering the perambulator into a gateway, she plumped heavily down into the grass at the roadside. Denis followed suit, feeling that it would be impolite, though he longed to take the opportunity, to walk on alone. He lit a cigarette. Ought he to have offered one to his companion? Mrs. Rowley produced from somewhere about her person a packet, wrapped in newspaper, containing several pieces of slightly soiled bread.

"Have some?" she offered, hospitably.

Denis declined, on the score that he was smoking.

Mrs. Rowley began eating with an appetite, "I often brings my food into the fields and eats it there," she said. "It's pleasanter outside these days."

Denis looked at her curiously. A very Wordsworthian figure, he reflected. She should have been the heroine of a Lyrical Ballad—Goody Rowley, whose name would rhyme with holy as providentially as that of Betty Foy with her Idiot Boy and his outbursts of slobbering joy. Wordsworth would have made something great out of this deaf and faintly insane scarecrow of a woman sitting down with her grey bread among the daisies, full of a gay resignation in spite of all the troubles of a painful life, symbolised by that antique, dusty perambulator waiting there, burdened, by the roadside.

"I don't like this war bread much," said Mrs. Rowley.

"Nor do I," Denis agreed.

"You can't say what it's made of, can you? And you got to

get it stale now. I finds it hard for my teeth. Doctor says I ought to have all my teeth pulled out and new ones put in. But I don't want to have them all pulled out, all at once like that. I'm afraid. All the same, they're very bad, my teeth. Look here."

Mrs. Rowley opened her mouth in a blackened horse-like grin. A frightful *memento mori*, from which Denis made haste to avert his eyes. Mrs. Rowley's smile was almost a disproof of the existence of God. Incredible that the Middle Ages, the age of disease, should also have been the age of faith. Disease—that was your real tragedy, and a tragedy that did not purge the soul, but rather left it swollen with a black venom of despair and anger. And yet, they were happy enough, those plague-ridden folk. They built their cathedrals, carved their Gothic philosophy into a million intricacies, sang their love-songs, rang their bells, danced and laughed in spite of all the buboes and mormals, the agues and mortal sweats, in spite of stink and worm-eaten flesh and all the inconceivable cruelties of unconquered nature. And they believed, believed in a providence that concerned itself directly in human affairs. They must have seen in their god a kind of Japanese gardener, snipping roots, paring twigs and buds, till he had made what should have been a tree into a wizened, twisted, fantastic thing, stunted and yet pitifully alive.

Denis checked himself. His thoughts were becoming altogether too cosmic. At all costs one should live *terre-à-terre*. The proper study of mankind is books. Cling to that wisdom, more precious than rubies.

The main street of the village of Crome climbs straight up a singularly precipitous hill. The laden perambulator mounted it slowly but triumphantly. Denis pulled, Mrs. Rowley pushed from behind. All human action consists, when all is said, in moving bits of matter from one place to another. I had as soon push this perambulator, thought Denis, as win the battle of Waterloo. But I had very much rather sit still and read.

IRIS TREE

SUSPENSE

OUTSIDE the rain is falling in long folds
Straight and austere as carven drapery ;
The noise of many centuries within its sound
Makes it immortal as the silence—and I feel
Walled in this brittle shell of fleeting hours
As though eternity were gathering round
With withering breath to blow my dust away,
And that my dust is pregnant with a seed.
The long night stands between my destinies
Conspiring with me against time and fate,
Borrowing pauses from the everlasting
To shield me now against all mortal laws.
This lighted room surrounded by the rain
A roaring darkness vast and shadowy,
Seems an unreal refuge, sinister
Like a house haunted by the future, a gold trap
Set for the trysts of fatal consequence.
I wait my judgment here, and wait in vain,
No voice but in the rain's inaudible whisperings.
Time is suspended as a swaying bridge
Over the drowning waters hurrying beneath.
Fate is suspended hiding in an omen
Behind our laughter, falling unawares
While we are weak and laugh because we fear.

CAFÉ ROYAL

ENTERING here a sham playfellow
To one who in the first flush of vanity
Lived, loved here, died within me,—
Now with my younger ghost returning,
She leading me by memories,
Probing my sentiments with wistful touches
With perfumes long grown stale,
Slanting obliquely down into my heart
Through some neglected window left unshuttered.
And my new self parading
Before these shadows spreading out my tail
Of bright, indifferent eyes,—
One shadow leading forward
Raising his hat and beckoning me,
'And shall we drink together?'
The echoes still come back
Thinly from many mirrors, as before
I smile and raise my glass.
Now surges in the mesmeratic pause,
Where all wheels drone and slacken,
A monotone of voices gliding through
Vibrating on the senses, thought is stilled . . .
The plush, the dark, warm smell,
The looking-glasses smeared with smoke
Slashed with low gleams of light—
Eyes turned uneasily toward the door,
The disappointed and still hopeful eyes
No newcomer will fold them
Secretively upon some psychic recognition.
This is a graveyard,
Only the buried will return.
I, too, was buried here, I, too, return.

WILFRED ROWLAND CHILDE

THE VISION IN THE WAY

THE 'modern world' had passed in flame, like those thorns whose crackling is compared to the laughter of fools, and God had broken into infinite atoms the elaborate hell of that Egypt out of which He had called His Son . . .

Thuribius, with his eyes now turned towards Moncontour, beheld the long silver streaks lengthening in the East; and on either side of the road, between the tall and glimmering poplars, the grey mist slowly dissolving from the face of the meadows. Dew dripped on everything, and the birds began to pipe from thicket and copse. He had slept the night before under a haystack, and tasted at supper of the holy humilities of the very poor. Before that the homely decencies of the small shopkeepers had entertained him, who keep hanging in their parlours eikons of Matthew and Zacchæus. Now, all alone, he trod the Royal Road of the Holy Cross towards the tall and castellate city that is called by the troubadour, Sylvester de Leriis, 'The regal Virgin standing in the East, girt with a silver rain of falling spears.'

The morning broadened, and he ate some small scraps of meat and bread in the shadow of an ancient, rustling, dark-green ilex, beside a fountain that was all overgrown with maidenhair, through whose delicate fronds danced the cold, black water. Oxen passed him, elegantly shambling, with moon-broad horns and brimming, lustrous, agate eyes, their skins white or fawn-colour; and great painted wagons, scarlet and blue and yellow, laden with fragrant hay, or piled with dusty sacks, in the midst of which sat the blinking miller. The brown countrymen, often wreathed with flowers, passed him singing, and they gave him Good-morning, rejoicing the heart of the Pilgrim. Also he saw

many children : the girls clad in pink and pale blue, the boys in white and gold ; and women, some very beautiful, some old and wrinkled, but all walking as they say Madonna walked when she went to the well. When he came nearer to the city the crowds increased, and Thuribius was forced to go slowly, leaning on his stick, for by now his left foot pained him. Suddenly he caught his breath : at a turn of the road, between a dark ilex and a small rose-washed chapel, the sacred City stood up into the morning.

Virgin and tall, all silver, with vanes and high roofs, precipitous belfries and aery embattled towers, delicately washed in the young mist and sheer above the rich and vivid sapphire of the sea, dotted with white and scarlet sails, Moncontour had all the august simplicity of Holy Church, whose daughter she is, and all the swift and sacred innocence of the pictures a child sees when it first peeps into a painted book of hours. Thuribius knelt upon the grass and prayed to the Lady Who loves the city as one of Her chiefest jewels : “Ave, ave Maria !—Hail Mary, full of grace ! . . .” and as he prayed he saw a flight of white doves detach itself from one of the rosy belfries and float daringly over the silver roofs ; and he heard the faint and remote noise of a multitude of tender bells, the plaintive pricking of whose multitudinous sweetness brought tears into his tired eyes . . . He remembered also his God and, as Jesus Christ had commanded, Who is Lord of the world to come, he prayed, using the words “Pater Noster Qui es in Caelis . . .” As he looked upon the whiteness of the bridal city and the virgin beauty of exalted Moncontour, he cried in his heart with the Psalmist : *Deus virtutum convertere : respice de coelo, et vide, et visita vineam istam.* A single white dove separated itself from that wheeling flock, and he saw it, from afar off, very small and distinct, cling with flutterings to the golden cross above the *flèche* of the tallest of those churches. It seemed to the returning Wanderer like an emblem of his own errant and repentant soul. The oil of joy flowed over the soul of Thuribius, down to the skirts of its garment, even as the oil

once flowed down the beard of Aaron, to the edges of the mantle of the High Priest. He did not fear his foes any more: they were confounded and sent backward, those that sought after his soul. The Lord had them in derision: He had delivered His darling from the power of the dog: He that sat above the water-floods had laughed them to scorn; even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. The dream of the undying Faith entered into his brain with the vision of those towering churches, never to leave it any more, and he remembered certain Virgins who had seen into the secret Treasuries of God, Angela of Foligno to whom the Holy Spirit showed in a vision the goodness of His Creation, and Anne-Catherine Emmerich, who beheld the solemn stepping of the Camels of the Magi, and the roses which Our Lady received from Saint Anne, and that Margaret-Mary, to whom the Lord of Incarnate Love, His Garments dyed scarlet in the winepress of Bozra, revealed the flaming Paradise of His Sacred Heart . . .

For a long time he stared and stared at the silver city and the sapphire sea: he saw the very banners flapping from her balconies, his forehead was bathed in a pure and cool wind, he heard the melody and murmur of her bells. After a time he went up with the crowd along the narrow winding way into the streets of the sacred City, that went twisting and climbing up, past churches and convents, schools and palaces, into the lofty square over which soared the Cathedral of the Precious Blood, lifting into the spotless blue the silver of its pinnacles and the sun-smitten fire of its vanes, resembling a fountain of mystical lace flung forth from the secret deep. *Multitudo sonitus aquarum: vocem dederunt nubes.* The Cathedral was covered with carven Saints, but in the middle of the market-square, on a tall and slender white pillar, stood the miraculous Image of Our Lady of Moncontour; pilgrims crowded round it on their knees. Crowned, in white raiment, the Mother, nursing in one arm Her Child, held out towards the kneeling crowds with the other an alabaster lily, which whoso could touch with his lips became immediately healed from all temptations and infirmities.

That day was a Feast of Our Lady, under Her Title of "Perpetual Succour"; and in the Cathedral Thuribius heard these words pronounced: "Tota formosa et suavis es, filia Sion, pulchra ut luna, electa ut Sol, terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata . . . Benedixit te Dominus in virtute sua, quia per te ad nihilum redegit inimicos nostros . . . Ego diligentes me diligo: et qui mane vigilant ad me, invenient me . . . Mecum sunt divitiae, et gloria, opes superbae, et justitia. Melior est enim fructus meus auro, et lapide pretioso, et germina mea argento electo . . . Alleluia, alleluia. Ave Maria gratia plena: Dominus tecum: benedicta tu in mulieribus. Alleluia."

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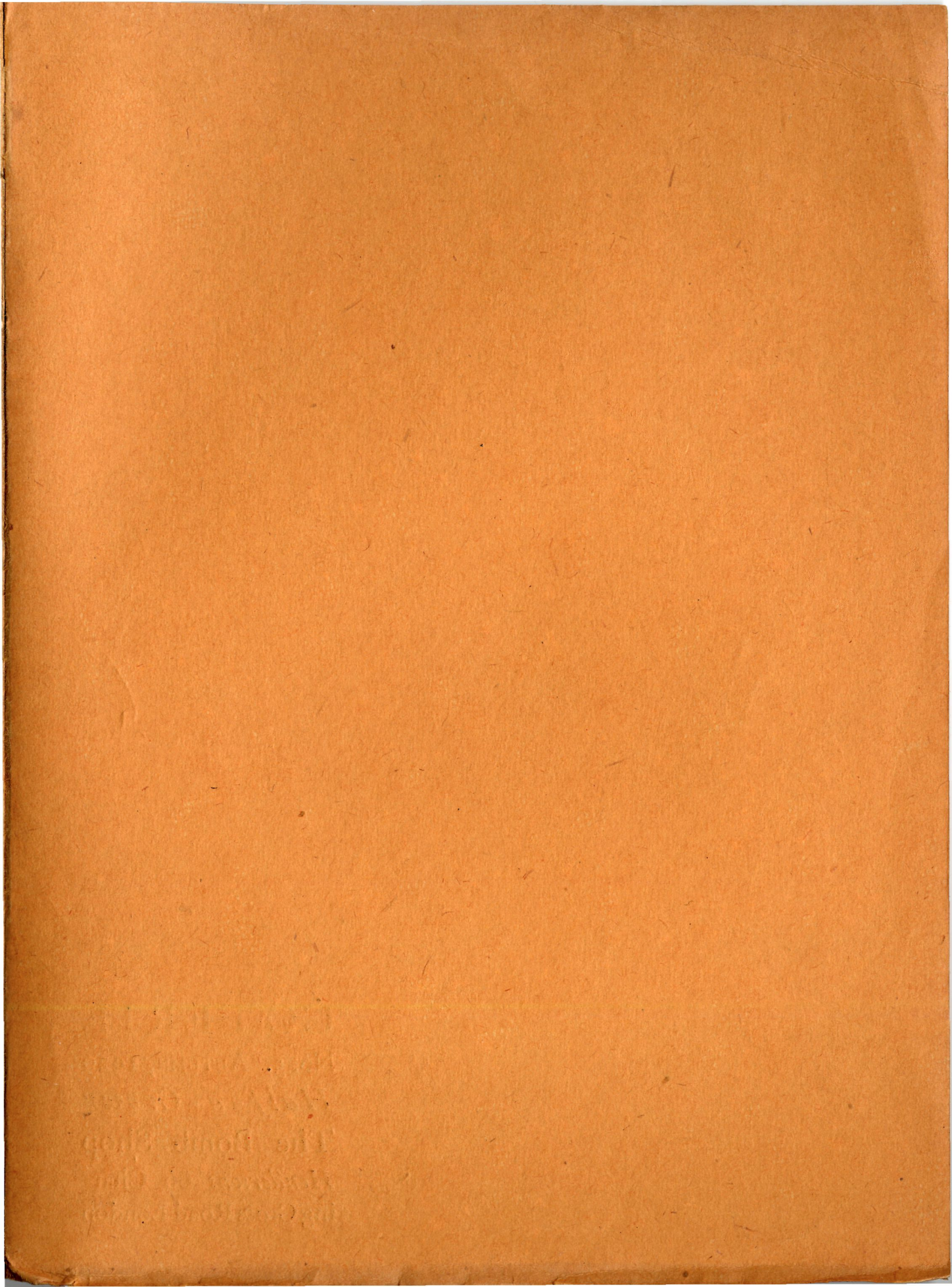
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