

# THE LITTLE REVIEW

Literature Drama Music Art

MARGARET C. ANDERSON  
EDITOR

DECEMBER, 1915

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# WAR LETTERS FROM THE LIVING DEAD MAN

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FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS  
FROM "X," WRITTEN DOWN BY

ELSA BARKER

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"WHEN I TELL YOU THE STORY OF THIS  
WAR AS SEEN FROM 'THE OTHER SIDE'  
YOU WILL KNOW MORE THAN ALL THE  
CHANCELLERIES OF THE NATIONS"

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# THE LITTLE REVIEW

Vol. II

DECEMBER, 1915

No. 9

## Hellenica

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

### I.

The scent of mint on the sandy grave of Nicias  
Crieth unto the wanderer  
For remembrance.

### II.

Here in the arms of the harvest  
Lieth the gleaner, Bion,  
Whose sickle shineth above him in the evening.

### III.

Far from tides and sand  
On the slope of Cithaeron  
Resteth Eumenes  
In the purple distance.  
His fellow tunny-fishers erect this stone.

### IV.

Chaste Clearista flowereth in the heavens,  
For dearer than Helen's beauty in April sunlight  
The gods love the spotless dreams of a maiden.

### V.

Fairer than iris blossoms slenderly swaying  
Under the sighing zephyrs of sandy Argos,  
The harvest breezes stole the heart of Erinna.  
Now she dreameth under the meadow grasses.



## VI.

The swan afloat on the rippling azure waters  
Remembereth thy fairness, Rhododaphne,  
And dreameth on time's surface of thy passing.

## VII.

Nerissa played with the swallows till the twilight.  
Now they soar above her,  
And they wonder.

## VIII.

Barefoot, a little lad hath wandered far,  
And we have sought in vain,  
For he hath found  
The amaranthine meadows.

## IX.

Far from Cos where the sailors hail in passing,  
Cleonicus lieth unmarked on the ocean strand.  
The crying gulls bring tidings of ancient summer,  
But not to me the sound of his glad coming.

## X.

Now that the flower is blown  
And the rosy petals  
Render earth more fragrant  
With their body,  
Myrrhis dreameth of spring in the flaming ground.

## XI.

Lightly I walked the hills of my native Hellas.  
Lightly I rest in the heart of her rushing forest,  
Hermas, the hunter,  
At peace,  
With the moon above me.

## XII.

Thyrsis, who loved the rain in the dreaming hollows,  
Wandereth now soft-sandalled in misty ways,  
Where the scent of flag  
Recalleth not  
Hylas, lonely.



## Sister

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

THE young artist is a woman, and at evening she comes to talk to me in my room. She is my sister, but long ago she has forgotten that and I have forgotten.

Neither my sister nor I live in our father's house, and among all my brothers and sisters I am conscious only of her. The others have positions in the city and in the evening go home to the house where my sister and I once lived. My father is old and his hands tremble. He is not concerned about me, but my sister who lives alone in a room in a house on North Dearborn Street has caused him much unhappiness.

Into my room in the evening comes my sister and sits upon a low couch by the door. She sits cross-legged and smokes cigarettes. When she comes it is always the same—she is embarrassed and I am embarrassed.

Since she has been a small girl my sister has always been very strange. When she was quite young she was awkward and boyish and tore her clothes climbing trees. It was after that her strangeness began to be noticed. Day after day she would slip away from the house and go to walk in the streets. She became a devout student and made such rapid strides in her classes that my mother—who to tell the truth is fat and uninteresting—spent the days worrying. My sister, she declared, would end by having brain fever.

When my sister was fifteen years old she announced to the family that she was about to take a lover. I was away from home at the time, on one of the wandering trips that have always been a passion with me.

My sister came into the house, where the family were seated at the table, and, standing by the door, said she had decided to spend the night with a boy of sixteen who was the son of a neighbor.

The neighbor boy knew nothing of my sister's intentions. He was at home from college, a tall, quiet, blue-eyed fellow, with his mind set upon foot-ball. To my family my sister explained that she would go to the boy and tell him of her desires. Her eyes flashed and she stamped with her foot upon the floor.

My father whipped my sister. Taking her by the arm he led her into the stable at the back of the house. He whipped her with a long black whip that always stood upright in the whip-socket of the carriage in which, on Sundays, my mother and father drove about the streets of our suburb. After the whipping my father was ill.

I am wondering how I know so intimately all the details of the whipping of my sister. Neither my father nor my sister have told me of it. Per-

haps sometime, as I sat dreaming in a chair, my mother gossiped of the whipping. It would be like her to do that, and it is a trick of my mind never to remember her figure in connection with the things she has told me.

After the whipping in the stable my sister was quite changed. The family sat tense and quiet at the table and when she came into the house she laughed and went upstairs to her own room. She was very quiet and well-behaved for several years and when she was twenty-one inherited some money and went to live alone in the house on North Dearborn Street. I have a feeling that the walls of our house told me the story of the whipping. I could never live in the house afterwards and came away at once to this room where I am now and where my sister comes to visit me.

And so there is my sister in my room and we are embarrassed. I do not look at her but turn my back and begin writing furiously. Presently she is on the arm of my chair with her arm about my neck.

I am the world and my sister is the young artist in the world. I am afraid the world will destroy her. So furious is my love of her that the touch of her hand makes me tremble.

My sister would not write as I am now writing. How strange it would seem to see her engaged in anything of the kind. She would never give the slightest bit of advice to any one. If you were dying and her advice would save you she would say nothing.

My sister is the most wonderful artist in the world, but when she is with me I do not remember that. When she has talked of her adventures, up from the chair I spring and go ranting about the room. I am half blind with anger, thinking perhaps that strange, furtive looking youth, with whom I saw her walking yesterday in the streets, has had her in his arms. The flesh of my sister is sacred to me. If anything were to happen to her body I think I should kill myself in sheer madness.

In the evening after my sister is gone I do not try to work any more. I pull my couch to the opening by the window and lie down. It is then a little that I begin to understand my sister. She is the artist right to adventure in the world, to be destroyed in the adventure, if that be necessary, and I, on my couch, am the worker in the world, blinking up at the stars that can be seen from my window when my couch is properly arranged.



## Toward Revolution

MARGARET C. ANDERSON

ON Thanksgiving Day some five thousand men and women marched in Joe Hillstrom's funeral. Why didn't they march for Joe Hillstrom before he was shot, everybody is asking.

Yes, naturally. Why not?

Incidentally, why didn't some one shoot the governor of Utah before he could shoot Joe Hill? It might have awakened Capital—and Labor. Or why didn't five hundred of the five thousand get Joe Hill out of jail? It could have been done. Or why didn't fifty of the five thousand make a protest that would set the nation gasping?

There are Schmidt and Caplan. Why doesn't some one see to it that they are released? Labor *could* do it. And there are the Chicago garment strikers. Why doesn't some one arrange for the beating-up of the police squad? That would make a good beginning. Or set fire to some of the factories, or start a convincing sabotage in the shops?

Why aren't these things done?

For the same reason that men continue to support institutions they no longer believe in; that women continue to live with men they no longer love; that youth continues to submit to age it no longer respects; for the same reason that you are a slave when you want to be free, or a nonentity when you would like to have a personality.

It is a matter of Spirit. Spirit can do anything. It is the only thing in the world that can.

For God's sake, why doesn't some one start the Revolution?



## Images of Life and Death

MAXWELL BODENHEIM

### Life

#### I.

The sky is the thin, strong expanse of a God,  
And the trees are lines of black Hindus  
Praying in black shrivelled attitudes.

#### II.

The grass is a priest in dream-gold cloth,  
Lying on his back, hard with years of thought-spinning.  
The lateral-gray, snarled clouds over him  
Are the thoughts he has solemnly woven.

#### III.

The slender lagoon holds the laughter of a child  
With his lips to a huge, full cup.

### Death

#### I.

A fan of smoke, in the long, green-white reverie of the horizon,  
Slowly curls apart.  
So shall I rise and widen out in the silence of air.

#### II.

An old man runs down a little yellow road  
To an out-flung, white thicket uncovered by morning.  
So shall I swing to the white sharpness of death.

## Preparedness The Road to Universal Slaughter

EMMA GOLDMAN

EVER since the beginning of the European conflagration the people of Europe have thrown themselves into the flames of war like panic-stricken cattle. And now America, pushed to the very brink by unscrupulous politicians, by ranting demagogues, and by military sharks, is preparing for the same terrible feat.

In the face of this approaching disaster it behooves men and women not yet overcome by the war madness to raise their protest, to call the attention of the people to the crime and outrage which are about to be perpetrated upon them.

America is essentially the melting pot. No national unit composing it is in a position to boast of superior race purity, particular historic mission, or higher culture. Yet the jingoes and war speculators are filling the air with the sentimental slogan of hypocritical nationalism, "America for Americans," "America first, last, and all the time." This cry has caught the popular fancy from one end of the country to the other. In order to maintain America military preparedness must be engaged in at once. A billion dollars of the people's sweat and blood is to be expended for dreadnaughts and submarines for the army and the navy, all to protect this precious America.

The pathos of it all is that the America which is to be protected by a huge military force is not the America of the people, but the America of the privileged class; the class which robs and exploits the masses, and controls their lives. And it is no less pathetic that so few people realize that preparedness never leads to peace, but is indeed the road to universal slaughter.

The American military ring with its Roosevelts, its Garrisons, its Daniels, and lastly its Wilsons, is moving the very heavens to place the militaristic heel upon the necks of the American people—using the same methods of the German diplomats to saddle the masses with Prussian militarism. If it is successful America will be hurled into the storm of blood and tears now devastating the countries of Europe.

Forty years ago Germany proclaimed the slogan: "Germany above everything. Germany for the Germans, first, last and always. We want peace; therefore we must prepare for war. Only a well-armed and thoroughly-prepared nation can maintain peace, can command respect, can be



sure of its national integrity." And Germany continued to prepare, thereby forcing the other nations to do the same. The European war is the fruition of the gospel of military preparedness.

Since the war began, miles of paper and oceans of ink have been used to prove the barbarity, the cruelty, the oppression of Prussian militarism. Conservatives and radicals alike are giving their support to the Allies for no other reason than to help crush that militarism, in the presence of which, they say, there can be no peace or progress in Europe. But though America grows fat on the manufacture of munition and war loans to the Allies to help crush Prussianism, the same cry is now being raised in America which, if carried into national action, will build up an American militarism far more terrible than German or Prussian militarism could ever be; because nowhere in the world has capitalism become so brazen in its greed as in America, and nowhere is the state so ready to kneel at the feet of capital.

Like a plague the mad spirit of militarism is sweeping the country, infecting the clearest heads and staunchest hearts. National security leagues, with cannon as their emblem of protection, naval leagues with women in their lead, have sprung up all through the United States. Americanization societies with well-known liberals as members, they who but yesterday decried the patriotic clap-trap of today, are now lending themselves to the befogging of the minds of the people, to the building-up of the same destructive institutions in America which they are directly and indirectly helping to pull down in Germany—militarism, the destroyer of youth, the raper of woman, the annihilator of the best in the race, the very mower of life.

Even Woodrow Wilson, who not so long ago talked of "a nation too proud to fight," who in the beginning of the war ordered prayers for peace, who in his proclamations spoke of the necessity of watchful waiting—even he has been whipped into line. He has now joined his worthy colleagues in the jingo movement, echoing their clamor for preparedness and their howl of "America for Americans." The difference between Wilson and Roosevelt is this: Roosevelt, the bully, uses the club; Wilson, the historian, the college professor, wears the smooth polished university mask, but underneath it he, like Roosevelt, has but one aim: to serve the big interests, to add to those who are growing phenomenally rich by the manufacture of military preparedness.

Woodrow Wilson, in his address before the Daughters of the American Revolution, gave his case away when he said: "I would rather be beaten than ostracized." To stand out against the Bethlehem, Du Pont, Baldwin, Remington, Winchester metallic cartridges and the rest of the armament ring means political ostracism and death. Wilson knows that; therefore he betrays his original position, goes back on the bombast of "too proud to fight," and howls as loudly as any other cheap politician for preparedness and national glory, for the silly pledge the Navy League women intend to impose upon every school child: "I pledge myself to do all in my power



to further the interests of my country, to uphold its institutions and to maintain the honor of its name and its flag. As I owe everything in life to my country, I consecrate my heart, mind, and body to its service and promise to work for its advancement and security in times of peace and to shrink from no sacrifice or privation in its cause should I be called upon to act in its defense for the freedom, peace, and happiness of our people."

To uphold the institutions of our country—that is it; the institutions which protect and sustain a handful of people in the robbery and plunder of the masses, the institutions which drain the blood of the native as well as of the foreigner and turn it into wealth and power; the institutions which rob the alien of whatever originality he brings with him and in return give him cheap Americanism, whose glory consists in mediocrity and arrogance.

The very proclaimers of "America first" have long before this betrayed the fundamental principles of real Americanism, of the kind of Americanism Jefferson had in mind when he said that the best government is that which governs least; the kind of an America David Thoreau worked for when he proclaimed that the best government is the one that doesn't govern at all; or the other truly great Americans who aimed to make of this country a haven of refuge, who hoped that all the disinherited and oppressed coming to these shores would give character, quality and meaning to the country. That is not the America of the politicians and the munition speculators. Their America has been powerfully portrayed by a young New York sculptor I know; he has made a hard cruel hand with long lean merciless fingers, crushing in over the heart of the foreigner, squeezing out its blood in order to coin dollars.

No doubt Woodrow Wilson has reason to defend these institutions. But what an ideal to hold out to the young generation! And how is a military-drilled and trained people to defend freedom, peace, and happiness? This is what Major General O'Ryan has to say of an efficiently trained generation: "The soldier must be so trained that he becomes a mere automation; he must be so trained that it will destroy his initiative; he must be so trained that he is turned into a machine. The soldier must be forced into the military noose; he must be jacked up; he must be ruled by his superiors with pistol in hand."

This was not said by a Prussian Junker; not by a German barbarian; not by Treitska or Bernhardi, but by an American major general. And he is right. You cannot conduct war with equals; you cannot have militarism with free born man; you must have slaves, automatons, machines, obedient disciplined creatures, who will move, act, shoot, and kill at the command of their superiors. That is preparedness, and nothing else.

It has been reported that among the speakers before the Navy League was Samuel Gompers. I have long ceased to believe what is reported in the press. But if that is true, it signalizes the greatest outrage upon labor at the hands of its own leaders. Preparedness is directed not only against the external enemy; it aims much more at the internal enemy. It is directed

against that element of labor which has learned not to hope for anything from our institutions, that awakened part of the working people who have realized that the war of the classes underlies all wars among nations, and that if war is justified at all it is the war against economic dependence and political slavery, the two dominant issues involved in the struggle of the classes.

Already militarism has been acting its bloody part in every economic conflict, with the approval and support of the state. Where was the protest from Washington when "our men, women and children" were killed in Ludlow? Where was that high-sounding outraged protest contained in the note to Germany? Or is there any difference in killing "our men, women and children" in Ludlow or on the high seas? Yes, indeed. The men, women, and children at Ludlow were working people, belonging to the disinherited of the earth, foreigners who had to be given a taste of the glories of Americanism, while the passengers of the *Lusitania* represented wealth and station; therein lies the difference.

Preparedness, therefore, will only add to the power of the privileged few and help them to subdue, to enslave, and crush labor. Surely Gompers must know that, and if he joins the howl of the military clique he must stand condemned as a traitor to the cause of labor.

It will be with preparedness as it has been with all the other institutions in our confused life which were created for the good of the people and which have accomplished the very reverse. Supposedly, America is to prepare for peace; but in reality it will prepare for the cause of war. It has always been so and it will continue to be so until nation refuses to fight against nation, and until the people of the world stop preparing for slaughter. Preparedness is like the seed of a poisonous plant; placed in the soil, it will bear poisonous fruit. The European mass destruction is the fruit of that poisonous seed. It is imperative that the American workers realize this before they are driven by the jingoes into the madness that is forever haunted by the spectre of danger and invasion; they must know that to prepare for peace means to invite war, means to unloose the furies of death over land and sea.

You cannot build up a standing army and then throw it back into a box like tin soldiers. Armies equipped to the teeth with highly-developed instruments of murder and backed by their military interests have their own dynamic functions. We have but to examine into the nature of militarism to realize the truth of this contention.

Militarism consumes the strongest and most productive elements of each nation. Militarism swallows the largest part of the national revenue. Even in times of peace almost nothing is spent on education, art, literature, and science in comparison with the amount devoted to militarism; while in times of war everything else is set at naught: all life stagnates, all effort is curtailed, the very sweat and blood of the masses are used to feed this insatiable monster—militarism. Under such circumstances it must become



more arrogant, more aggressive, more bloated with its own importance. If for no other reason, it is out of surplus energy that militarism must act to remain alive; therefore it will find an enemy or create one artificially. In this civilized purpose militarism is sustained by the state, protected by the laws of the land, fostered by the home and the school, and glorified by public opinion. In other words, the function of militarism is to kill. It cannot live except through murder.

But the most dominant factor of military preparedness, and the one which inevitably leads to war, is the creation of group interests which consciously and deliberately work for the increase of armament whose purposes are furthered by creating the war hysteria. This group interest embraces all those engaged in the manufacture and sale of munition and in military equipment for personal gain and profit. For instance, the family Krupp, which owns the largest cannon munition plant in the world; its sinister influence in Germany, and in fact in many other countries, extends to the press, the school, the church, and to statesmen of highest rank. Shortly before the war, Carl Liebknecht, the one brave public man in Germany now, brought to the attention of the Reichstag the fact that the family Krupp had in its employ officials of the highest military position, not only in Germany, but in France and in other countries. Everywhere its emissaries have been at work, systematically inciting national hatreds and antagonisms. The same investigation brought to light an international war supply trust which gives a hang for patriotism, or for love of the people, but which uses both to incite war and to pocket millions of profits out of the terrible bargain.

It is not at all unlikely that the history of the present war will trace its origin to this international murder trust. But is it always necessary for one generation to wade through oceans of blood and heap up mountains of human sacrifice that the next generation may learn a grain of truth from it all? Can we of today not profit by the cause which led to the European war, can we not learn that it was preparedness, thorough and efficient preparedness on the part of Germany and the other countries for military aggrandizement and material gain; above all can we not realize that preparedness in America must and will lead to the same result, the same barbarity, the same senseless sacrifice of life? Is America to follow suit, is it to be turned over to the American Krupps, the American military cliques? It almost seems so when one hears the jingo howls of the press, the blood and thunder tirades of bully Roosevelt, the sentimental twaddle of our college bred President.

The more reason for those who still have a spark of libertarianism and humanity left to cry out against this great crime, against the outrage now being prepared and imposed upon the American people. It is not enough to claim being neutral; a neutrality which sheds crocodile tears with one eye and keeps the other riveted upon the profits from war supplies and war loans, is not neutrality. It is merely hypocritical. Nor is it enough to join the bourgeois pacifists, who proclaim peace among the nations, while help-



ing to perpetuate the war among the classes, a war which in reality is at the bottom of all other wars.

It is this war of the classes that we must concentrate upon, and in that connection the war against false values, against evil institutions, against all social atrocities. Those who appreciate the urgent need of cooperating in great struggles must oppose military preparedness imposed by the state and capitalism for the destruction of the masses. They must organize the preparedness of the masses for the overthrow of both capitalism and the state. Industrial and economic preparedness is what the workers need. That alone leads to revolution at the bottom as against mass destruction from on top. That alone leads to true internationalism of labor against Kaiserdom, kingdom, diplomacies, military cliques, and bureaucracies. That alone will give the people the means to take their children out of the slums, out of the sweat-shops and the cotton-mills; that alone will enable them to inculcate in the coming generation a new ideal of brotherhood, to rear them in play and song and beauty; to bring up men and women, not automatons; that alone will enable woman to become the real mother of the race, to give to the world creative men, and not soldiers who destroy. That alone leads to economic and social freedom, and does away with war.

## Ellie

MARY ALDIS

She came to do my nails.  
Came in my door and stood before me waiting,  
A great big lummoX of a girl—  
A continent.  
Her dress was rusty black  
And scant,  
Her hat, a melancholy jumble of basement counter bargains.  
Her sullen eyes,  
Like a whipped animal's,  
Shone out between her silly bulging cheeks and puffy forehead.

She dropped her coat upon a chair  
And waited;  
Then, at a word, busied herself  
With files and delicate scissors,  
Sweet-smelling oils and my ten finger tips.

She proved so deft and silent  
I bade her come again;  
And twice a week  
While summer dawned and flushed and waned  
She used me in her parasitic trade.  
The dress grew rustier,  
The hat more melancholy,  
And Ellie fatter.

Each time she came I wondered as she worked  
If thought lay anywhere  
Behind that queer uncouthness.  
She had a trick of seizing with her eyes  
Each passing thing,  
An insatiate greediness for something out of reach;  
And yet she seemed enwrapped  
In a kind of solemn patience,  
Large, aloof and waiting.  
We hardly ever spoke—  
I could not think of anything worth saying;  
One does not chatter with a continent.

Finally it was homing time;  
The seashore town was raw and desolate  
And idlers flitted.  
The last day Ellie came  
Her calm was gone, she had been crying.  
Fat people never ought to cry;  
It's awful. . . .  
The hot drops fell upon my hand  
While Ellie dropped the scissors suddenly  
And sniffed and blew and sobbed  
In disconcerting and unreserved abandonment.  
I said the usual things;  
I would have patted her but for the grease,  
But Ellie was not comforted.  
Not until the storm was spent  
And only little catching breaths were left  
I got the reason.  
"I'm so fat," she gulped, "so awful, awful fat  
The boys won't look at me."  
And then it came, the stammered passionate cry:

Could I not help?  
Could I not find a medicine?  
We talked and talked  
And when at dusk she went, a teary smile  
Hovered a moment on her mouth  
And in those sullen, swollen eyes  
A little hope perhaps;  
I did not know.

The city and its interests soon engulfed me.  
A letter or two,  
A doctor's vague advice to bant and exercise,  
And Ellie and her woes passed from my mind  
Until, as summer dawned again,  
I heard that she was dead.  
A curious letter written stiffly,  
From Ellie's mother,  
Told me I was invited to the funeral  
"By wish of the Deceased."

Wondering I travelled to the little town  
Where the sea beat and groaned  
And sorrowed endlessly,  
And made my way down the steep street  
To Ellie's door.  
Her mother met me in the hall  
And motioned,—  
"She wanted you to see her,"  
(Then ushered me into an awful place, the parlor—  
A place of emerald plush and golden oak  
Set round with pride and symmetry,  
And in the midst  
A black and silver coffin—  
Ellie's coffin.  
Raising the lid she pointed and I looked.

Somewhere in Florence Mino da Fiesole  
Has made a tomb  
Where deathless beauty lies with upturned face.  
Two gentle hands, palms meeting,  
Touch with their pointed forefingers  
A delicate chin, and over the vibrant body  
Clings a white robe



Enshrouding chastely  
Warm curving lines of adolescent grace.  
No sleeper this,—  
The figure glows, alert, awake, aware,  
As if some sudden ecstasy had stolen life  
And held imprisoned there  
The moment of attainment—  
Rapt, imperishable and fair.

Even so lay Ellie,  
And when from somewhere far I heard  
The mother's voice  
I listened vacantly.

The woman chattered on,  
"The dress you know, white chiffon, like a wedding dress—  
I never knew she had it,  
She must 'a made it by herself.  
It's queer it fitted perfectly  
An' her all thin like that—  
She must a thought—"

Then black-robed relatives came streaming in  
To look at Ellie.  
I watched them start  
And look around for explanation.  
The mother pinched my arm:  
"Don't ask me anything now," she whispered;  
"Come back tonight."

Then old, old words were sung and prayed and droned,  
While everybody dutifully cried,  
And when the village parson  
Rhythmically proclaimed—  
And this mortal shall put on immortality,—  
With a great welcoming  
And a great lightening  
I knew at last the ancient affirmation.  
When evening came I found the mother  
Sitting amidst her golden oak and plush  
In a kind of isolated stateliness.

She led me in.

"'Twas the stuff she took that did it,"

She began; "I never knew till after she was dead.

The bottles in the woodshed, hundreds of 'em

All labelled "Caldwell's Great Obesity Cure

Warranted Safe and Rapid."

Oh ain't it awful?" and she fell to crying miserably;

"But wasn't she real pretty in her coffin?"

And then she cried again

And clung to me.

## The Ecstasy of Pain

### (Fragmentary Reflections on the Art of Przybyszewski)

ALEXANDER S. KAUN

. . . Out of the effervescent hurricane of light burst forth a terrible song.

Despair, as if thousands of graves had torn open. As if the heavens had rent asunder, and the Son of Man had descended upon the earth to judge the good and the wicked. Millions of hands rose up to heaven in a mad horror of death—hands that prayed for mercy and charity. He heard a beastly roar, which like a geyser of a smoking sea of blood spurtled upward; and above all this he saw bony fingers that twisted and writhed in convulsions of fear and shouted to heaven: "Ad te clamamus exules filii Hevae, ad te supiramus gementes et flentes."

And he saw a multitudinous crowd that was lashed with an insane ecstasy of destruction, and above them a heaven that yawned with disease and fire. He saw how those miserable creatures wriggled and serpentine in hellish madresses of life; he saw the bleeding backs furrowed by the whips into chunks; he saw all humanity demented, obsessed, with an inspired frenzy in the bestialized eyes.

Slowly disappeared the procession of the doomed; wild cries intoxicated with despair died away in a death-rattle, and a sun, red like copper, shed a chatoyant green light on the poodles of blood.

"Ad te clamamus exules filii Hevae!"

\* \* \* \*

This is a fragment from an early poem of Przybyszewski, *De Profundis*. It is a proper background to all the works of the Pole, to his plays, essays, novels, poems. At least I see him in that light.

A reminiscence: On a rainy autumn night I went to hear him lecture. " . . . and if the psychologists will find contradictions in my words—I shall not feel dismayed. There are contradictions that are dearer to me than most perfect consequentialities." From the dim light of the platform ached a face distorted with contempt and suffering, with the grim clairvoyance of the Beyond. At moments the eyebrows leaped up and bulged the forehead into thick, strained furrows, and the eyes suddenly burst in a flash that revealed unknown worlds, twisting your soul with awe and mystery. But soon the flame would extinguish, and the face would resume the masque of contemptuous weariness; the mouth-corners congealed a satanic would-be smile that prepared one for his famous "Heh-heh." That face haunted me for many days and nights, as if my inner vision had been scalded by an unearthly chimera. My friends, who have seen his exaggerated portrait painted by Krzyzanowski, will understand me. Those who will read his works (if they are translated), will understand me. *Homo Sapiens*\* is but a nuance of his multiplex creative spirit, though perhaps a most characteristic nuance. Przybyszewski, like Nietzsche, like Wilde, is a unique mosaïque, in which the personality, the artist, his life and his works, are inseparable, indivisible units of the wonderful whole. Who can fathom this hellish cosmos, this mare tenebrarum of the modern man's soul, which the mad Pole has traversed and penetrated to the bottom, and has cast out shrieking monsters and gargoyles illuminated with blinding, dazzling, infernal flames?

I cannot. Perhaps only pale glimpses of reflections.

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Those who have heard Przybyszewski play Chopin tell us that no virtuoso can compare with his creative interpretation of his melancholy compatriot. In his profound essay on *Chopin and Nietzsche* I have been impressed not so much with the morbid theory as with the characteristic feature present in all his work—the reflection of his own personality. In his favorite artists, in his heroes, in his women, he has painfully sought an expression of his restless, boundless self. Thus Chopin becomes one of the numerous selves of Przybyszewski. Let me picture the Composer in the light of the Poet.

Specifically Slavic features: extreme subtlety of feeling, easy excitability, passionateness and sensuousness, predilection for luxury and extravagance, and, chief of all, a peculiar melancholy lyricism, which is nothing



but the expression of the most exalted egoism, whose sole and highest criterion is his own "I." These, and the profound melancholy of his native limitless plains with their desolate sandy expanses, with the lead-skies over them, have been influences keenly contradicting his flexible, light vivaciousness of the Gallic, his coquettish effeminacy, his love for life and light.

Subtracting the last two strokes, who is it: Chopin or Przybyszewski?

The trait most obviously common to both Poles is the unquenchable yearning, the eternal Sehnsucht, which filters through all their productions. In neither of them was it the yearning of healthy natures, in whom, as in a mother's womb, it bears the embryo of fruitful life; it is not the yearning of Zarathustra "in a sunny rapture of ecstasy greeting new, unknown gods with an exalted 'Evoi!'" Chopin's longing, as reflected in Przybyszewski, is tinted with the pale color of anemia peculiar to a representative of a degenerate aristocracy (the Poet's progenitor died of delirium tremens), with his transparent skin projecting the tiniest veins, with his slender figure and prolonged limbs that breathe with each movement incomparable gracefulness, with his overdeveloped intellect which shines in his eyes, as in the eyes of frail children who are doomed to early death. This longing is the incessant palpitation of a nervous, over-delicate nature, something akin to the constant irritability of open wounds, the continuous change of ebbs and flows of morbid sensitiveness, the eternal dissatisfaction of acute emotions, the fatigableness of a too-susceptible spirit, the weariness of one oversatiated with suffering. Yet this longing has in it also wild passion, "the convulsive agony of deadly horror," self-damnation and thirst for destruction, delirium and madness of one who strains his gaze into the vast—and sees nothing.

Indeed I should like to hear Chopin's *Preludes* recreated under the long-  
ing fingers of Stanislaw.

\* \* \* \*

Stanislaw Przybyszewski. Do pronounce it correctly, that you may hear the sound of rain swishing through tall grass. Przybyszewski has come to know himself so thoroughly and unreservedly, and, in himself, to know the modern man of the widest intellectual and artistic horizons, through a long excruciating internal purgatory. From the study of architecture and general aesthetics his restless, ever-searching spirit hurled him into natural sciences in the hope of finding positive answers to his burning questions. He came out loaded with an enormous baggage of facts and information; yet he had not quenched his everlasting dissatisfaction, but had acquired a sceptical "heh-heh" towards life and knowledge. He plunged into psychology, and found Nietzsche—to him the deepest searcher, possessor of the keen eye of a degenerate, which like a wintersun sheds its light with morbid intensity upon snowfields, clearly illuminating each crystal. With a "heh-heh" he dismissed the Loneliest One. For was not Nietzsche driven to create for himself a superman, as a consolation, as a hope, as "a soft pillow upon which could rest his weary inflamed head"? Did he for one moment believe in that ghost which he erected in the heavy hours of despair? Non-

sense. Heh-heh. Had not his Falk, his homo sapiens, been crushed in his struggle to attain liberation and supermanship? Recall Falk's self-rending meditations: "Conscience! Heh-heh-heh! Conscience! How ridiculously silly is your superman! Herr Professor Nietzsche left out of account tradition and culture which created conscience in the course of hundreds of centuries. . . . Oh, how ridiculous is your superman sans conscience!" Thus, step after step, killing god after god, burning his ships behind him, the all-knowing, the all-denying degenerate-nobleman Slav-cosmopolite has ascended the loftiest summit, or, as he would rather say, has descended into deepest hell—Art. An equipment hardly appropriate for an artist who sees "Life Itself" in color and fragrance and petals and varicolored mornings and varicolored nights and Japanese prints and. . . . but you may find the catalogue in the Editor's rhapsody of last month. Przybyszewski's back-ground served him as an Archimedean lever to gauge and fathom the soul of modernity.

\* \* \* \*

Let me attempt to present the quintessence of Przybyszewski's modern Individuum, as he prefers to call an exceptional personality.

He considers himself a superman, aloof from the market-interests of the crowd. He is conscious of the fetters of his instincts and of the gradual sapping of his strength—hence the history of the Individuum turns into a sad monography of suppressed will and distorted instincts, a history of a mountain torrent which cannot find an outlet, and rushes into depth, dissolving obstructing strata, destroying and washing them away, and ruining the structure of the rocks in their very bowels.

Hence the longing for liberation and the yearning for expanse, a perilous "palpitating Sehnsucht and craving of the heights, of the beyond." But this longing has another distinctive symptom: the consciousness of its hopelessness, the clear conviction that the passionately-desired goal is but an *idée fixe*. In this longing is expressed a spirit that ruins everything in itself with the corrosive acid of reason, a spirit that had long lost faith in itself, that considers its own activity diffidently and critically, a spirit that spies and searches itself, that has lost the faculty of taking itself seriously, that has become accustomed to mock itself and to play with its own manifestations as with a ball; a spirit not satisfied with the highest and finest human perceptions, that has come at last, after many searchings, to the gloomy decision that all is in vain, that it is incapable of surpassing itself.

Hence the pursuit of enjoyment. But this morbid seeking of enjoyment lacks that direct, self-sufficient bliss that results from the accumulated surplus of productive strength. The modern Individuum is deprived of that healthy instinct, therefore in place of naive joy experienced from the liberation of surcharged power he plunges into self-forgetfulness. All his life is reduced to pure self-narcotization. In the morbid straining of his abnormally-functioning nerves the Individuum-decadent rises to those mysterious borders where the joy and the pain of human existence pass into one another



and intermingle, where the two are brought in their extreme manifestations to a peculiar feeling of destructive rapture, to an ecstatic being outside and above himself. All his thoughts and acts acquire a character of something devastating, maniacal, and over all of them reigns a heavy, depressing, wearying atmosphere, like the one before the outbreak of a storm, something akin to the passionate tremor of delirious impotence, something similar to the consumptive flush of spiritual hysteria.

In such clinical terms Przybyszewski sees the modern homo sapiens. Through this prism I perceive his Falk, doomed to utter failure and futility.

\* \* \* \*

Falk an erotomaniac? Nonsense. His sexual relations are as pathological as the functions of his other faculties, not more. In his incessant search for an outlet, for discharge, for some quantity that might fill up his hollowed heart, Falk grasps woman as a potential complement to his emptiness. He fails, naturally. To the artist woman is a narcotizer and wing-clipper; more often a Dalila or Xantippe than a Cosima Wagner or a Clara Schumann. Neither the exoticism of Ysa, nor the pillow-serviceability of Yanina, nor the medieval fanaticism of Marit, nor Olga's revolutionary resignedness, have the power of checking the hurricane of his questing spirit for more than a moment, such moments when the tormented man erects for his consolation a phantom, be it a superman or a Christ. Falk's quest for self-forgetfulness is futile. He lacks the healthy capacity of us, normal beings, for finding salvation in befogging our vision. No matter how we may indulge in self-analization, we usually stop at the perilous point and brake our searching demon with the same happy instinct that closes our eyes automatically at the approach of danger. Falk's mental motor has no brakes; it hurls him into the precipice.

"I have never suffered on account of a woman," boasts the old rake, Iltis.

"Because your organism is very tough, a peasant's organism, my dear Iltis. Your sensibilities have not yet reached the stage of dependence upon the brain. You are like a hydromedusa which suddenly parts with its feelers stocked with sexual organs and sends them off to seek the female, and then does not bother about them any more. You are a very happy creature, my dear Iltis. But I don't envy you your happiness. I never envy the ox his enjoyment of grass, not even when I am starving."

Przybyszewski's Individuum seeks in woman the miraculous expression of his most intimate, most precious "I." He speaks in one place about the love of the "anointed artist," which is a painful conception of an awful unknown force that casts two souls together striving to link them into one; an intense torment rending the soul in the impossible endeavor to realize the New Covenant, the union of two beings, a matter of absolute androgynism. For such an artist love is "the consciousness of a terrible abyss, the sense of a bottomless Sheol in his soul, where rages the life of thousands of generations, of thousands of ages, of their torments and pangs of reproduction and



of greed for life." Now recall Falk's dream:

"He saw a meadow-clearing in his father's forest. Two elks were fighting. They struck at each other with their large horns, separated, and made another terrific lunge. Their horns interlocked. In great leaps they tried to disentangle themselves, turning round and round. There was a crunching of horns. One elk succeeded in freeing himself and ran his horns into the other's breast. He drove them in deeper and deeper, tore ferociously at his flesh and entrails. The blood spurted. . . . And near the fighting animals a female elk was pasturing unmindful of the savage struggle of the passion-mad males. . . . In the centre stood the victor trembling and gory, yet proud and mighty. On his horns hung the entrails of his rival."

The epitomy of the sex-problem, heh-heh.

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"I don't envy the ox his enjoyment." Przybyszewski despises happiness as something unworthy of an artist. A happy soul, he believes, is a miracle, the squareness of a circle, a whip made of sand. The soul is sombre, stormy, for it is the aching of passion and the madness of sweeps, living over ecstasies of boiling desire, the stupendous anxiety of depths and the boundless suffering of being. For the artist who creates the world not with his brain, but with his soul, all life is one "sale corvée," a filthy burden, eternal horror, despair, and submission, fruitless struggle and impotent stumbling. For this reason love, the greatest happiness for ordinary males, becomes for the artist the profoundest disastrous suffering.

Take away from Przybyszewski his ecstasy of pain, and you rob him of his very essence, of his *raison d'être*, of his creative breath. When you read his *Poems in Prose* you face a soul writhing in hopeless despair, in futile longing, in maddening convulsions. But you cannot pity the artist. You are aware of the sublime joy in his sorrow, of the unearthly bliss that is wrapped in the black wings of his melancholy. In his poem *At the Sea*, the elemental yearning of his soul reaches cosmic dimensions. Only one other poem approaches it in its surcharged grief—Ben Hecht's *Night-Song*, if we overlook the latter's redundancy. Allow me to give you a pale translation of the "Introibo" to *At the Sea*:—may the Pole's spirit forgive me my sacrilegious impertinence.

# INTROIBO

Thou, who with ray-clad hands wreathest my dreams with  
the beauty of fading autumn, with the splendor of off-blooming  
grandeur, with inflamed hues of the burning paradise,—

Radiant mine!

How many pangs have passed as if in a dream, since I saw  
Thee for the last time, and yet mine heart doth shine amidst the  
stars which Thou hast strewn in my life, yet the thirsting hands  
of my blood yearn for the bliss Thou didst once kindle in my soul.

Thou, who in evening twilight spinnest for me with still hands on enchanted harps heavy meditation on moments of joy that have flown away like a distant whisper of leaves,—on suns that, sinking into the sea, sparkle in the east with bloody dew,—on nights that press to their warm breast tortured hearts,—

Radiant mine!

How many times has the sun set since those hours when with Thy magic songs Thou pacified the sorrow of my soul,—and yet I see Thine eyes, full of moans and sadness, burning in an unearthly rapture, see the radiant hand stretching towards me and grasping mine with a hot cry.

Thou, who transformest stormy nights into sunny days, in the depths of my dreams quenchest reality, removest into an infinite distance all near,—

Thou, who enkindlest in my heart will-o'-the-wisps and bearest unto life black flowers—

Radiant mine!

A thousand times has the world transfigured since Thy look consumed the tarnishing glitter of my soul, and yet I see Thy little child-like face and the golden crown of hair over Thy brow, see how two tears had spread into a pale smile that glowed on Thy mouth, and hear the dark plaint of Thy voice.

Thou, who breakest before me the seals of all mysteries and readest the runes of hidden powers, and in all the madnesses of my life flingest Thyself in a rainbow of blessing from one heaven to the other,—

Never yet has the storm so strewn the rays of my stars, never yet has the aureole played with such bleeding radiancy around Thy head, as now, when I have lost Thee forever.

### “Homo Sapiens” Discussed by Readers

In another place I called *Homo Sapiens* “the book of the age.” Surely there has not been a more stirring work of literature since *Werther*. Will the public respond? Is it true that the wall of American indifference is impregnable? I am still optimistic about the intellectual aristocracy of this country; that small circle of the young in spirit, brave searchers and earnest livers, for whom art and life are not merely diversions between meals and business transactions, but the italicized essence of existence. To those few Przybyszewski’s book should appeal; those should react.

I have been getting curious, and at times interesting, opinions of such readers. I hope to receive more, and acquaint the *Little Review* family with them. On the whole, there prevails a note of depression and uneasiness. One writes: “I had hoped to be left alone on a mountain peak in a blaze of light and in the stress of wind; instead there is a sardonic laugh, and I



am again hurled into the maelstrom of a world that cannot rise above suffering from its own passions." A feminist remarks sadly that the book demonstrates "the limit of man's penetration. The women are women still—not even women of the transition." An incurable, hopelessly struggling Puritan rages and curses both me and the author; I give a few gems: "I've read your devilishly wonderful book! . . . It did many things to me, which, thank God, have passed like a drunken dream. . . . For three days I've been hideously torn up, slashed into tatters, savage and fundamental. But you want my opinion! How can I tell you, divorce it from myself, tear it out of my living flesh, when it has become imbedded. That terrible, wonderful Falk! It makes you shudder away from all temperamental people with experimental souls in their fingers, and few convictions. . . . I became paralyzed with horror. At last I cried out, writhed on the floor and prayed to some Power, any Power, for pity, not to see myself, not to see life beneath the superficial surface. . . . Go away, take your Slav fingers out of my soul! They force me to look at truth, when I want to deal in lies. They force me to climb the heights and peer into the hideous crevasses, when I want to browse fatuously on the hillocks." More such "drunken dreams," and the comfortable blinders will fall off the eyes of the happiness-by-all-means-fiends.

I submit two letters of friends who have read my article and wished to supplement my views. I humbly think that what they say is included in my "reflections"; but I am also conscious of my inherent fault—conciseness which borders on obscurity. Hence clarification is gratefully welcome.

# I.

What you say about Przybyszewski I also think. But what you do not say about *Homo Sapiens* is what I feel most of all. There is something very definite about *Homo Sapiens*, the book. It rises out of the mass of flaming gibberish, dissected nerves, and poetical slashings. It rings in the ears long after the book is closed. It is the most poignant cry of the dying nineteenth century, and it comes out of lower depths than the cry of Dostoevsky's Ras-kolnikov,—shriller, madder, and more penetrating. . . .

Eric Falk is not a nuance. He is the whole of Stanislaw Przybyszewski, the whole of modern wisdom and introspection, which is another word for degeneracy.

Come now, pretend I am not reviewing it. Pretend I am something of a clairvoyant.

See Przybyszewski creating him—Erick Falk. He is sitting at his desk. He is going to write a book about man, not a type, not a silhouette, but about Man complete. He wants the final man of his day, the *Homo Sapiens*, the Zarathustran phantom.

This Przybyszewski is a thorough fellow, a biologist, a poet, a physician, an historian, a psychologist. He lives on an operating table. Knows his own insides.



"Come here, Zarathustra," chuckles this Przybyszewski, and he coaxes him off the heights, off the peaks where he is waiting to be fed by the eagles.

And striding from the peaks comes Zarathustra. Who do you suppose it is? Przybyszewski, of course.

They greet each other.

And Przybyszewski says to this self of his: "So you are the ultimate clay, ha, ha."

And this self answers: "Yea, behold in me the finite evolution, man crowned by his own hard and subtly-won glories."

"Come here," purrs Przybyszewski. Remember, he is talking to himself—at his desk.

Hesitating, frowning, and yet with the pure grimace of superiority stamped on his face, this self approaches. And the book is on.

Przybyszewski's inspiration is the fury of a madman, the derisive, diabolical chuckling of a fanatical cynic.

"Come now, we will fly," whispers Przybyszewski, and off they go—the innocent Zarathustra and the steeped, slashbuckling Przybyszewski. And remember still—they are one.

And the rest of it is the plot of *Homo Sapiens*, the book, which I will skip. . . .

Thus Eric Falk soars and Przybyszewski shows the sorry mechanics of his wings, laughing, chuckling, for they are his own. Thus toward the middle of the book you begin wondering. Falk is going to pieces, Falk the immutable, the all knowing, the transcender, the . . . the . . . the . . . the *Homo Sapiens*. What is the matter? When he betrays a woman and causes her death a hideous vapor suddenly envelopes his soul and befouls it. Przybyszewski thrusts his radiant leer from behind Zarathustra's mask and hisses, "Conscience, ha!"

And thus it goes its merry way. To the edge of the precipice this mad Pole pushes his whirling Falk, to the utter edge of known reason, known psychology and known Passions.

And then suddenly the soarer falls. The mechanism comes clattering to earth—to the bottom of the precipice. The lugubrious Stanislaw has led his creation—himself—to the limits.

He has finished his book.

Piled on the desk lies the heap of glowing sentences, the history of rhapsodic vivisection.

Przybyszewski has expressed himself.

He has uttered his most internal cry, the cry of a poet, a weaver of plots, an anatomical expert, of an introspective vulture-minded Disbeliever.

And now I call your attention to Mr. Przybyszewski at his desk—too tired to rise. Gone are the golden thrills that quivered in him, gone everything but the thin sardonic grin that lights the face of Eric Falk—on the last page. And only Eric Falk's last cry, "Vive L'Humanité" is left him.

So our Stanislaw, the idol of Bohemia, the tortured demon, sits chuckling, a glass of cognac trembling in his fingers.

"Homo Sapiens," he sighs with his inevitable sneer, that pierces through his pity and pain like the point of a rapier, "behold thyself. Thou, Eric, art man. Thou art the creaking vehicle for the golden theories, the rainbow fantasies which have sifted out of the mental mists of the century. And behold, thou creakest, thou groanest, thou breakest under this lightest of burdens."

The tired Przybyszewski quivers. His lips, mocking their way through the delirious poison of thought and passion have kissed the intangible. He has stripped his brain to its last cell and looked at it. And the cry that rises out of the book comes condensed from his lips now—after it is done. Nowhere is it written, nowhere is it heard except at Stanislaw Przybyszewski's desk—in Bohemia.

It is the answer, ha. Is it?

"Homo Sapiens, thou art clay. Thy mind is a super-chaos. Thy soul is a petty mirage."

## II.

Przybyszewski transplants his readers from their ordinary mental environment into those astral regions where metaphysical subtleties are clothed with reality. Life is dealt with not on the surface strata of its expressions but at its base where motives and ideas and emotions have their source. And in spite of this fact, or rather because of the uncanny clairvoyance of its author there is no perversion or befogging of one's point of view. These nebulous regions are lit up by the ruthless penetration of an artist who is a scientist as well.

One's first sensations are like seeing for the first time with the naked eye the fan of nerves which spread out from the corona radiata, or touching the single nerve trunks with the dissecting knife. In the same manner the pathological Pole brings you into actual contact with the cargos of these nerves, ideas, emotions, sensations. All the concealing layers of evasions and of equivocations have been dissected away; there lies spread out before you sections of naked consciousness. And so subtle has been the dissecting work that there has been no disarrangement and no death. All is still living, still functioning. And your sensation of strangeness, almost of horror, is born out of revulsion against a self-consciousness so intense as to seem almost morbid. "I feel," said a friend of mine, "as if I had been vivisected." Not so much this as that one has been vivisecting. Przybyszewski compels you to co-operate with him in analysing psychological phenomena. At moments you lift your eyes from the page, panting, almost physically exhausted from the effort of concentrating on those tortuous, subtle reactions which occur in the farthest recesses of consciousness and spread upward in waves to the surface, where they often take on curious irrelevant expression.



But that is sheer morbidity, cries your friend the Philistine. It is introspection carried past the point of decency. But to the investigator there is no point past which it is indecent to press. In him there is no affectation of scruple to erect its artificial barricade. He must have transcended all such petty egotism and have depersonalized himself. He is constrained to this by that curiosity which is his master passion, which generates itself and is dynamic in him as hunger or sex are dynamic in the ordinary individual. This curiosity of the artist brooks no bounds, short of the facts against which it brings up abruptly. And so Przybyszewski for all his uncanny subtlety cannot be accused of morbidity since he uses it not to distort but merely to reveal the truth. If he has no false reverence neither has he irreverence. His scalpel, always flashing and leaping, pauses a moment on a state of emotion and, pointing, calls it by name. "For I am I," says Falk. "I am a criminal diabolic nature." Or again:

"And so a certain man is suffering from love induced by auto-suggestion. Very well. But at the same time he loves his wife unqualifiedly. And he loves her so much that there can be no doubt of the reality of his love. In a word he loves both the one and the other."

But such a condition isn't possible, the Philistine will cry out, wounded at his most vulnerable point, his inflexible principles. "A man can't love two women at the same time." This isolated case would undermine the whole monogamistic theory. He sees one of his cherished institutions tottering. And so he takes fright and refutes the fact. "It can't be, it isn't possible." But Przybyszewski continues to stand with the scalpel wearily pointing. "My dear Sir, this is no question of postulates, it's a question of an individual instance. It is possible, because it occurs. Falk *does* love two women at the same moment." And the Philistine will doubtless turn away snorting furiously and unconvinced. "Przybyszewski," he will sneer, "that degenerate Pole, always half drunk with cognac, a Slav to boot. What does he know of life or reality? They were all neurasthenics. Look at Artzibashev and Andreyev and Dostoevsky. Yes, let us look at them, and remembering Dostoevsky's epilepsy, remember also Raskolnikov. A criminal's psychology lifted onto paper out of the limbo regions of consciousness by the mammoth Russian's bloody pen. Something more than neurasthenia, this gift of analysis.

What, finally, is Homo Sapiens? Who is this writter-fellow, Falk, with no conscience, with his "criminal, diabolic nature?" Does he only exist to analyse himself, and his tortuous, painful psychologizings? Why is he, what is he?—He is the self-conscious man, par excellence. This book is the epic of consciousness. "The thing must be thought out," says Falk. And nuance by nuance it is thought out, rapidly but faithfully, under your very eyes. You are invited,—no, compelled,—to take part in the operation. Hence your feeling of fatigue. And again, after a page or two, "He examined his own feelings."



"But why a Falk?" the Philistine demands. "Falk is no average man. He is a genius, and as such his psychology is specialized and distinct. Falk is a neurasthenic, victim of erotomania. Even his lucidity is not to his credit. Since he is a writer it is implicit in him, as muscle is in the circus rider. He is bound to analyse his acts, to trace them back to their motives. Falk presents an isolated case. If one is going to deal with consciousness why not choose a less precocious exponent? Why not the everyday consciousness of the average human being?"

And by the same token, why not a Falk, Mr. Philistine, since we are agreed that this is a drama of consciousness. Of what use is the average man in this extremity? The artist is the *Homo Sapiens* par excellence, for it is in him that consciousness has reached its most complex differentiation. "I am," says Falk, "what they call a highly differentiated individual. I have, combined in me, everything—design, ambition, sincerity of knowledge and ignorance, falsehood and truth. A thousand heavens, a thousand worlds are in me." And recognizing this fact he wrestles with it through some four hundred odd pages. That Falk loved two women, or ten women, is not only possible, but probably inevitable. What in the average man is a temperate reaching out for a few specific joys becomes in a Falk the impulse of his whole being for self-expression. It bursts out along a thousand channels, requiring as many outward aspects as there are sources in his personality. And it is this devious stream of a human consciousness that we are following outward to its expression in words or acts, and backward to its source, as we dissect with Przybyszewski Falk's mental protoplasm.

"Futile," sneers the Philistine, "utterly futile. If that is a *Homo Sapiens*, give me a subman. Your Falk knew no happiness and he gave none. He only strewed suffering in his wake both for himself and others. He was without scruples and without conscience. Where did he get to with all his differentiation? He wrote a few books, to be sure, but what were they in the scale of the women he ruined, the men he did to death? Even of his own misery? His gift of introspection was a sharp knife turned against himself, since he cried out in the end: 'to be chemically purified of all thoughts.' *Homo Sapiens* indeed!"

You can see Przybyszewski wearily twisting the scalpel in his nerveless hands, you can see the smile that twists his lips just before they curve about the waiting cognac glass. "No, he was not happy, it is true he did strew misery in his wake. He was neurasthenic and degenerate and criminal. He was all these things and all the other things which you have forgotten or never perceived. For he was *Homo Sapiens*. And such as he is I have drawn him. Ha, ha—Vive l'Humanité!"

# The Spring Recital

THEODORE DREISER

## SCENE:

*A prosperous First Church in the heart of a great city. Outside the city's principle avenue, along which busses and vehicles of all descriptions are rolling. Surrounding the church a graveyard, heavily shaded with trees, the branches of which reach to the open windows bearing soft odours. Over the graves many full blown blossoms, and in the sky a full May moon. An idling sense of spring in the gait and gestures of the pedestrians. In front of the church hangs a small lighted cross, and under it swings the sign "Organ Recital, 8:30, Wilmuth Tabor, Organist." The doors giving into the church are open. The interior, save for the presence of a caretaker in a chair, is empty. On either side of the pulpit, below a great dark rose window, burns a partially lighted electrolier. In the organ loft, over the street doors, a single light.*

FIRST STREET BOY (to his companion, ambling to discover what the world contains, and glancing in as they pass). Gee! Who'd wanta go to church on a night like this?

SECOND STREET BOY. I should say! Didjah see the old guy with the whiskers sitten' inside?

FIRST STREET BOY. Sure. A swell job, eh? (Their attention is attracted by an automobile spinning in the opposite direction, and they pass on).

AN OLD LADY (to her middle-aged daughter, on whose arm she is leaning . . . sympathetically and reminiscently). The dear old First Church! What a pity its parishioners have all moved away. I don't suppose the younger generation cares much for church going anymore. People are so irreligious these days.

THE DAUGHTER. Poor Mr. Tabor. I went to one of his concerts in the winter and there were scarcely forty people there. And he plays so heavenly, too. I don't suppose the average person cares much for organ music.

(They pass with but a glance at the interior.)

A BELATED SHOE CLERK (hurrying to reach Hagan's Olio Moving Picture and Vaudeville Theatre before the curtain rises, but conscious that he ought to pay some attention to the higher phases of culture, turning to the old door-keeper). When does this concert begin?



THE OLD DOOR-KEEPER (*heavily*). Half past eight. (*He glances at the sign hanging over the youth's head.*)

THE BELATED SHOE CLERK. Do they have them every Wednesday night?

THE OLD DOORKEEPER. Every Wednesday. (*The Clerk departs, and the old man scratches his head.*) They often ask, but they don't come in. (*He shifts to a more comfortable position in his chair.*) I see no use to playin' to five or six people week in and week out all summer long. Still, if they want to do it they have the money. It looks like a good waste of light to me.

(*Mrs. Pence and Mrs. Stillwater, two neighbors of the immediate vicinity, enter the church door.*)

MRS. PENCE (*a heavy pasty faced woman in white lawn, lowering her voice to a religious whisper as they enter*). Yes, I like to come here now and then. I don't know much about music but the organ is so soothing. We had a parlor organ when I was a little girl and I learned to play on that.

MRS. STILLWATER (*short, blonde, and of a romantic turn, but with three grown sons*). I just think the organ is the loveliest of all instruments. It's so rich and deep. Isn't it dim here? So romantic! I love an old church. (*They seat themselves in a pew.*) I don't suppose people want much light when they hear music. See the moonlight in that window over there, isn't it lovely?

(*A pair of lovers enter.*)

THE BOY. I've heard of him. He's a well-known organist. I love Grieg. I wish he would play the Nocturne in G Minor.

THE GIRL. Oh yes, or Solvig's Lied. Isn't it dim here.

(*They enter a pew in the most remote corner. She squeezes his hand and he returns the pressure.*)

THE ORGANIST (*a pessimistic musician of fifty, entering and climbing slowly to the organ loft. As he does so he surveys the empty auditorium gloomily.*) Only four people! (*He turns on the bracket lights, uncovers the keys, and adjusts the sheets of his programme before him. Surveying himself in the mirror, and then examining the opening bars of The Tocatto and Fugue in D by Bach, he pulls out various stops and looks into the dim, empty auditorium once more.*) What a night! And me playing in this dim, empty church. It's bad enough to be getting along in years and have no particular following, but this church! All society and wealth away to the sea shore and the mountains and me here. Ah, well (*he sighs*). Worse and worse times still succeed the former. (*He sounds a faint tremulo to test the air pressure. Finding all satisfactory, and noting the hour by his watch, which stands at eight-thirty, he begins the Overture to "The Magic Flute," this being a purely secular programme.*)

(*Enter through a north window, open even with the floor of the organ loft, a horned fawn, with gay white teeth grimacing as he comes, begins*

*pirouetting. He carries a kex on which he attempts to imitate the lovely piping of the overture).*

THE FAWN (*prancing lightly here and there*). Tra aa ala-lala! Ah, tra-la-la, Ah, tra-la-la! Tra-la-lee! Tra-la-lee! Very excellent! Very nice! (*He grins from ear to ear and espying the church cat, a huge yellow tom who is mousing about, gives a spirited kick in its direction*). Dancing's the thing! Life is better than death, thin shade that I am!

THE CAT (*arching his back and raising his fur*). Pfhs-s-st! Pfhs-s-st! (*The fawn pirouettes nearer, indicating a desire to dance with it, where-upon the cat retreats into a corner under the organ*).

THE FAWN. Ky-ey-ey! You silly dolt! (*Kicks and spins away*).

THE ORGANIST (*noticing the spit-fire attitude of the cat*). He seems to see something. What the deuce has got into him, now? I wonder whether cats do see anything when they act like that. (*He drifts into a frail dance harmony, yielding to the seduction of it and closing his eyes*).

THE BOY LOVER. Wonderful! So delicately gay and sad! It's just like flowers blooming in the night, isn't it? (*His sweetheart squeezes his hand and moves closer*).

*Six Hama-dryads (sweeping in from the trees and circling about, wreath-wise under the groined arches of the ceiling. They are a pale, ethereal company, suiting their movements to the melody and its variations).*

Arch of church or arch of trees,  
Built of stone or built of air,  
Spirits floating on a breeze,  
Dancing gayly anywhere.

Out of lilac, out of oak,  
Hard by asphodel and rose,  
Never time when music spoke  
But a dryad fled repose.

Weaving, turning, high and low  
Where the purpled rhythms fall,  
Where the plangent pipings call,  
Round and round and round we go.

THE FAWN (*dancing forward and about them*). I can dance! Let me dance! (*He grins in the face of one*).

THE HAMA-DRYADS. Go away! Don't bother!

THE CAT (*prowling under the organ*). I saw a mouse peeping out of that hole just now. Wait! (*He crouches very low, ready to spring*).

THE ORGANIST (*dreamily*). This passage always makes me think of moonlight on open fields and the spicy damp breath of a dark dewy wood,



and of lilacs blowing over a wall, too. So suitable, but I would rather live than play. (*He sighs. A gloomy ghost with sharp green eyes enters from the sacristy, and pauses in the dark angle of the wall.*)

THE GHOST (*a barrel house bum a dozen years dead, and still enamored of the earth*). What's doing here, I wonder? (*He stares*). A lot of fools dancing. (*Turns and departs*).

THE GIRL. Oh Sweetheart, isn't it perfect. (*She lays her head on his shoulder*).

THE BOY. Darling!

THE CAT (*springing*). There! I almost caught him. (*Peers into the hole*). Just the same, I know where he is now. (*He strolls off with an air of undefeated indifference*).

THE ORGANIST (*missing a note*). This finale isn't so easy. And I don't like it as well, either. I always stumble in the allegro. (*He wipes his brow, improvises a few bars, interpreting also a small portion of the triumphal march from "Aida"*). This is different. I can do it better. (*He begins upon the Grail motif from "Parsifal"*).

MRS. STILLWATER (*shifting her arm and moving her knee*). I never like loud music as well as the softer kind. That middle part was beautiful.

MRS. PENCE. Well, I can't say I like loud music, either, but now this—

(*The Hama-dryads cease dancing and drift out of the window, followed by the fawn. An English minister, once of St. Giles, Circenster, who died in 1631, a monk of the Thebaid, A. D. 300, and three priests of Isis, B. C. 2840, enter, each independently of the others. On detecting the odour of reverence they visualize themselves to themselves as servitors of their respective earthly religions—the Egyptians in their winged hoods, the monk of the Thebaid in his high pointed cowl, the Rector of St. Giles in his broad-brimmed hat with the high conical crown, knee-length coat, and heavy, silver-buttoned shoes.*)

THE MINISTER (*to himself*). An unhappy costume, yet it is all that identifies me with my former earthly self, or with life. (*He notes the Egyptians and the monk, but pays no attention to them for the moment*).

FIRST PRIEST OF ISIS (*to his brothers*). A house of worship, How the awe of man persists. I thought I detected the rhythm of melody here.

SECOND PRIEST (*tall and severely garbed, yet in the rich colors of his order*). And I. It is melody. I feel the waves.

THIRD PRIEST (*signing in the direction of the organist*). There is the musician. He is arranging something. And here is a very present reminder of one of our earthly stupidities. We worshiped the forerunner of that in our day. (*He motions to the church cat who strolls by with great dignity. They smile*).

THE CAT (*surveying them with indifferent eyes*). At least I am alive.

FIRST PRIEST (*a master of astrology*). Small comfort. You will be dead within the year. I see the rock that ends you. Then no more airs for you.

THE MONK OF THE THEBAID (*to himself*). This is a religious edifice—heavily material and of small pomp—christian, possibly. That spirit yonder (*he surveys the minister of St. Giles*) was also a priest of sorts, I take it, and these three Egyptians—how they strut! They give themselves because of the thin memory of them and of their rites that endures in the world.

THE MINISTER OF ST. GILES (*surveying the monk*). A sombre flagellant. I wonder has he outgrown his earthly illusion. (*He approaches*). Brother, do I not meet an emancipated spirit?

THE MONK. You do. Centuries of observation have taught me what earthly search could not. I smile at the folly of this. (*He waves an inclusive hand about him*).

THE MINISTER. And I, I also—though I was of stern faith in my day, and of this very creed—even now I suspect some discoverable power worthy of worship. My mere persistence causes me to wonder though it does not explain itself.

THE MONK. Nor does mine to me, nor the persistence of their seeming reality to them. (*He points through the transparent walls of the church to where outside moving streams of shadows—automobiles, belated wagons, and pedestrians are to be seen—and to the lovers*). Yet there is no answer. They have their faith, futile as it is. A greater darkness has fallen on you and me. Endless persistence for us if we must, let us say, but merging at last into what?

THE MINISTER. And when I died I imagined I should meet my maker face to face.

THE MONK (*smiling*). And I the same. And they,—(*he nods toward the Egyptians*),—their gods were as real to them,—shadows all, of the unknowable.

THE ORGANIST (*plunging into the sub-theme which speedily dies off into unfathomable mysteries of dark notes and tones*). I wonder if I'm boring them by this heavy stuff. Still what do I care. There are only four. (*Nevertheless he fuses the Grail motif to the dance of the flower maidens*).

THE BOY. Isn't it lovely!

THE GIRL. Perfect!

THE ORGANIST. Lovely and very difficult. These pedals are working rather stiffly,—and that automobile has to honk just now. (*He fingers lightly three notes of a major key indicative of woodland echoes and faint bird notes. Re-enter the barrel house bum who is seeking anything that will amuse him*).

THE BUM. Still playing! And there are those two old stuffs of women. Not an idea between 'em. (*He turns to go but catches sight of*



the monk and the Egyptians. Pauses, and then turns back).

THE MONK. Soothing harmonies these! More strange combinations, the reason for which we cannot guess, the joy and beauty of which we know. I find earthly harmonies very grateful. But then, why?

(He and the priest forget their quondam materiality for a moment and disappear from sight; recovering themselves as shadows only by thinking).

THE BUM (staring interrogatively and irritatingly at the monk and the Egyptians, who, however, pay not the slightest attention to him). You thought you knew somepin' when you were alive, didn'jah? You thought you were smart, huh? You thought you'd find out somepin' when yuh died, huh? Well, yuh got fooled didn'jah? You're like all the other stuffs that walk about and think they know a lot. Yuh got left. Har! Har! Har! (He chortles vibrantly). I know as much as you fellers, and I've only been dead a dozen years. There aint no answer! Har! Har! Har! There aint no answer! An' here you are floatin' aroun' in them things! (He indicates their dress). Oh, ho, ho ho! (He grins maliciously and executes a crude clog step).

THE MONK (repugnantly and pulling his cowl aside). Away, vile creature—unregenerate soul! Has even the nothingness of materiality taught you nothing?

THE BUM (straightening up and leering). Who's vile? What's vile? (He thinks to become obstreperous but recalling his nothingness grins contemptuously). You think you're still a monk, don'cha? You think you're good—better'n anybody else. Whatcha got to be good about? Oh ho, ho, ho, ho! Ah har, har, har, har! He thinks he's still a monk—

FIRST EGYPTIAN (to the monk sympathetically). Come away, friend. Leave him to his illusions.

SECOND EGYPTIAN. Time alone can point out the folly of his mood.

THE MINISTER OF ST. GILES (drawing near and scowling at the Bum). Out, sot.

THE BUM (defiantly and yet indifferently). Who's a sot? An' where's out? Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho!

THE ORGANIST (passing into the finale). And this is even more beautiful. It suggests graves and shrines—and fawns dancing. But I don't propose to play long for four people.

(A troupe of fawns and nymphs dance in, pursuing and eluding each other. The six Hama-dryads return, weaving and turning in diaphanous line. A passing cloud of hags and wastrels, the worst of the earth lovers, enticed by the gaily of sound, enter and fill the arches and the vacant spaces for the moment, skipping about in wild hilarity. The Bum joins them, dancing deliriously. Persistences of fish and birds and animals, attracted by the rhythm which is both colour and harmony to them, turn and weave among the others. Ancient and new dead of every clime, enamored of the earth life and wandering idly, enter. A tired pedestrian of

forty, an architect, strolling for the air and hearing the melody, enters. After him come spirits of the streets—a doctor and two artisans, newly dead, wondering at the sound).

THE MINISTER OF ST. GILES (*noting the flood of hags and wastrels*). And these are horrible presences! Succubi! Will they never get enough of materiality?

THE MONK. In my day the Thebaid was alive with them—the scum of Rome and Alexandria, annoying us holy men at our devotions.

THE MINISTER. Do you still identify yourself with earthly beliefs?

THE MONK. A phase! A phase! In the presence and thought of materiality I seem to partake of it.

THE FIRST EGYPTIAN. And I! A sound observation!

THE THIRD EGYPTIAN. The lure of life! It has never lost its charm for me.

THE MINISTER (*to himself*). Nor for me.

THE FAWN (*cavorting near, his key to his lips, piping vigorously*). Heavy dolts! Little they know of joy except to stare at it.

THE MINISTER (*indicating the fawn*). And this animal—to profane a temple!

THE MONK (*mischievously*). And do you still cling to earthly notions of sanctity?

THE MINISTER. I hold as I have said, that there must be some power that explains us.

THE TWELVE HAMA-DRYADS (*dancing and singing*):

Round and round a dozen times,  
Three times up and three times down,  
Catch a shadow circlewise,  
Fill it full of thistledown.

Fill it up and then away—  
How can stupid mortals know  
All the gladness of our play—  
Where the dew wet odours blow,  
Round and round and round we go!

THE BUM (*spinning near*). This is glorious! Gee!

FIRST EGYPTIAN (*unconscious of anything save the charm of the rhythm*). Sweet vibrations these. But not our ancient harmonies. In our time they were different.

SECOND EGYPTIAN. Our day! Our day! Endless memories of days. Oh, for an hour of sealed illusion!

THE BOY LOVER. Isn't it perfect!

THE GIRL. Divine! It's like a dream and I want to cry.

THE THIRD EGYPTIAN. The harmony! The harmony! (*He points*



to the boy and girl. *The three approach and stand before the lovers, viewing them with envious eyes*). In ancient Egypt—on the banks of the Nile—how keen was this thrill of existence. How much greater is their reality than ours. And all because of their faith in it.

*(The minister and the monk approach).*

THE ORGANIST *(finishing with a flourish)*. Well, there's the end of my work tonight. *(He closes various stops, begins to gather up his music and turn out the lights. The dryads and nymphs flood out of the windows, followed by the fawns, the hags, and the wastrels. The green-eyed bum starts to go, but pauses, looking back wistfully. The Egyptians, fading from their presence as such, appear only as pale flames of blue)*.

MRS. STILLWATER. Now that was lovely, wasn't it?

MRS. PENCE. Charming, very charming!

THE BOY. Don't you love Wagner?

THE GIRL. I do! I do! *(In the shadows they embrace and kiss)*.

THE ORGANIST *(wearily as he bustles down the stairs)*. Why should I play any more for four people? It is nine o'clock. A half hour is enough. At least I can find a little comfort at the Crystal Garden. *(He thinks of an immense beer place, and shrugs his shoulders the while. The old doorman, hearing him go out, prepares to put out the lights)*.

MRS. STILLWATER *(rising)*. I do believe it's over.

MRS. PENCE. Well, there are so few you can scarcely blame him.

THE BUM *(gloomily)*. Now I gotta find somepin' else.

THE CHURCH CAT *(prowling toward the organ loft in the dark of the closed church)*. Now for one more try at that mouse.

FINIS.

## Editorials and Announcement

### *Powys at the Hebrew Institute*

ON page 43 there is announcement of a series of lectures by John Cowper Powys. I can hear him now on the philosophical basis of democracy: "My dear friends, the philosophical basis of democracy is individualism"! As to the Nietzsche and Dostoevsky lecture, you may count upon it being one of the memorable occasions of your life.

*The Foreigner in America*

MARY ANTIN is talking all through the country of the wonderful things America does for the foreigner. These things are not true.

I went the other night to an affair given by a Norwegian woman and her husband before a gathering of Chicago's representative intellectuals. The woman was Borgny Hammer, an actress of tremendous power from the National Theatre, Christiania. Mme. Hammer plays Ibsen so well that there is not much chance of her playing it very often. On this particular evening she gave some Björnson things and talked with naive fervor of Norway as compared with this commercialized land. Her intensity was so authentic and so beautiful and so moving that it became almost pitiable in that stiff, self-contained room. Mme. Hammer could be playing *Ghosts* and *Master Builder* and *Beyond Human Power*, could be giving nightly inspiration to thousands of unimaginative Americans if America had been able to offer the foreigner one tenth of what the foreigner brings to America.

Not long ago the Hebrew Institute of Chicago refused its platform to Alexander Berkman who was to speak there on the Schmidt and Caplan case. Some one who sympathized with the action of the directors explained to me that it was a wise move on their part because the foreigners, especially the Russian Jews, are so easily inflamed. Thank heaven they are! If only something could be done to inflame the American. Well—there is always the flag. . . .

*The Russian Class*

THE group for the study of Russian literature will have a preliminary meeting in room 612 Fine Arts Building on Friday, January 14, 1916, at 8 p. m. All interested are invited.



## The Illusions of "The Art Student"

THERE has made its appearance in this city of ours a new magazine, *The Art Student*. Its desire, according to the editor's announcement, is to "help establish a bond of understanding between the American student of the allied arts and the public."

This aim is commendable and deserves the co-operation of everybody unselfishly interested in the promotion of American art.

The reason for this publication at the present time is also given in that announcement. It says there: "With all Europe at war and its art centers crippled, it is not only America's opportunity, but her duty, to preserve and promote art in its various forms."

I am afraid the youthful enthusiasm of *The Art Student* is the cause both of this exaggeration as concerns Europe and the illusion as concerns America.

We have heard much and read more about America's opportunity these last fourteen months. First it was the trade fields deserted by the warring nations in South America and the Orient; then it was the sea routes closed to the second biggest merchant fleet of the world—the opportunity for an American merchant marine; and now it is our opportunity in the field of Art!

What has become of the first illusions of which our papers and magazines were full? England expanded her commerce in South America, having forced for the time being her German rival from that field of hottest competition, and Japan practically monopolized the commerce of China. England increases her merchant fleet by capering American ships, and the Pacific Mail retires voluntarily from the Pacific ocean.

That is the result of our boasted opportunity in the realm of trade and commerce. Why? Because we underestimated others and because we talked about our own foreign methods instead of changing our own and acting.

And now in Art we are doing exactly the same thing. We point with horror to the war that cripples European art and acclaim loudly the superiority of our civilization.

Gentlemen, you are all wrong. Art is not crippled in Europe through the war! *Inter arma silent musae!* The arts are silent, they sleep. Silence and sleep we all understand are good things. The first helps us to concentrate and find ourselves, the latter gives us new strength.

And that is the worst that the war does to Art in Europe. Art is at present less active, a self-imposed inactivity, owing to circumstances; not crippled, a result of direct unartistic influences.

European Art is free of such crippling influences. Art schools are

not run by local millionaires, galleries not governed by rich manufacturers, academy instructors not selected by wealthy trustees with the sole idea that their insignificance will insure submittance to the layman rule!

Is Sir Thomas Lipton president of the Royal Academy? No! Is Herr von Krupp president of the Duesseldorf Academy? No! Do they make bankers and brewers directors and trustees of art institutions in Paris or Munich? No! Do they in St. Petersburg or Vienna? No! Do they in Berlin or Rome? No! Do they in Brussels or Madrid? No!

*Do they in America? Yes!*

Do they in England, France, Russia, Italy, Germany, or Australia invite their best painters and sculptors to teach in their academies? Yes! *Do they in America? No!* Do they in England, France, Russia, Italy, Germany, or Austria select these teachers from mediocrities who will be sure not to revolt against the incompetent decisions of a layman board of trustees? They don't!

*Do they in America? They do!*

What is "city beautiful" in Europe? It is a fact! *What is it in America? It is a "slogan."*

No, gentlemen, you need not be worried about European Art! War is not inartistic. Money is! A general staff in war time can destroy what art has created! Our system of millionaire trustees is preventing Art from creating!

War in Europe can kill artists, it cannot kill art.

In America we kill art and our artists escape to Europe.

—Garnerin.

## The Theatre

### "Grotesques"

Cloyd Head—Maurice Browne: comparatively misty names, far below the golden monolith at whose base is carefully engraved the word—Granville Barker. Mr. Barker resurrects Greek tragedies and Shakespeare plays and produces them acceptably; Cloyd Head and Maurice Brown have evolved an absolutely new stage method and draped it about a poetic concept. Therefore Cloyd Head and Maurice Browne will probably be heralded and worshipped ten years from now, at the earliest. They must pay the penalty of originality and the ability of appreciating it.

In *Grotesques* recently produced at the Chicago Little Theatre, for the first time, actors posed as black and white marionettes in a series of decorations created by Fate, masquerading as a sardonic artist. The idea of



Fate moving human beings together as one shuffles a pack of cards is old. But the portraying of this shuffling through conventional decorations with the actors giving the jerking semblance of puppets, and with Fate personified, directly addressing the audience, is sparkingly new. Capulchard, the artist, has made a decoration symbolizing the background of life—an utterly simple picture composed of a conventionalized black and white wave effect, a black sky, a round white moon, stiff white trees, an owl on one of their branches, and a lotus-flower. From his marionette boxes at both sides of the decoration he drags forth his puppets—man motif, woman motif, crone motif, sprite motif, girl motif, and carelessly waves them into various poses, the main incidents of their lives. But they gradually become aware of him, they begin to speak out of their lines, to burst into tiny rebellions which he controls with difficulty. They show increasing determination to mar his series of decorations. Finally in a moment of sublime defiance, headed by the man-motif, they slash their strings. The result—Death. Capulchard carelessly erases the decoration—it has served its purpose.

I shall probably fully drain *Grotesques* after slowly reading it again and again. But even now, Cloyd Head's huge child whose face is like the pointed petals of sun-flowers, has aroused a little cluster of reactions within me. To sharply visualise the play, you need not see the actual black and white of the decoration, and the über-marionettes who move stiffly through it. The words of the play themselves are black and white: you feel them as an inextricable part of the picture: there is something in their staccato rising and falling that suggests light and darkness evenly spread upon a canvass. Something in the even placing and sounding of phrases like this:

Who am I that come,  
Caressing tenderly the sign of bird?  
A Girl, in white, alone, beside the pattern brook.  
I wander without fear, of fear not having heard.

It is not easily explained. It is a feeling that can only come to one after repeated reading of the play.

A second reaction comes to one while loitering with the images in their jerking procession. Each image, with its absolute minimum of words, has two clear virtues—the expression of emotion half-human and half artificial, and the concentration of just enough of this emotion to produce an illusion of the whole. Consider this speech of the sprite motif:

Tiptoe a-tread—thru the wood—by the brook—  
the sprite enters—oh, ho!  
Dance, crinkled stream!  
Ha; a dragon-fly poised upon air.

(*Blows*) . . . . Begone.  
 (*Reflectively*) It is night.  
 (*Bowing*) Madame Owl.  
 Hoot! To-whoo!

An actual sprite-soul in life would babble, would use more extravagant phrasing. In this sprite passage, just enough of the babbling and exuberance has been given, to suggest the essence of it; just enough words have been given, to suggest the steady motion of the invisible strings. These qualities run throughout the speeches of all the über-marionettes.

## Book Discussion

*Plays for Small Stages*, by Mary Aldis. New York: Duffield and Company.

These plays are among those acted by the Lake Forest Players, and, written especially for them, they exemplify certain qualities of drama and stage-craft which are of special value in amateur production. First of all they are real in situation. Two of the five, *Mrs. Pat and the Law* and *Extreme Unction*, deal with slum life, but with phases of it which the amateur can study at first hand, and is, indeed, the better for studying. The juxtaposition in both types of the submerged tenth and the reachers of helping hands suggests that the plays have in fact, grown out of such study. The former sketch is done with a brilliancy of Irish humor and fancy that reminds the reader of Lady Gregory's best. The latter is the grim tragedy of a dying prostitute—a situation relieved first by the mordant irony of the conventional religious pouncet-box of the well-meaning lady visitor, and later by the sympathetic imagination of the physician. A third play, *The Drama Class*, presents with broad humor an occasion familiar to all up-lifters of the drama in regions which on the "culture map" are lightly shaded—the discussion of a modern European play by a woman's club. *The Letter* and *Temperament* represent the maladjustments of monogamy—the one with tragic emphasis, the other in pure farce. The point should be noted, however, that all five are plays of situation, static rather than dynamic, expository and revealing rather than developing—the type most suited to the dimensions of the one-act play, and made familiar by the playwrights of the Abbey and Manchester Theatres. As Mrs. Aldis says in her preface,



speaking of the general policy of the Lake Forest Players: "In selecting plays we have departed radically from the amateur tradition of resuscitating 'plays with a punch,' which have fared well in the hands of professionals. In the established tricks of the trade, of course the amateur cannot compete with the professional." In writing as well as in selecting plays for amateur performance Mrs. Aldis has wisely preferred truth of situation to the "punch."

In the second place Mrs. Aldis has made her characters speak the language of life rather than that of the stage. This trait again fits her plays for amateur production, especially in a small theatre where effects can be gained without the emphasis of stage talk. Working as she says for a small stage Mrs. Aldis has been able to reproduce with striking fidelity not only the vocabulary but the movement, the rhythm, even the intonations of human speech. This kind of naturalism is of great importance in the drama of situation. The words in which Mrs. Aldis calls attention to this connection, and to the possibilities of artistic success in amateur acting depending thereon might have occurred in Maeterlinck's essay *The Drama in Daily Life*. "We seek," she says, "plays in which the mental attitude and the interplay of character are more important than the physical action. Here, if anywhere, lies the amateur's opportunity. So we are not afraid of plays with little action and much talk. . . . It is in talk, low and intense, gay and railing, bitter and despairing as the case may be, that we moderns carry on the drama of life, the foundation of the drama of the stage."

—Robert M. Lovett.

*The State Forbids: A Play in One Act, by  
Sada Cowan. New York: Mitchell Kennerley.*

The mother speaks: "The State won't let us women help ourselves. We *must* have children whether we want them or not, and then the State comes and takes them from us. It doesn't ask. It commands. We've got to give them up. [*Shrilly*] I've got to give my boy. [*Again shrilly*] What are we, we women? Just cattle. Breeding animals . . . without a voice! Dumb—powerless! Oh, the State! The State commands! and the State forbids! Damn the State!"

It is to appear in vaudeville. Like *War-Brides* it is woman propaganda; but here the emphasis is on Birth Control. Like *War-Brides* it is negative as literature, but the woman speeches make smashing vaudeville. We wonder whether it is the importance of its idea or its evident value as a thriller and shocker which prompts its production.

## The Reader Critic

*Ben Hecht, Chicago:*

I congratulate you on the roseate misconceptions of "Life Itself." Long live your fancies—mine didn't. The perfumes of Araby are short-lived in a slop-jar.

I envy you your dogmatic naïveté until I remember something I thought of long ago:—that ideals are for the weak; that people who live on fancies starve for lack of sorrow, shrivel for lack of cynicism, and finally die of inhibition.

I remember, in a discussion on art the other evening, your crying out about "the eternal standard" and I feeling it was true but not knowing what it meant. I know now. It meant nothing. It is just another fancy.

Vivi le divinité!

Remember what Homo Sapiens discovered: the limitations of the infinite—of his brain. They are as nothing to the limitations of our Gods.

### GOD'S GARDEN—THE WORLD

*(Yes, this still happens. We get hordes of such letters.)*

I feel sure that at heart your idea of freedom is right, but I do not believe that you altogether understand how to carry it out.

To get at the bottom of things—you want to be just a natural, normal human being. You want to live to grow, to expand like a flower. How then is this most easily accomplished? Simply this, to be what nature or God or the power back of the universe intended for you to be. What then is your place in the universe, and what is your relation to it? You are by God's grace a woman; then the greatest thing you can do is to be a woman. But what does it mean to be a woman? To love, to create, to protect, to uplift, and to purify. What do these words mean? You can love the out-of-doors, you can love books, music, art, people, all the world, everything your heart desires. All that you love you can create by writing, by making things grow, by building and constructing. You can protect by being a mother to all those weaker than yourself who need your help. You can uplift and purify by inspiring all you meet with goodness and high ideals.

Yes, you say, but how can I be free to do these things when I am hampered and bound by conventionalities and surroundings? No one is bound down who knows that freedom comes from within, not from without. The girl in the factory, the girl in college, the girl in her own home, or the girl out of doors can be just as free as she makes up her mind to be. Freedom is not a matter of clothes or environment.

As to conventionalities—most of them have been formed because time and culture have taught us to have regard for our fellow beings. There is nothing immorally wrong in a man going to the opera in his shirt sleeves but it might not be agreeable to the gentleman seated next to him. Then the psychology of the close relationship between thoughts and actions—free thoughts result in free actions, likewise carelessness in our habits of daily life make careless thinking. I believe in keeping your own individuality above all things if you can back up your ideas by good reasons; but you will find that there is a reason for most conventionalities that can't be overthrown. If we were not an integral part of a whole we could do just as we pleased because no one would be affected and no one would care; but everything we do, every move we make, affects some part of the whole, and that is why we care and why everybody cares.

Stick to your idea of freedom and of being natural, but be careful how you apply it and of its effect on others. Whatever is good and helpful will live and what is not good will die.

Remember, too, that this is America, 1915, not Greece, B. C. 400.

Do not think I mean to be critical for I love you just the same as I love everybody and all things in God's garden, the world, so much so that I want you to fully understand what it means to be a real woman.



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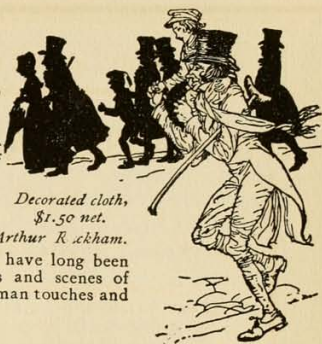
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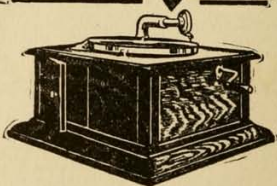
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