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VIEWS AND COMMENTS

I BELIEVE it was Plato who said that the mark of the philosopher was the feeling of wonder, and dubbed as the "Uninitiated" such as were destitute of this feeling. Yet in practical affairs it would appear that the sterile minds are just those inclined to set too high store on wonder. Probably the explanation of the seeming paradox lies in the fact that there are two opposite modes of reacting to the feeling: the determination as to which line the reaction shall take being largely dependent on the innate capacity of the individual experiencing the feeling, and to a certain extent also on training and habits of mind. To a sterile mind wonder is something to cling to, to reverence and to perpetuate; to a fruitful mind, on the contrary, wonder serves as stimulus—a stimulus leading towards its own destruction. To such a mind the value of wonder is that of thought or a theory: something not to be placed on a pedestal and preserved but to be got rid of and replaced by knowledge. That is to say, to such a mind, given also sufficient interest, wonder produces a wish for, followed by a *striving after*, a fuller understanding of the particular subject about which it has arisen: which obtained, wonder ceases to be. A mind of this fertile sort will not rest until it has observed its subject from all points of view and, so to speak, brought up all the heavy siege guns of the critical faculties and set them to storm the fortress of the Unknown and reduce Wonder to ruins. Obviously with a big enough subject, say some unexplored or badly explored branch of science or art, the conquest of it may take a lifetime, may often even take generations. There were many journeys in search of the North and South Poles before they were finally "discovered," and how many centuries passed before men could fly! But the pioneers were all of them convinced that the feats could be accomplished, given the necessary implements, backed by courage, skill, and perseverance. In like manner the pioneer philosopher or scientist does not allow himself to be daunted by Wonder or reduced to a state of paralysis or imbecility by Awe. He feels that his exclusion from a full understanding of any particular subject is explained by his present deficiency in time, inclination, opportunity, or suitable implements for research, and that, given these, there is no subject that could not become lit with the light of common day for him: that even the Infinite could be reduced to the terms of a compound addition sum. But yet without wonder as a first stimulus no science or art could have come to be.

* * * *

But if Wonder in its normal and transitory form has been the parent of all those bright children, the Arts and Sciences—and died that they might live—in its other and perpetuated form it has equally been the parent of Ignorance and Superstition. In the ignorant and sterile mind the Wonderful comes to be synonymous with the Inscrutable, the Uncomprehended, and Incomprehensible, and the more one lingers over this tendency to exalt the prestige of the Wonderful, the more clearly one appreciates the uses to which it lends itself in the spheres of Beliefs and Faiths. It represents the first step of the rendering sacred of all processes about which it clings. It makes itself the signpost for the discouragement of prospective trespassers. In substance it says, "You cannot hope to understand, therefore acquiesce in my pretensions, subscribe and submit." It asks, not for comprehension but for blind adhesion and worship. Worship is the attitude of "wondering-at" encouraged, protected, and allowed full swing, and has as its negation the inquiring, searching, sceptical attitude. It is the preserving agency which keeps faiths fixed, immutable, and eternal. Its action is the guarantee of "No progress here." It effectually prevents its adherents getting forward or even desiring to.

* * * *

Though this kind of action is looked for in religions which appear to present for their adherents a sphere where a standstill is preferable to development, in the arts and sciences it is quite a different matter. The "Perpetuated Belief," the "Theory-become-Hobby," which is the stand-by of religious faiths, is the negation of their existence. Theories here, legitimate children of wonder, are merely experimenting guesses, working hypotheses, either to be developed beyond themselves or discarded altogether. Nor does there seem to be any adequate ground for distinguishing between the arts and sciences in this respect. Intelligibility as a basis and in the first instance, with progressive development as a corollary in the second, is the only correct attitude for either. Yet the religious spirit dogs both like a harpy, endeavouring to infect "schools"—elementary institutions purporting to encourage growth and change—with the spirit of dogma and finality. The methods by which stagnation has learned to defend itself in religion—resorting to open violence against opponents when strong enough and to the more insidious "poisonous gases" of moral persecution when caution seems advisable—find in the arrogance, intolerance, and blind advocacy of the "schools" of sciences and arts almost equally yielding ground.

* * * *

As with religious sects, so it is to be observed that the main condition of "school-forming" in the arts and sciences is not so much the advent of a "master" as the adherence of admiring but unoriginal disciples. The tendency of the disciple of parts is to destroy the school, since, his originality carrying him far afield, he becomes a master in his turn and lessens the authority of other masters by just so much as his original contribution to the subject-matter stands for. Dull but admiring disciples will in turn gather about him and form yet another "school." It is the followers rather than the leaders who create the schools: which explains the stagnating influence generally exercised by them. Having a mentality of relatively minor calibre, the rôle of disciples is wonder, worship, and adherence rather than critical understanding and appreciation, and they naturally turn and fix upon the incomprehensible part of a "master's" doctrine; its idiosyncrasy rather than the fertile, path-opening, comprehensible elements which constitute its actual value. Out of a mere mannerism of the master—an accidental excrescence of which he has neglected to purge himself or which he has neglected to make comprehensible to his followers, and which very often he has omitted to make comprehensible to himself—disciples of "schools" are provided with the stuff that faiths are made of: stuff, however, from which the body of knowledge can cull no increase: useful for an amusement but useless for enlightenment. It may happen, of course, that the enthusiasm of followers will—if his vanity is suceptible—influence the master also and persuade him that his genius lies in the uncomprehended, incomprehensible, and adventitious parts of his work. Vanity and worshipping followers will combine to make many a man of genuine parts a charlatan. This is, one would imagine, the chief danger of "schools" from the standpoint of a "master" who requires in self-defence to arm himself with a suspicious eye, first against his unexplained parts and second against the "Wonder" of his ordinary followers.

All which shows that Wonder is one of those double-faced things which are virtues or vices according to the treatment to which they are subjected, and which are useful when kept in a subordinate position but lose their heads, so to speak, and get beyond themselves when mistakenly exalted to positions of authority.

H. S. W.

A MEMORY: POEM IN PROSE

THE river is swift under the old bridge. The town gates are grey and crumbling. Winter sets little plaques of snow all over the cobbled square; summer plants, tufts of grass, and small weeds between the stones. It is very simple and quiet and peaceful in our old forgotten town. It is so old and so many dead people have lived there that the low wooden houses bend over wearily, and the grass-grown winding streets are only happy when there is no step to wake their echoes. It is so quiet that you can hear the minutes slowly moving by. We are so peaceful that we do hardly anything except watch the months pass.

In spring the elm-trees which grow along the town walls—for our town is one of the few in England which still have walls—the elm-trees glint with leaves, and the rushing March wind with its rapid glimmerings of sunlight and cloud whips across our red tiled roofs. But this soon changes, and all along the dykes blossom meadow-sweet and yellow flags; green tall rushes bending in the wind are lighted upon by sharp blue dragonflies; then it is so still that the Tick-Tack, Tick-Tack, Tick-Tack of the church clock sounds right across the empty sun-lit market-place. (Our church clock is two hundred years old; it is almost the newest thing in the town. The newest thing is the Martello tower, which was put up during the wars with Napoleon.)

In the winter, which is very severe in our town, we have sometimes so prolonged a frost that the townsfolk come out in their wraps and skate along the dykes. And the girls are so plump and the young men so serious and the old men so ribald and the children so rosy-faced that you might well imagine you were in some Dutch village of the seventeenth century; it is almost as homely and naïve as a picture by Aart van der Neer. At night everything is so still that you can hear the frost creeping along the dark streets, snapping off a piece of wood from the house where Queen Elizabeth slept, crackling up the thatch of the King's Head, hanging a string of icicles on the eaves of the grammar school, and turning the water in the tanks and dykes and wells, in our jugs and ewers and bottles, into hard clear ice. Only the river under the old bridge is too swift to freeze.

But it is best in early autumn. You lie in a field by a very little stream and the tall poplars shower gold round leaves, like guineas, slowly into the water, while the ducks dibble among the water-weeds. There is a vast yellow glow of sun; blue sky swamped in gold; the air throbs with the whirr of a threshing-machine in the old barn on the other side of the stream; you hear a cow snort as she drinks, and the old people sitting at the doors of their alms-cottages look quiet and happy. Presently the drone of the threshing-machine weakens and stops; the sun goes down in a great wasteful splash of red light; a late bird whistles a few notes; a leaf rustles down; the old people do not move; some one goes slowly along the path.

Yes, it is very quiet in our town.

RICHARD ALDINGTON.

PASSING PARIS

LA TRIENNALE. A selection from the leading art-groups and limited to artists of French nationality furnishes a good, tangible object-lesson of what is to be expected of modern French art and serves as apology for a display at the present juncture. Naturally it is chiefly retrospective, not in its representatives, but in the works it summons together, most of these being already familiar to habitués of the annual shows. A judicious, deliberate eclecticism balances the most opposed schools one against the other: Matisse *versus* Bonnat; Harpignies *versus* Marquet; Mme. Marval *versus* Mlle. Dufau, etc. Besides the veteran Harpignies there are others: Degas, and Renoir, who here introduces himself as a sculptor—a young, debutant sculptor, nearly eighty years old, by the way. Claude Monet is missing, but in his stead there are Signac, as president of the Indépendants, and Odilon Redon, who has dared, and quite exceptionally, to honour these walls, for he does not care to mingle in "mixed" society as a rule. And it is well for his companions, they being painters of varying degrees, high or low in the scale, but merely painters, and M. Redon on another plane, outside their zone of operations. The same criterion does not apply to them and to him. It is clear that they struggle for some technical supremacy, while he, possessing his technique, possessing it in the sense that the Japanese masters possessed theirs, aims and achieves, through an amazing mastery of his materials, the absolute liberation of the material element in painting. His art is not only art, but an art.

* * * *

On all hands artists are making a stand against the war-deluge. Some yield prudently to the general turmoil by individual transformations and, realizing the vanity of practising "fine" art at its finest just now, adapt their skill to more accessible forms, and we have painters and sculptors trying their hand at toys in response to a demand for the French and, especially, artistic idea. M. Poulbot, the draughtsman, had, years before the war, set an example with his gutter-snipe dolls. Mlle. Poupelet, our leading woman-sculptor and one of our leading artists, irrespective of sex, was one of the next to make an attempt in this direction, and a group has gathered round her who model and carve and carpenter for the intended amusement of the young and the certain admiration of the old. Several exhibitions have already been held in Paris and New York, yielding success surpassing anticipation, though it is not to be supposed that the more remarkable qualities some of these little knick-knacks disguise under their more obvious purpose is particularly apparent to the general public.

* * * *

Of the late Mounet-Sully, M. Péladan said that, in his personality, stage-personality, he attained to more art than a hundred painters chosen from among his contemporaries. Mounet-Sully is particularly remembered for his interpretation of *Œdipus Rex.* The most artistic actor surviving him and who has only just, after a long struggle with the usual opposition, obtained admission to the official boards, is M. de Max, recently obliged to allow his name to figure in a musical-comedy programme to spare it from falling into absolute oblivion. He is a wonderful tragedian, remarkable in Shakespeare (one recalls an epoch-making rendering of Antony in *Julius Cæsar*), but far too original, too striking, both in histrionic comprehension and physical appearance to meet with the full approval of the average to whom the average is alone agreeable and understandable. At the Comédie Française De Max will put his companions out of tune, and perhaps, therefore, himself out of court, as was Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, as was, practically, the beautiful, far too clever Mme. Moreno, who has just made a tentative reappearance, after long absence from Paris, in a part far too insignificant for her. Initiates know Mme. Moreno to be the most exquisite reciter of modern verse in the French language (with M. de Max, who enounces Baudelaire to perfection); her intellect is the admiration of her friends; and any one with the slightest touch of critical sense must realize what she could do for the stage if people of her brains were given a chance. She is too complete an artist, too enthusiastic an actress to sterilize her art with intellectual theory; she has no highfalutin reform up her sleeve, but the breadth and simplicity of her style, her irreproachable diction, her taste and refinement, her very profile, isolate her . . . the more, the more to her credit, but not to the advantage of the French stage or to the satisfaction of those to whom it is tolerable only when animated by such as she is.

* * * *

Henry Bataille, dramatist, poet, painter, publishes *La Divine Tragédie* (Fasquelle), variations on the war-theme. Herewith a sample of his passionate participation in the universal drama:

Rien n'est plus merveilleux que la beauté des morts.
Si l'on vous dit jamais que la balle, en frappant,
Que l'obus, en fauchant, avaient meurtri leurs corps
Assez pour qu'on n'y vît que la terreur du sang,
N'en croyez rien. Ce n'est pas vrai. . . . Graves, superbes,
Sculptés par le génie insensé de la mort,
Tous ces soldats raidis se sont couchés dans l'herbe
Comme des rois, vêtus de fer, de pourpre et d'or. . . .
. . . Mères. . . . Mères en deuil. . . . Mères de mon pays . . .
Que l'indicible horreur de votre cœur s'arrache . . .
Ils étaient là, très doux, très sages, très petits,
Avec leurs joues en fleur, tous ces enfants sans tache . . .
Ce n'est pas vrai qu'on aît abimé leurs figures. . . .
Mères, rassurez-vous, écartez vos deux mains
Du visage qui fuit la vision. . . . Je jure
Qu'ils avaient tous la face empreinte du divin.
Pas un, entendez-vous, pas un qui ne fut tel . . .
Il faut le croire ! . . . Il faut ! . . . J'en atteste le ciel ! . . .
Mères . . . levez le front. . . . J'en viens. . . . Je les ai vus. . . .
Tous vos enfants étaient aussi beaux que Jésus. . . .

* * * *

Although it may sometimes be the outcome of lack of confidence, indifference to popularity is always estimable albeit the qualities it evinces may be of a negative order. It may sometimes be due to unintelligibility, which in its turn may proceed from (1) of course, a superior intellect whose workings are beyond immediate reach; (2) from a natural idiosyncracy; (3) from the use of drugs (as in Raimbaud); (4) from affectation, it being almost impossible to distinguish the last-named category with certainty. M. Sébastien Voirol, by whom we give one of the most lucid of the poems he sent in his *La Feuille de Laurier Tricolore mais Verte* (sic) to soldiers at the front, does not, I believe, intend deliberately to puzzle. In his estimation, literature, his literature, at least, occupies an ornamental plane. A literature condescending to be easily decipherable is to him, I fancy, a literature of utility, domestic, and of a low order, a literature of the streets, not literature, therefore, but merely writing. He has, apparently, come to use words in some parallel, rather than in their direct, sense. Mallarmé's most hermetic pages must be M. Voirol's pet delectation. All his work, whether in poetry or in prose (*L'Eden*, *Augurales et Talismans*, *Les Sandales aux Larmes*), is written with the loftiest disregard for conventional coherence, but always with a species of literary gentility which commands admiration and sympathy. It is possible that words have some mystic significance for M. Voirol, to which he has the key; it is possible that to him they are images in themselves; it is possible that to him they have a life outside and beyond their meanings; it is possible he condenses and triturates and dilutes them till he reaches their soul and spirit, and it is these he distils for us. It is possible that, like many an alchemist of old, his labour is futile of results, and that he expects more of language, as they did often of their chemicals, than it can give. . . . It is possible, on the other hand, that it does open on to a new world, or at least on to one of which he has the intuition and vision—it is possible it opens on to nothing. At all events it opens on to nothing that is vulgar or commonplace and certainly on to something that is distinguished in its singularity. M. Voirol's respect of language must be respected, his tenacity to his convictions admired, his desire of the decorative eminently approved of.

M. Sébastien Voirol is the Secretary-founder of the Anglo-French Literary Bureau, to which reference has been made in these columns as aiming at establishing a link between French and British literary circles.

M. C.

"THE LITTLE DEMON"*

UNDISCERNING and hasty readers of this novel who pass over the five introductions—four by the author and one by the translators—will probably be inclined to dismiss it with the remark that its appearance at this time is an unfortunate thing for the cause of Anglo-Russian understanding. That sort of inept observation has been anticipated by the author in the important preface he wrote for this authorized English edition, in which he says:

> The portrait of Peredonov [the central character] is an expression of the all-human inclination towards evil, of the almost disinterested tendency of a perverse human soul to depart from the common course of universal life directed by one omnipotent Will; and, taking vengeance upon the world for its own grievous loneliness, to bring into the world evil and abomination, to mutilate the given reality, and to defile the beautiful dreams of humanity.

Sologub here claims to have done more than reflect the mean and disgusting side of life in a modern Russian town; when he calls his novel a mirror—as he does in an earlier preface—he should not be misunderstood. In this book he claims to have done more than a Zola; he asserts that he has universalized his characters and turned them into living types of human passions and vices. There can be no doubt that he has succeeded. I do not mean that Peredonov can be labelled Original Sin, and his sheep-like follower Volodin Mr. Servility—as if "The Little Demon" were an up-to-date version of "The Pilgrim's Progress"!—but rather that both these characters are not of any particular nation but are living men, drawn and interpreted until they attain, with all their vulgarity and meanness, a point scarcely below tragedy.

Disregarding the episode of Liudmilla's passion for the boy Sasha, which, by its instinctive innocence and purity, is obviously designed to heighten the effect of the rest of the book but, in my opinion, does more to disorganize the otherwise perfect construction of the novel—disregarding this one piece of tenderness and beauty we have a group of people, not without subtly indicated individual differences but all more or less resembling the chief character Peredonov in his cunning, his servility, his cringing cowardice, his filthy imagination, his littleness of mind. There is not one strong vice among them; even Peredonov's ambition, the disillusionment of which ends the novel, is something petty and calculating.

> His feelings were dull, and his consciousness was a corrupting and a deadening apparatus. All that reached his consciousness became transformed into abomination and filth. All objects revealed their imperfections to him and their imperfections gave him pleasure. When he walked past an erect and clean column, he had a desire to make it crooked and to bespatter it with filth. He laughed with joy when something was being besmirched in his presence.

It is something which astonished me, still astonishes me and will, I believe, astonish every reader of "The Little Demon"—how such a character can have been made the centre of a half-tragic story, how one can bear away from such a continuous narrative of the mean and ignoble a final impression of something almost appealing, beautiful. This baffles me, I repeat. It is a question so unfamiliar that I must be excused from an attempt to answer it.

Among the secondary characters Volodin, the "ram," interested me most. The attention given to him is not one-twentieth of that given to Peredonov; and yet he is just as alive, just as real. To have characterized him so completely in such a few small strokes must be accounted one of Sologub's greatest triumphs.

I don't want to give the impression that "The Little Demon" is altogether a sombre, sordid novel, at whose appearance the reviewers will say, "Why are all Russian novels . . ." etc. There are several excellent pieces of comedy—Peredonov's attempt to woo a lady on behalf of the shy Volodin; his interviews with the notabilities of the town. Both of these episodes are thoroughly Dickensian—without the cocksureness of getting his laugh which often marred some of the best scenes in Dickens.

I am incompetent to criticize the translation; I know no Russian. Apart from a very few inevitable footnotes the novel can be read through without a hitch, without any of those jerks which so often pull up the reader of Russian novels. If this is praise enough my friends Cournos and Aldington are welcome to it. I can't give them any higher.

ALEC W. G. RANDALL

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* "The Little Demon." By Feodor Sologub. Authorized translation by John Cournos and Richard Aldington. Martin Secker. 6s.

THE HELMSMAN

O BE swift—
we have always known you wanted us.

We fled inland with our flocks,
we pastured them in hollows
cut off from the wind
and the salt track of the marsh.

We worshipped inland—
we stepped past wood-flowers,
we forgot your tang,
we brushed wood-grass.

We wandered from pine-hills
through oak and scrub-oak tangles,
we broke hyssop and bramble,
we caught flower and new bramble-fruit
in our hair—we laughed
as each branch whipped back—
we tore our feet in half-buried rocks
and knotted roots and acorn cups.

We forgot—we worshipped,
we parted green from green,
we sought further thickets,
we dipped our ankles
through leaf-mould and earth,
and wood and wood-bank enchanted us—

And the feel of the clefts in the bark,
and the slope between tree and tree—
and a slender path strung field to field
and wood to wood
and hill to hill
and the forest after it.

We forgot—
for a moment, tree-resin, tree-bark,
sweat of a torn branch
were sweet to the taste.

We were enchanted with the fields,
the tufts of coarse grass
in the shorter grass—
we loved all this.

But now our boat climbs—hesitates—drops—
climbs—hesitates—crawls back
climbs—hesitates—
O be swift—
We have always known you wanted us.

H. D.

FRENCH POEMS

On peut tout dire, n'est-ce pas ?

VOUS ne saviez pas que je vous aimais,
amis qui m'avez entrevu
devant la vie, heurtant à la même porte,
nous bousculant aussi, de temps en temps.
Rachilde disait : " Nous sommes une grande famille ! "
C'est vrai !—Pourtant,
sans mal penser, mais me fiant aux bons ferments,
vous m'avez deviné, peut-être, dur et prêt à dire
tantôt de l'un :
il a du cœur et de l'esprit, et pond à l'aveuglette !
de l'autre : du talent, mais pour l'Académie !
ou bien : quand donc un tel fera-t-il quelque chose,
au lieu de journalistiquer ?
ou mieux encore : celui-là est bon, mais idiot,
puisqu'il prône
le temple sans foi de nos Barrès !
Et vous auriez eu le droit de murmurer derrière moi :
quel plat à barbe ! quel long Quixote, suant l'ennui
et la constipation !

Dans ces antagonismes juvéniles
je n'étais jamais le plus vieux du moins,
et maintenant la lutte est terminée . . .
C'est la paix—
la paix profonde qui n'est pas pour moi l'oubli—
une paix qui nous prive d'union,
de l'aspect fraternel que veut
ma vraie douleur.

Vous avez tous rêvé quelque chose de beau
et à personne il n'est donné
de réaliser son rêve le plus splendide ;
il faut donc se borner à dire de nos poètes :
ils acceptèrent avec virilité le sacrifice
et parvinrent à la Marne,
ou, près de plus obscurs héros, ailleurs,
à sauver ce que de Liberté nous est échu,
la plus vaste patrie, et l'art
insoumis aux militaires.

L'hommage juste vous sera sans doute rendu,
et c'est bien peu de chose.
Qu'y puis-je ajouter ?
Sinon qu'en ce modeste coin où, comme vous, je rêve,
la plus belle victoire c'est à toi,
pensif René Tautain qu'on la doit.
A la bataille de l'Aisne
Olivier Hourcade maintint l'ennemi,
comme Charles Müller aux premiers jours,
comme dans les Vosges, Jacques Nayral,
et les frères Bonneff.
Le doux lieutenant Pergaud tomba en conquérant,
tandis que Vildrac prenait Vauquois,
plus heureux que vos fils, Dr. Florand et Saint-Pol-Roux,
que vous, Du Fresnois et Fournier,
puisqu'il il doit nous revenir.

Oh ! mes amis, revenez sans faute ! C'en est assez,
il ne faut pas
que d'autres manquent encore.

Ma prière est pour vous tous,
Allard et Barbusse, Léger et La Fresnaye,
Canudo et Kaplan, Apollinaire,
que j'étais loin de croire aussi vaillants.
Acremant, Thomas, Salmon, Frick, Sauvebois,
boutez-les dans la mer,
sans que les bougres vous aperçoivent !
Faites dans la cour de Eayazid un tour
et saluez de ma part ces colombes,
puis revenez sans dam, Dalize et Giraudoux !
Gleizes et Jacob (anticipons !)
Mercereau et Réaubourg,
et vous, révolté contre l'atroce malignité des hommes,
Jean Metzinger, à vous de soigner les malheureux,
sans vous laisser tuer, veillez-y bien !

C'est tout ce que je peux dire pour cette fois ;
en ces temps d'incertitude
j'ai voulu être juste
en joignant aux noms que les Lettres pleurent
ceux des vivants auxquels je pense chaque jour . . .

SÉBASTIEN VOIROL.

(From *La Feuille de Laurier Tricolore mais Verte.*)

THE PERFECT BOOK

L'art n'est à la portée que de ceux qui consentent à déplaire.—R. de G.

THERE could be no greater distinction for an author than to produce a book which everybody disliked. Such a book would be either a work of genius or a mass of putrefaction ; probably the latter ; but in any case it would be a distinction.

Literature is far too democratized ; everybody reads and nearly everybody writes. A book, however good, is bound to please somebody ; there are snobs who will like a book merely because they do not understand it. To please is nowadays too facile a conquest. I dream of the perfect book which would disgust not only the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Morals and the worm-eaten jackals of the Press, but one's nearest friends and the masters whom one reveres.

One would even be disgusted with it oneself—supreme triumph ! R. A.

ITALY

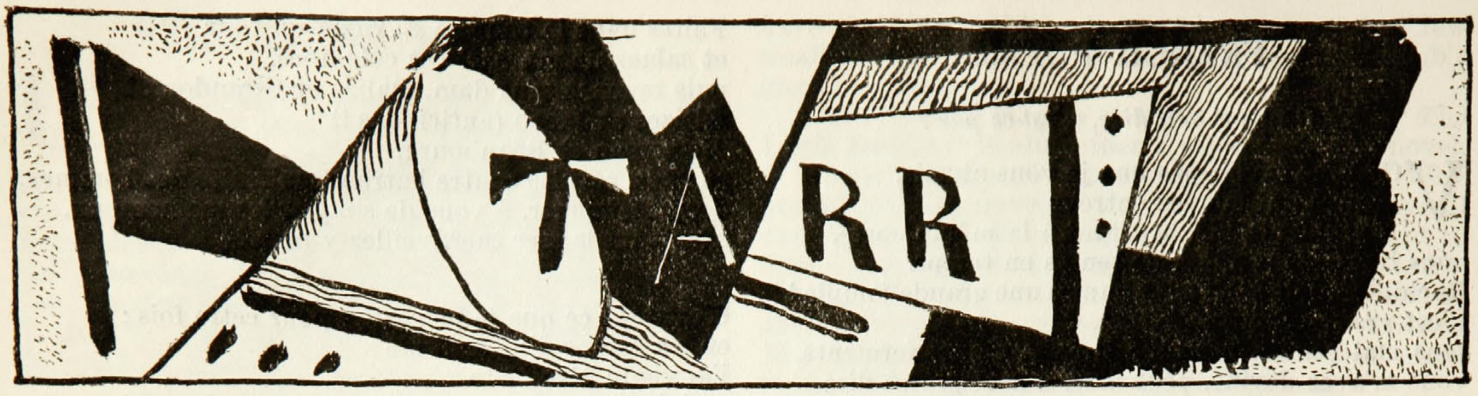
YOU must not tempt us with your beauty ;
It is not ours.

For you :
Silver spray of bending olives
Above blue waves,
Music on glittering Venetian waters
At evening,
Carved bronze, old palaces,
And long bright frescoes—
A thousand silent towns
Set upon golden hills.

For us :
Rows of grey bleak houses,
Misery of ceaseless noise,
No sun.

RICHARD ALDINGTON.

Peasant Pottery Shop
41 Devonshire Street, Theobald's Road, W.C.
(Close to Southampton Row)
Interesting British and Continental
: Peasant Pottery on sale :
Brightly coloured plaited felt Rugs.



By WYNDHAM LEWIS

PART I

CHAPTER I

PARIS hints of sacrifice.— But here we deal with that large dusty facet known to indulgent and congruous kind. It is in its capacity of delicious inn and majestic Baedeker, where western Venuses twang its responsive streets and hush to soft growl before its statues, that it is seen. It is not across its Thébaïde that the unscrupulous heroes chase each other's shadows. They are largely ignorant of all but their restless personal lives.

Inconceivably generous and naïve faces haunt the Knackfus Quarter.—We are not, however, in a Selim or Vitagraph camp (though " guns " tap rhythmically the buttocks).—Art is being studied.—Art is the smell of oil paint, Henri Murger's *Vie de Bohème*, corduroy trousers, the operatic Italian model. But the poetry, above all, of linseed oil and turpentine.

The Knackfus Quarter is given up to Art.—Letters and other things are round the corner.—Its rent is half paid by America. Germany occupies a sensible apartment on the second floor. A hundred square yards at its centre is a convenient space, where the Boulevard du Paradis and Boulevard Pfeifer cross with their electric trams.—In the middle is a pavement island, like vestige of submerged masonry.—Italian models festoon it in symmetrical human groups ; it is also their club.—The Café Berne, at one side, is the club of the " Grands messieurs Du Berne." So you have the clap-trap and amorphous Campagnia tribe outside, in the café twenty sluggish common-sense Germans, a Vitagraph group or two, drinking and playing billiards. These are the most permanent tableaux of this place, disheartening and admonitory as a Tussaud's of The Flood.

Hobson and Tarr met in the Boulevard du Paradis.

They met in a gingerly, shuffling fashion.—They appeared apologizing to each other for having met.

" Have you been back long ? " Tarr asked.

" No, I got back yesterday."

" How is London looking ? "

" Oh, very much as usual.—I wasn't there the whole time.—I was in Cambridge last week."

They went to the Berne to have a drink.

They sat for some minutes with stately discomfort of self-consciousness, staring in front of them.—Tarr was Hobson's superior. Shyness emanated masterfully from him. Their drink was like a Quaker's meeting. It was a fastidious question of the spirit moving you.

Tarr's conduct of life was Puritanical and uncivilized, with *gauche* ritual of self, the result of solitary habits. Certain observances were demanded of those approaching, and quite gratuitously observed in return. The fetish within—soul-dweller that is strikingly like wood-dweller, and who was not often enough disturbed to have had sylvan shyness mitigated—would still cling to these forms.

Sometimes Tarr's cunning idol, aghast at its nakedness, would manage to borrow or purloin some shape of covering from an elegantly draped visitor.

But for Hobson's outfit he had the greatest contempt.

This was Alan Hobson's outfit.—A Cambridge cut disfigured his originally manly and melodramatic form. His father was a wealthy merchant at the Cape. He was very athletic, and his dark and cavernous features had been constructed by Nature as a lurking-place for villainies and passions. But he slouched and ambled along, neglecting his muscles : and his dastardly face attempted to portray delicacies of common sense, and gossamer-like backslidings into the Inane that would have puzzled a bile-specialist. He would occasionally exploit his blackguardly appearance and blacksmith's muscles for a short time, however. And his strong, piercing laugh threw A B C waitresses into confusion.

The Art-touch was very observable. Hobson's Harris tweeds were shabby. A hat suggesting that his ancestors had been Plainsmen or some rough sunny folk, shaded unnecessarily his countenance, already far from open.

Hobson, in spite of these fashions, was not an imbecile.—He had passed four years at the University of Cambridge. Something absurd happens to people there. A series of week-ends even is sufficient to do it. He had been untrue to his rascally sinuous body ever since. But this body stopped in front of Tarr of its own accord. It slunk up, ashamed of its plight, its gait, its clothes.

He had nothing to distract him from the very satisfactory, if tame, advantages of his education. His training was a toy he never tired of.—Tarr teased his gentleman sometimes. His gentleman laughed shrilly, and parried from a recumbent position. This curious entity, when taken any notice of, became rather friskily feminine. Tarr was fond of locating Hobson's sex there, for he had a theory that snobbery and sex, like religion and sex, were to be found together.

Tarr, then, sat is a discouraged silence. The material for conversation afforded by a short sea voyage, an absence, a panama hat on his companion's head, had been exhausted.—He possessed no light touch or economy of force. His muscles rose unnecessarily on his arm to lift a wine-glass to his lips. He had no social machinery, but the cumbrous one of the intellect. He danced about with this, it is true. But it was full of sinister piston-rods, organ-like shapes, heavy drills.—When he tried to be amiable, he usually only succeeded in being ominous.

It was an effort to talk to Hobson. For this effort a great bulk of nervous force was awoken. It got to work and wove its large anomalous patterns. It took the subject that was foremost in his existence and imposed it on their talk.

Tarr turned to Hobson, and seized him, conversationally, by the hair.

" Well, Walt Whitman, when are you going to get your hair cut ? "

" Why do you call me Walt Whitman ? "

"Beg pardon; Buffalo Bill.—Or is it Shakespeare?"

"It is not Shakespeare."

"'Roi je ne suis; Prince je ne daigne.'—That's Hobson's choice.—But why so much hair?—I don't wear my hair long. If you had as many reasons for wearing it long as I have, we'd see it flowing round your ankles!"

"I'm sure you have very good reasons for wearing it short, or you wouldn't do so.—I can't see why you should resent my innocent device. However long I wore it I should not damage you by my competition——"

Tarr rattled the cement match-stand on the table, and the *garçon* sang "Toute suite, toute suite!"

"Hobson, you were telling me about a studio to let before you left.—I forget the details——"

"Was it one behind the Panthéon?"

"That's it.—Was there electric light?"

"No, I don't think there was electric light. But I can find out for you."

"How did you come to hear of it?"

"Through a German I know—Salle, Salla, or something."

"What was the street?"

"The Rue Lhomond. I forget the number."

"I'll go and have a look at it after lunch.—What on earth possesses you to know so many Germans?" Tarr asked, sighing.

"Don't you like Germans?—You've just been too intimate with one, that's what it is. A female German, too!—I always keep my Germans at a distance!"

"Why, that's all they're good for, to be very intimate with. The problem is how to stand them when one's not being intimate with them."

"Tut! So you still see Fräulein Lunken—is it?—as much as ever?"

"Oh, you knew her?—Yes, I forgot that.—Yes, I still see her."

"It seems to me you know more Germans than I do.—But *you're ashamed of it.* You do everything you can to hide it. Hence your attack on me a moment ago.—I met a Fräulein Brandenbourg the other day, a German, who claimed to know you. I am always meeting Germans who know you. She also referred to you as the 'official fiancé' of Fräulein Lunken.—Are you an 'official fiancé'? And if so, what is that, may I ask?"

Tarr was taken aback, it was evident.

Hobson laughed stridently.

"You not only get to know Germans, crowds of them, on the sly, you make your bosom friend of them, engage yourself to them in marriage and make Heaven knows how many more solemn pacts, covenants, and agreements.—It's bound all to come out some day. What will you do then?"

Tarr was recovering gracefully from his relapse into discomfort. If ever taken off his guard, he made a clever use immediately afterwards of his *naïveté.* He beamed on his slip. He would swallow it tranquilly, assimilating it, with ostentation, to himself. When some personal weakness slipped out he would pick it up unabashed, look at it smilingly, and put it back in his pocket.

"As you know," he soon replied, "'engagement' is a euphemism. And, as a matter of fact, my girl publicly announced the breaking off of our engagement yesterday."

He looked a complete child, head thrown up as though proclaiming something he had reason to be particularly proud of.—Hobson laughed convulsively, cracking his yellow fingers.

"Yes, it is damn funny, if you look at it that way.—I let her announce our engagement or the reverse just as she likes. That has been our arrangement from the start. I never know at any given time whether I am engaged or not. I leave all that sort of thing entirely in her hands. After a severe quarrel I am pretty certain that I am temporarily unattached, the link publicly severed somewhere or other."

"Possibly that's what is meant by 'official fiancé'?"

"Very likely."

He had been hustled—through his vanity, the Cape Cantabian thought—somewhere where the time could be passed. He did not hesitate to handle Tarr's curiosities.—It is a graceful compliment to offer the nectar of some ulcer to your neighbour. The modern man understands his udders and taps.—With an obscene heroism Tarr displayed his. His companion wrenched at it with malice. Tarr pulled a wry face once or twice at the other's *sans gêne.* But he was proud of what he could stand. He had a hazy image of a shrewd old countryman in contact with the sharpness of the town. He would not shrink. He would roughly outstrip his visitor.—"Ay, I have this the matter with me—a funny complaint?—and that, and that, too.—What then?—Do you want me to race you to that hill?"

He obtruded complacently all he had most to be ashamed of, conscious of the power of an obsessing weakness.

"Will you go so far in this clandestine life of yours as to *marry* anybody?" Hobson proceeded.

"No."

Hobson stared with bright meditative sweetness down the boulevard.

"I think there must be a great difference between your way of approaching Germans and mine," he said.

"Yes, as I observed, you know many more than I do.—I only know one, who is a female and, therefore, doesn't count."

"I should have thought it was just the other way about.—You get a much fuller flavour in a female——"

"Indeed!"

Hobson laughed faintly, acknowledging the weak interruption which he had provoked.

"I mean national flavour."

"You mean national flavour."—Tarr had a way of beginning a reply with a parrot-like echo of the words of the other party to the dialogue; also of repeating *sotto voce* one of his own sentences, a mechanical rattle following on without stop. "Sex is nationalized more than any other essential province of life. In this it is just the opposite to art.—There is much pork and philosophy in German sex.—But then if it is the sex you are after, it does not say you want to identify your being with your appetite. Quite the opposite. The condition of continued enjoyment is to resist assimilation.—A man is the opposite of his appetite."

"Surely, a man *is* his appetite."

"No, a man is always his *last* appetite, or his appetite before last; and that is no longer an appetite.—But nobody *is* anything, or life would be intolerable, the human race collapse.—You are me, I am you.—The Present is the furthest projection of our steady appetite. Imagination, like a general, keeps behind. Imagination is the man."

"*What* is the Present?" Hobson asked politely, with much aspirating, sitting up a little and slightly offering his ear.

But Tarr only repeated things arbitrarily. He proceeded:

"Sex is a monstrosity. It is the arch abortion of this filthy universe.—How 'old-fashioned!'—eh, my fashionable friend?—We are all optimists to-day, aren't we? God's in his Heaven, all's well with the world! How robust! how manly! how pleasant, and above all, how *desirable*!—It's a grand place, isn't it? Full of *white* men, *strong* men, *super* men; 'great statesmen,' 'great soldiers,' 'great artists,' 'sacred faith,' 'noble pity,' 'sacrifice,' '*pure* art,' 'abstract art,' 'civilization,' and snuff.—You positively, when you think of it all, feel like dropping on your knees in a gush of gratitude to God! But I'm a new sort of pessimist.—I think I am the sort that will please!—I am the Panurgic-Pessimist, drunken with the laughing-gas of the Abyss. I gaze on squalor and idiocy, and the more I see it, the more I like it.—Flaubert built up his *Bouvard et Pécuchet* with maniacal and tireless hands. It took him ten years. That was a long draught of stodgy laughter from the gases that rise from the dung-heap? He had an appetite like an elephant for this form of mirth. But he grumbled and sighed over his food.—I take it in my arms and bury my face in it!"

As Tarr's temperament spread its wings, whirling him menacingly and mockingly above Hobson's head, the Cape Cantab philosopher did not think it necessary to reply.—He was not winged himself.—He watched Tarr looping the loop above him. He was a drole bird! He wondered, as he watched him, if he was a *sound* bird, or *homme-oiseau.* People believed in him. His Exhibition flights attracted attention. What sort of prizes could he expect to win by his professional talents? Would this notable *arriviste* be satisfied?

The childish sport proceeded, with serious intervals.

"I bury my face in it!"—(He buried his face in it! !)—"I laugh hoarsely through its thickness, choking and spitting; coughing, sneezing, blowing.—People will begin to think I am an alligator if they see me always swimming in their daily ooze. As far as sex is concerned, I am that."

"Sex, Hobson, you know very little about.—Very little about." He shook his head in a dejected, drunken way, protruding his lips. He seemed to find analogies for his *repeating habits*, with the digestion.—"You must take my word for a good deal in that connexion.—The choice of a wife is not practical in the way that the securing of a good bicycle, hygiene, or advertisement is. You must think more of the dishes of the table.

"Rembrandt paints decrepit old Jews, the most decayed specimens of the lowest race on earth that is. Shakespeare deals in human tubs of grease—Falstaff; Christ in sinners.

"Now as to sex; Socrates married a shrew; most of the wisest men marry fools, picture post cards, cows, or strumpets."

"I don't think that is quite true." Hobson resurrected himself dutifully. "The more sensible people I can think of off-hand have more sensible, and on the whole prettier, wives than other people."

"Prettier wives?—You are describing a meaningless average.—The most suspicious fact about a distinguished man is the possession of a distinguished wife. But you might just as well say in answer to my Art statement that Sir Edward Leighton did not paint the decayed meat of humanity."

Hobson surged up a little in his chair and collapsed.—He had to appeal to his body to sustain the argument.

"Neither did Raphael—I don't see why you should drag Rembrandt in—Rembrandt——"

"You're going to sniff at Rembrandt!—You accuse me of following the fashions in my liking for Cubism. You are much more fashionable yourself. Would you mind my 'dragging in' cheese, high game——?"

Hobson allowed Gorgonzola with a rather drawn expression. But he did not see what that had to do with it, either.

"It is not *purely* a question of appetite," he said.

"Sex, sir, is *purely* a question of appetite!" Tarr replied.

Hobson inclined himself mincingly, with a sweet chuckle.

"If it is *pure* sex, that is," Tarr added.

"Oh, if it is *pure* sex—that, of course——" Hobson convulsed himself and crowed thrice.

"Listen, Hobson!—You mustn't make that noise. It's very clever of you to be able to. But you will not succeed in putting me off by making me feel I am addressing a rooster——"

Hobson let himself go in whoops and caws, as though Tarr had been pressing him to perform.

When he had finished, Tarr said:

"Are you willing to *consider sex seriously, or not?*"

"Yes, I don't mind."—Hobson settled down, his face flushed from his late display.—"But I shall begin to believe before very long that your intentions are honourable as regards the fair Fräulein.—What exactly is your discourse intended to prove?"

"*Not* the desirability of the marriage tie, any more than a propaganda for representation and anecdote in art. But *if* a man marries, or a great painter represents (and the claims and seductions of life are very urgent), he will not be governed in his choice by the same laws that regulate the life of an efficient citizen, a successful merchant, or the ideals of a health expert."

"I should have said that the considerations that precede a proposition of marriage had many analogies with the health expert's outlook, the good citizen's——"

"Was Napoleon successful in life, or did he ruin himself and end his days in miserable captivity?—*Passion* precludes the idea of success. Failure is its condition.—Art and Sex when they are deep enough make tragedies, and *not* advertisements for Health experts, or happy endings for the Public, or social panaceas."

"Alas, that is true."

"Well, then, well, then, Alan Hobson, you scarecrow of an advanced fool-farm, deplorable pedant of a sophistic voice-culture——"

"I? My voice—? But that's absurd!—If my speech——"

Hobson was up in arms about his voice in mock vehement surprise.

Tarr needed a grimacing, tumultuous mask for the face he had to cover.—The clown was the only rôle that was ample enough. He had compared his clowning with Hobson's Pierrotesque and French variety.

But Hobson, he considered, was a crowd.—You could not say he was an individual.—He was a set. He sat there, a cultivated audience.—He had the aplomb and absence of self-consciousness of numbers—of those who know they are not alone.—Tarr was shy and the reverse by turns. He was alone. The individual is rustic.

For distinguishing feature Hobson possessed a distinguished absence of personality.

Tarr gazed on this impersonality, of crowd origin, with autocratic scorn.

Alan Hobson was a humble investor.

"But we're talking at cross purposes, Hobson.—You think I am contending that affection for a dolt, like my fiancée, is in some way a merit. I do not mean that. Also, I do not mean that sex is my tragedy, but art.—I will explain why I am associated sexually with this pumpkin.

"First, I am an artist.—With most people, not describable as artists, all the finer part of their vitality goes into sex. They become third-rate poets during their courtship. All their instincts of drama come out freshly with their wives. The artist is he in whom this emotionality normally absorbed by sex is so strong that it claims a newer and more exclusive field of deployment.—Its first creation is *the Artist* himself, a new sort of person; the creative man.

"But for the first-rate poet, nothing short of a Queen or a Chimera is adequate for the powers of his praise.—And so on all through the bunch of his gifts. One by one his powers and *moyens* are turned away from the usual object of a man's poetry, and turned away from the immediate world.

" One solitary thing is left facing a woman.—That is his sex, a lonely phallus.—Things are not quite so simple in actual fact as this. Some artists are less complete than others. More or less remains to the man.—Then the character of the artist's creation comes in.

" I will speak without formality of myself.

" The tendency of my work, as you may have noticed, is that of an invariable severity. Apart from its being good or bad, its character is ascetic rather than sensuous, and divorced from immediate life. There is no slop of sex in *that.* But there is no severity left over for the work of the cruder senses either.

" Very often with an artist whose work is very sensuous or human, his sex instinct, if it is active, will be more discriminating than with a man more fastidious and discriminating than he in his work.

" To sum up this part of my disclosure.—No one could have a coarser, more foolish, slovenly taste than I have in women. It is not even sluttish and abject, of the J. W. M. Turner type, with his washer-woman at Gravesend.—It is bourgeois, banal, pretty-pretty, a cross between the Musical Comedy stage and the ideal of the Eighteenth-Century gallant.

" All the delicate psychology another man naturally seeks in a woman, the curiosity of form, windows on other lives, love and passion, I seek in my work and not elsewhere.—Form would perhaps be thickened by child-bearing; it would perhaps be damaged by harlotry.—Why should sex still be active? That is a matter of heredity that has nothing to do with the general energies of the mind.

" I see I am boring you.—The matter is too remote!—But you have trespassed here, and you must listen.—I cannot let you off before you have heard, and shown that you understand.—If you do not sit and listen, I will write it all to you. YOU WILL BE MADE TO HEAR IT!—And *after* I have told you this, I will tell you why I am talking to a fool like you!"

" You ask me to be polite——"

" I don't mind how impolite you are so long as you listen."

" Well, I am listening—with interest."

Tarr was tearing, as he saw it, at the blankets that swaddled this spirit in its inner snobberies.—A bitter feast was steaming hot, and a mouth must be found to eat it. This beggar's had to serve. It was, above all, an ear, all the nerves complete. He *must* get his words into it. They must not be swallowed at a gulp. They must *taste,* sting, and benefit by the meaning of an appetite.—He had something to *say.* It must be said while it was living. Once it was said, it could look after itself.—Hobson had shocked something that was ready to burst out. He must help it out. Hobson must pay as well for the intimacy. *He must pay Bertha Lunken afterwards.*

He felt like insisting that he should come round and apologize to her.

" A man only goes and confesses his faults to the world when his self will not acknowledge or listen to them. The function of a friend is to be a substitute for this defective self, to be the World and the Real without the disastrous consequences of reality.—Yet punishment is one of his chief offices.—The friend enlarges also substantially the boundaries of our solitude."

This was written in Tarr's diary. He was now chastising this self he wrote of for not listening, by telling the first stranger met.—Had a friend been there he could have interceded for his ego.

" You have followed so far?" Tarr looked with slow disdainful suspicion at Hobson's face staring at the ground. " You have understood the nature of my secret?—Half of myself I have to hide. I am bitterly ashamed of a slovenly, common portion of my life that has been isolated and repudiated by the energies I am so proud of. 'I am *ashamed* of the number of Germans I know,' as you put it.—I have in that rôle to cower and slink away even from an old fruit-tin like you. It is useless heroically to protect that section of my life. It's no good sticking up for it. It is not worth protecting. It is not even up to *your* standards. I have, therefore, to deliver it over to your eyes, and eyes of the likes of you, in the end—if you will deign to use them!—I even have to beg you to use your eyes; to hold you by the sleeve and crave a glance for an object belonging to me!

" In this compartment of my life *I have not a vestige of passion.*—That is the root reason for its meanness and absurdity.—The best friend of my Dr. Jekyll would not know my Mr. Hyde, and vice versa. This rudimentary self is more starved and stupid than any other man's. Or to put it less or more humbly, I am of that company who are reduced to looking to Socrates for a consoling lead.

" Think of all the *collages,* marriages, and *liaisons* that you know, in which some frowsy or foolish or doll-like or log-like bitch accompanies the form of an otherwise sensible man, a dumbfounding, disgusting, and septic ghost!

" How foul and wrong this haunting of women is!—They are everywhere!—Confusing, blurring, libelling, with their half-baked, gushing, tawdry presences! It is like a slop of children and the bawling machinery of the inside of life, always and all over our palaces. Their silly flood of cheap illusion comes in between friendships, stagnates complacently around a softened mind.

" I might almost take some credit to myself for at least having the grace to keep this bear-garden in the background."

Hobson had brightened up while this was proceeding.—He now said:

" You might almost.—Why don't you? I admire what you tell me. But you appear to take your German foibles too much to heart."

" Just at present I am engaged in a gala of the heart. You may have noticed that.—I am not a strict landlord with the various personalities gathered beneath my roof.—In the present case I am really blessed. But you should see the sluts that get in sometimes! They all become steadily my fiancée too.—Fiancée! Observe how one apes the forms of conventional life. It does not mean anything, so one lets it stop. Its the same with the café fools I have for friends—there's a Greek fool, a German fool, a Russian fool,—an English fool!—There are no 'friends' in this life any more than there are 'fiancées.' So it doesn't matter. You drift on side by side with this live stock—friends, fiancées, colleagues, and what not."

Hobson sat staring with a bemused seriousness at the ground.

" Why should I not speak plainly and cruelly of my poor, ridiculous fiancée to you or any one?—After all, it is chiefly myself I am castigating.—But you, too, must be of the party! The right to *see* implies the right to be *seen.* As an offset for your prying, scurvy way of peeping into my affairs you must offer your own guts, such as they are——!"

" How have I pried into your affairs?" Hobson asked with a circumspect surprise.

" Any one who *stands outside,* who hides himself in a deliquescent aloofness, is a sneak and a spy——"

" That seems to me to be a case of smut calling the kettle black. I should not have said that you were conspicuous——"

"No.—You know you have joined yourself to those who hush their voices to hear what other people are saying!—Every one who does not *fight* openly and bear his share of the common burden of ignominy in life, is a sneak, unless it is for a solid motive.—The quiet you claim is not to *work* in.—What have you exchanged your temper, your freedom, and your fine voice against? You have exchanged them for an old hat that does not belong to you, and a shabbiness you have not merited by suffering neediness.—Your pseudo-neediness is a sentimental indulgence.—Every man should be forced to dress up to his income, and make a smart, *fresh* appearance.—Patching the seat of your trousers, instead!"

"Wait a minute," Hobson said, laughing. "You accuse me of sentimentality in my choice of costume. I wonder if you are as free from sentimentality."

"My dear sir, I don't care a tinker's curse about that.—I am talking about *you*.—Let me proceed.—With your training, you are decked in the plumes of very fine birds indeed. But your plumes are not meant to fly with, but merely to slouch and skip along the surface of the earth.—You wear the livery of a ridiculous set, you are a cunning and sleek domestic. No thought can come out of your head before it has slipped on its uniform. All your instincts are drugged with a malicious languor, an arm, a respectability, invented by a set of old women and mean, cadaverous little boys."

Hobson opened his mouth, had a movement of the body to speak. But he relapsed.

"You reply, 'What is all this fuss about? I have done the best for myself.—I was not suited for any heroic station, like yours. I live sensibly and quietly, cultivating my vegetable ideas, and also my roses and Victorian lilies.—I do no harm to anybody."

"That is not quite the case. I need two hundred pounds at the present moment. You have that sum in your bank. You make me feel a ninny to be talking with you here, and that little matter not first of all adjusted.—When I reflect, I realize that it could not be taken *directly* from you, the State protects you. All the same, the feeling of dissatisfaction-with-self remains.—What is your position?—You have bought for eight hundred pounds at an aristocratic educational establishment a complete mental outfit, a programme of manners. For four years you trained with other recruits. You are now a perfectly disciplined social unit, with a profound *esprit de corps*.

"The Cambridge set that you represent is, as observed in an average specimen, a cross between a Quaker, a Pederast, and a Chelsea artist.—Your Oxford brothers, dating from the Wilde decade, are a stronger body. The Chelsea artists are much less flimsy. The Quakers are powerful rascals.

"You represent, my dear fellow, the *dregs* of Anglo-Saxon civilization!—There is nothing softer on earth.—Your flabby potion is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent nineties, the wardrobe—leavings of a vulgar Bohemianism with its head-quarters in Chelsea!

"You are concentrated, systematic slop.—There is nothing in the universe to be said for you.—Any efficient State would confiscate your property, burn your wardrobe, that old hat, and the rest, as *infecte* and insanitary, and prohibit you from propagating."

Tarr's white collar shone dazzlingly in the sun.—His bowler hat bobbed and cut clean lines as he spoke.

"A breed of mild pervasive cabbages has set up a wide and creeping rot in the West of Europe.—They make it indirectly a peril and tribulation for live things to remain in the neighbourhood.

"You are systematizing and vulgarizing the individual.—You are not an individual. You have, I repeat, no right to that hair and that hat. You are trying to have the apple and eat it too.—You should be in uniform, and at work, *not* uniformly *out of uniform*, and libelling the Artist by your idleness.

"Are you idle?"

Tarr had drawn up short, turned squarely on Hobson, and in an abrupt and disconnected voice asked his question.

Hobson stirred resentfully in his chair. He yawned a little. He replied:

"Am I idle, did you say? Yes, I suppose I am not particularly industrious. But how does that affect you? You know you don't mean *all* that nonsense. Vous vous moquez de moi! Where are you coming to?"

"I have explained already where I come in. It is stupid to be idle. You go to seed.—The only justification for your slovenly appearance, it is true, is that it is ideally emblematic."

"My dear Tarr, you're a strange fellow. I *can't* see why these things should occupy you.—You have just told me a lot of things that may be true or may not. But at the end of them all—? Et alors?—alors?—*quoi*? one asks. You contradict yourself. You know you don't *think* what you talk. You deafen me with your upside-downness."

He gesticulated, got the French guttural r with satisfaction, and said the *quoi* rather briskly.

"In any case my hat is my business!" he concluded quickly, after a moment, getting up with a curling, luscious laugh.

The *garçon* hurried up and they paid.

"No, I am responsible for you.—I am one of the only people who *see*. That is a responsibility."—Tarr walked down the boulevard with him, speaking in his ear almost, and treading on his toes.

"You know Baudelaire's fable of the obsequious vagabond, cringing for alms? For all reply, the poet seizes a heavy stick and belabours the beggar with it. The beggar then, when he is almost beaten to a pulp, suddenly straightens out beneath the blows; *expands*, *stretches*; his eyes dart fire! He rises up and falls on the poet tooth and nail. In a few seconds he has laid him out flat, and is just going to finish him off, when an *agent* arrives.—The poet is enchanted. He has accomplished something!

"Would it be possible to achieve a work of that description with you? No. You are meaner-spirited than the most abject tramp. I would seize you by the throat at once if I thought you would black my eye. But I feel it my duty at least to do this for your hat. Your hat, at least, will have had its little drama to-day."

Tarr knocked his hat off into the road.—Without troubling to wait for the results of this action, he hurried away down the Boulevard du Paradis.

CHAPTER II

A GREAT many of Frederick Tarr's resolutions came from his conversation. It was a tribunal to which he brought his hesitations. An active and hustling spirit presided over this section of his life.

Civilized men have for conversation something of the superstitious feeling that ignorant men have for the written or the printed word.

Hobson had attracted a great deal of steam to himself. Tarr was unsatisfied.—He rushed away from the Café Berne still strong and with much more to say. He rushed towards Bertha to say it.

A third of the way he came on a friend who should have been met before Hobson. Then Bertha and he could have been spared.

Butcher was a bloody wastrel enamoured of gold and liberty.—He was a romantic, educating his schoolboyish sense of adventure up to the pitch of drama. He had been induced by Tarr to develop an interest in commerce. He had started a motor business in Paris, and through circularizing the Americans resident there and using his English connexions, he was succeeding on the lines suggested.

Tarr had argued that an interest of this sort would prevent him from becoming arty and silly.—Tarr would have driven his entire circle of acquaintances into commerce if he could. He had at first cherished the ambition of getting Hobson into a bank in South Africa.

As he rushed along then a gaunt car met him, rushing in the opposite direction. Butcher's large red nose stood under a check cap phenomenally peaked. A sweater and Yankee jacket exaggerated his breadth. He was sunk in horizontal massiveness in the car—almost in the road. A quizzing, heavy smile broke his face open in an indifferent businesslike way. It was a sour smile, as though half his face were frozen with cocaine.—He pulled up with the air of an Iron-Age mechanic, born among beds of embryonic machinery.

"Ah, I thought I might see you."—He rolled over the edge and stood grinning and stretching in front of his friend.

"Where are you off to ?" Tarr asked.

"I heard there were some gypsies encamped over by Charenton."—He smiled and waited, his entire face breaking up expectantly into cunning pits and traps.—Mention of "gypsies" usually drew Tarr. They were a survival of Butcher's pre-motor days.

"Neglecting business ?" was all Tarr said however. "Have you time for a drink ?"

"Yes !" Butcher turned with an airy jerk to his car. "Shall we go to the Panthéon ?"

"How about the Univers ? Would that take long ?"

"The Univers ? Four or five minutes.—Jump in."

When they had got to the Univers and ordered their drink, Tarr said :

"I've just been talking to Alan Hobson. I've been telling him off."

"That's right.—How had he deserved it ?"

"Oh, he happened to drop on me when I was thinking about my girl. He began congratulating me on my engagement. So I gave him my views on marriage, and then wound up with a little improvisation about himself."

Butcher maintained a decorous silence, drinking his Pernot.

"You're not engaged to be married, are you ?" he asked.

"Well, that's a difficult question."—Tarr laughed with circumspection and softness. "I don't know whether I am or whether I'm not."

"Would it be the German girl, if you were ?"

"Yes, she'd be the one."

There was a careful absence of comment in Butcher's face.

"Ought I to marry the Lunken ?"

"No," Butcher said with measure.

"In that case I ought to tell her at once."

"That is so."

Tarr had a dark morning coat, whose tails flowed behind him as he walked strongly and quickly along, and curled on either side of his hips as he sat. It was buttoned half-way down the body.—He was taller than Butcher, wore glasses, had a dark skin, and a steady, unamiable, impatient expression. He was clean-shaven, with a shallow, square jaw and straight, thick mouth.—His hands were square and usually hot.

He impressed you as having inherited himself last week, and as under a great press of business to grasp the details and resources of the concern. Not very much satisfaction at his inheritance, and no swank. Great capacity was printed all over him.—He did not appear to have been modified as yet by any sedentary, sentimental, or other discipline or habit. He was at his first push in an ardent and exotic world, with a good fund of passion from a frigid climate of his own.—His mistakes he talked over without embarrassment. He felt them deeply. He was experimental and modest.

A rude and hard infancy, according to Balzac, is best for development of character. A child learns duplicity, and hardens in defence.—An enervating childhood of molly-coddling, on the other hand, such as Tarr's, has its advantages.—He was an only child of a selfish, vigorous mother. The long foundation of delicate trustfulness and childishness makes for a store of illusion to prolong youth and health beyond the usual term. Tarr, with the Balzac upbringing, would have had a little too much character, like a rather too muscular man. As it was, he was a shade too nervous. But his confidence in the backing of character was unparalleled. You would have thought he had an iron-field behind him.

When he solicited advice, it was transparently a matter of form. But he appeared to need his own advice to come from himself in public.—Did he feel himself of more importance in public ?—His relation to the world was definite and complementary. He preferred his own word to come out of the air ; when, that is, issuing from his mouth, it entered either ear as an independent vibration. He was the kind of man who, if he ever should wish to influence the world, would do it so that he might touch himself more plastically through others. He would paint his picture for himself. He was capable of respect for his self-projection. It had the authority of a stranger for him.

Butcher knew that his advice was not really solicited.—This he found rather annoying, as he wanted to meddle. But his opportunity would come.—Tarr's affairs with Bertha Lunken were very exasperating. Of all the drab, dull, and disproportionately long *liaisons*, that one was unique ! He had accepted it as an incomprehensible and silly joke.

"She's a very good sort. You know, she is phenomenally kind. It's not quite so absurd as you think, my question as to whether I should marry her. Her love is quite beyond question."

Butcher listened with a slight rolling of the eyes, which was a soft equivalent for grinding his teeth.

Tarr proceeded :

"She has a nice healthy penchant for self-immolation ; not, unfortunately, directed by any considerable tact or discretion. She is apt to lie down on the altar at the wrong moment—even to mistake all sorts of unrelated things for altars. She once lay down on the pavement of the Boulevard Sebastopol, and continued to lie there heroically till, with the help of an *agent*, I bundled her into a cab. She is genial and fond of a gross pleasantry, very near to 'the people'—*le peuple*, as she says, purringly and pityingly. All individuals who have class marked on them strongly resemble each other. A typical duchess is much more like a typical nurserymaid than she is like anybody not standardized to the same extent. So is Bertha, a bourgeoise, or rather bourgeois-Bohemian, reminiscent of the popular maiden."

Tarr relighted his cigarette.

"She is full of good sense.—She is a high standard Aryan female, in good condition, superbly made ; of the succulent, obedient, clear, peasant type. It is natural that in my healthy youth, living in these Bohemian wastes, I should catch fire. But that is not the whole of the picture. She is unfortunately not a peasant. She has German culture, and a florid philosophy of love.—She is an art-student.—She is absurd."

Tarr struck a match for his cigarette.

"You would ask then how it is that I am still there ? The peasant-girl—if such it were—would not hold you for ever ; even less so the *spoiled* peasant.—But that's where the mischief lies.—That bourgeois, spoiled, ridiculous element was the trap. I was innocently depraved enough to find it irresistible. It had the charm of a vulgar wall-paper, a gimcrack ornament. A cosy banality set in the midst of a rough life. Youthful exoticism has done it, the something different to oneself."

Butcher did not roll his eyes any more. They looked rather moist. He was thinking of love and absurdities that had checkered his own past, and was regretting a downy doll. He was won over besides by Tarr's *plaidoirie*, as he always was. His friend could have convinced him of anything on earth within ten minutes.

Tarr, noticing the effect of his words, laughed. Butcher was like a dog, with his rheumy eyes.

" My romance, you see, is exactly inverse to yours," Tarr proceeded. " But pure unadulterated romanticism with me is in about the same rudimentary state as sex. So they had perhaps better keep together ? I only allow myself to philander with *little* things. I have succeeded in shunting our noxious illusionism away from the great spaces and ambitions. I have billeted it with a bourgeoise in a villa. These things are all arranged above our heads. They are no doubt self-protective. The whole of a man's ninety-nine per cent. of obscurer mechanism is daily engaged in organizing his life in accordance with his deepest necessity. Each person boasts some notable invention of personal application only.

" So there I am fixed with my bourgeoise in my skin, *dans ma peau*. What is the next step ?—The body is the main thing.—But I think I have made a discovery. In sex I am romantic and *arriéré*. It would be healthier for all sex to be so. But that is another matter. Well, I cannot see myself attracted by an exceptional woman—' spiritual ' woman—' noble soul,' or even a particularly refined and witty animal.—I do not understand attraction for such beings.—Their existence appears to me quite natural and proper, but, not being as fine as men ; not being as fine as pictures or poems ; not being as fine as housewives or classical Mothers of Men ; they appear to me to occupy an unfortunate position on this earth. No man properly demarcated as I am will have much to do with them. They are very beautiful to look at. But they are unfortunately alive, and usually cats. If you married one of them, out of pity, you would have to support the eternal grin of a Gioconda fixed complacently on you at all hours of the day, the pretensions of a piece of canvas that had sold for thirty thousand pounds. You could not put your foot through the canvas without being hanged. You would not be able to sell it yourself for that figure, and so get some little compensation. *Tout au plus*, if the sentimental grin would not otherwise come off, you could break its jaw, perhaps."

Butcher flung his head up, and laughed affectedly.

" Ha ha ! "—he went again.

" Very good !—Very good !—I know who you're thinking of," he said.

" Do you ? Oh, the ' Gioconda smile,' you mean ?—Yes.—In that instance, the man had only his silly sentimental self to blame. He has paid the biggest price given in our time for a *living* masterpiece. Sentimentalizing about masterpieces and *sentimental prices* will soon have seen their day, I expect. New masterpieces in painting will then appear again, perhaps, where the live ones leagued with the old dead ones disappear.—Really, the more one considers it, the more creditable and excellent my self-organization appears. I have a great deal to congratulate myself upon."

Butcher blinked and pulled himself together with a grave dissatisfied expression.

" But will you carry it into effect to the extent.—Will you.—Would marriage be the ideal termination ? "—Butcher had a way of tearing up and beginning all over again on a new breath.

" That is what Hobson asked.—No, I don't think marriage has anything to do with it. That is another question altogether."

" I thought your remarks about the housewife suggested——"

" No.—My relation to the idea of the housewife is platonic. I am attracted to the housewife as I might be attracted to the milliner. But just as I should not necessarily employ the latter to make hats—I should have some other use for her—so my connexion with the other need not imply a *ménage*. But my present difficulty centres round that question :

" What am I to do with Fräulein Lunken ? "

Butcher drew himself up, and hiccuped solemnly and slowly.

He did not reply.

" Once again, is marriage out of the question ? " Tarr asked.

" You know yourself best. I don't think you ought to marry."

" Why, am I——? "

" No. You wouldn't stop with her. So why marry ? "

He hiccuped again, and blinked.

Tarr gazed at his oracle with curiosity.—With eyes glassily bloodshot, it discharged its wisdom on gusts of air. Butcher was always surly about women, or rather men's tenderness for them. He was a vindictive enemy of the sex. He stood, a patient constable, forbidding Tarr respectfully a certain road. He spoke with authority and shortness, and hiccuped to convey the absolute and assured quality of his refusal.

" Well, in that case," Tarr said, " I must make a move. I have treated Bertha very badly."

Butcher smothered a hiccup.—He ordered another lager.

" Yes, I owe my girl anything I can give her. It is hardly my fault. With the training you get in England, how can you be expected to realize anything ? The University of Humour that prevails everywhere in England as the national institution for developing youth, provides you with nothing but a first-rate means of evading reality. The whole of English training—the great fundamental spirit of the country—is a system of *deadening feeling*, a prescription for Stoicism. Many of the results are excellent. It saves us from gush in many cases ; it is an excellent armour in times of crisis or misfortune. The English soldier gets his special *cachet* from it. But for the sake of this wonderful panacea—English humour—we sacrifice much. It would be better *to face* our Imagination and our nerves without this soporific. Once this armature breaks down, the man underneath is found in many cases to have become softened by it. He is subject to shock, *over*-sensitiveness, and many ailments not met with in the more frank and direct races. Their superficial sensitiveness allows of a harder core.—To set against this, of course, you have the immense reserves of delicacy, touchiness, sympathy, that this envelope of cynicism has accumulated. It has served English art marvellously. But it is probably more useful for art than for practical affairs. And the artist could always look after himself. Anyhow, the time seems to have arrived in my life, as I consider it has arrived in the life of the country, to discard this husk and armour. Life must be met on other terms than those of fun and sport."

Butcher guffawed provocatively. Tarr joined him. They both quaffed their beer.

" You're a terrible fellow," said Butcher. " If you had your way, you'd leave us stark naked. We should all be standing on our little island in the savage state of the Ancient Britons—figuratively." He hiccuped.

" Yes, figuratively. But in reality the country would be armed better than it ever had been before. And by the sacrifice of these famous ' national characteristics ' we cling to sentimentally, and which are merely the accident of a time, we should lay a soil and foundation of unspecific force, on which new and realler ' national flavours ' would very soon sprout."

" I quite agree," Butcher jerked out energetically. He ordered another lager.

" I agree with what you say. If we don't give up dreaming, we shall get spanked. I have given up my gypsies. That was very public-spirited of me ? " He looked coaxingly.

" If every one would give up their gypsies, their jokes, and their gentlemen — ' Gentlemen ' are worse than gypsies. It would do perhaps if they reduced them considerably, as you have your Gitanos. —I'm going to swear off humour for a year. I am going to gaze on even you inhumanly. All my mock matrimonial difficulties come from humour. I am going to gaze on Bertha inhumanly, and not humorously. Humour paralyses the sense for reality and wraps people in a phlegmatic and hysterical dream-world, full of the delicious swirls of the switchback, the drunkenness of the merry-go-round—screaming leaps from idea to idea. My little weapon for bringing my man to earth—shot-gun or what not—gave me good sport, too, and was of the best workmanship. I carried it slung jauntily for some time at my side—you may have noticed it. But I am in the tedious position of the man who hits the bull's-eye every time. Had I not been disproportionately occupied with her absurdities, I should not have allowed this charming girl to engage herself to me.

" My first practical step now will be to take this question of ' engaging ' myself or not into my own hands. I shall *disengage* myself on the spot."

" So long as you don't engage yourself again next minute, and so on. If I felt that the time was not quite ripe, I'd leave it in Fräulein Lunken's hands a little longer. I expect she does it better than you would."

Butcher filled his pipe, then he began laughing. He laughed theatrically until Tarr stopped him.

" What are you laughing at ? "

" You are a nut ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! "

" How am I a *nut* ? You must be thinking about your old machine out there."

Butcher composed himself—theatrically.

" I was laughing at you. You repent of your thoughtlessness, and all that. Your next step is to put it right. I was laughing at the way you go about it. You now proceed kindly but firmly to break off your engagement and discard the girl. That is very neat."

" Do you think so ? Well, perhaps it is a trifle over-tidy. I hadn't looked at it in that way."

" You can't be too tidy," Butcher said dogmatically. He talked to Tarr, when a little worked up, as Tarr talked to him. He didn't notice that he did. It was partly *câlinerie* and flattery.

Tarr pulled out a very heavy and determined-looking watch. He would have suffered had he been compelled to use a small watch. For the time to be microscopic and noiseless would be unbearable. The time *must* be human. That he insisted on. And it must not be pretty or neat.

" It is late. I must go. Must you get back to Passy or can you stop ? "

" Do you know, I'm afraid I must get back. I have to lunch with a fellow at one, who is putting me on to a good thing. But can I take you anywhere ? Or are you lunching here ? "

" No.—Take me as far as the Samaritaine, will you ? "

Butcher took him along two sides of the Louvre, to the river.

" Good-bye, then. Don't forget Saturday, six o'clock."

Butcher nodded in bright, clever silence. He shuffled into his car again, working his shoulders like a verminous tramp. He rushed away, piercing blasts from his horn rapidly softening as he became smaller. Tarr was glad he had brought the car and Butcher together. They were opposites with some grave essential in common.

His usual lunch time an hour away, his so far unrevised programme was to go to the Rue Lhomond and search for Hobson's studio. For the length of a street it was equally the road to the studio and to Bertha's rooms. He knew to which he was going.

But a sensation of peculiar freedom and leisure possessed him. There was no hurry. Was there any hurry to go where he was going ? With a smile in his mind, his face irresponsible and solemn, he turned sharply into a narrow street, rendered dangerous by motor-buses, and asked at a *loge* if Monsieur Lowndes were in.

" Monsieur Lounes ? Je pense que oui. Je ne l'ai pas vu sortir."

He ascended to the fourth floor and rang a bell.

Lowndes was in. He heard him coming on tiptoe to the door, and felt him gazing at him through an invisible crack. He placed himself in a favourable position.

CHAPTER III

TARR's idea of leisure recognized no departure from the tragic theme of existence. Pleasure could take no form that did not include Death and corruption—at present Bertha and humour. Only he wished to play a little longer. It was the last chance he might have. *Work* was in front of him with Bertha.

He was giving up *play*. But the giving up of play, even, had to take the form of play. He had seen in terms of sport so long that he had no other machinery to work with. *Sport might perhaps, for the fun of the thing, be induced to cast out sport.*

As Lowndes crept towards the door, Tarr said to himself, with ironic self-restraint, " *bloody* fool, *bloody* fool ! "

Lowndes was a colleague, who was not very active, but had just enough money to be a Cubist. He was extremely proud of being interrupted in his work. His " work " was a serious matter. He found " great difficulty " in working. He always implied that *you* did not. He had a form of persecution mania as regards his " mornings." From his discourse you gathered that he was, first of all, very much sought after. People, seemingly, were *always* attempting to get into his room. You imagined an immense queue of unwelcome visitors (how or why he had gathered or originally, it was to be supposed, encouraged, such, you did not inquire). You never saw this queue. The only person you definitely knew had been guilty of interrupting his " work " was Thornton. This man, because of his admiration for Lowndes' intelligence and moth-like attraction for his Cubism, and respect for his small income, had to suffer much humiliation. He was to be found (even in the morning, strange to say) in Lowndes' studio, rapidly sucking a pipe, blinking, flushing, stammering with second-rate Public School mannerisms, retailing scandal and sensational news, which he had acquired from a woman who had sat next him at the invariable dinner-party of the night before.

When you entered, he looked timidly and quickly at the inexorable Lowndes, and began gathering up his hat and books. Lowndes' manner became withering. You felt that before your arrival, his master had been less severe ; that life might have been almost bearable for Thornton. When he at last had taken himself off, Lowndes would hasten to exculpate himself. " Thornton was a fool, but he could not always keep Thornton out," etc. Lowndes, with his Thornton, displayed the characteristics of the self-made man. He had risen ambitiously in the sphere of the Intelligence. Thornton sat like an inhabitant of the nether world of gossip, pettiness, and squalor from which his friend had lately issued. He entertained an immense respect for that friend. This one of his own kind in a position of respect and security was what he could best understand, and would have most desired to be.

" Oh! Come in, Tarr," Lowndes said, looking at the floor of the passage, " I didn't know who it was." The atmosphere became thick with ghost-like intruders. The wretched Thornton seemed to hover timidly in the background.

" Am I interrupting you ? " Tarr asked politely.

" No-o-o ! " a long, reassuring, musical negative.

His face was very dark and slick, bald on top, pettily bearded, rather unnecessarily handsome. Tarr always felt a tinge of indecency in his good looks. His Celtic head was allied to a stocky commercial figure. Behind his spectacles his black eyes had a way of scouring and scurrying over the floor. They were often dreamy and burning. He waddled slightly, or rather confided himself first to one muscular little calf, then to the other.

Tarr had come to talk to him about Bertha.

" I'm afraid I must have interrupted your work ? " Tarr said with mock ceremony.

" No, it's all right. I was just going to have a rest. I'm rather off colour."

Tarr misunderstood him.

" Off colour ? What is the matter with colour now ? "

" No, I mean I'm seedy."

" Oh, ah. Yes."

His eyes still fixed on the ground, Lowndes pottered about, like a dog.

As with most educated people who " do " anything, and foresee analysis and fame, he was biographically minded. A poor man, he did his Boswelling himself. His self-characterization, proceeding whenever he was not alone, was as follows : " A fussy and exacting man, slightly avuncular, strangely, despite the fineness and amplitude of his character, minute, prescious, and tidy." (In this way he made a virtue of his fuss.) To show how the general illusion worked in a particular case : " He had been disturbed in his ' work ' by Tarr, or had just emerged from that state of wonderful concentration he called ' work.' He could not at once bend himself to more general things. His nerves drove him from object to object. But he would soon be quiet."

Tarr looked on with an ugly patience.

" Lowndes, I have come to ask you for a little piece of advice."

Lowndes was flattered and relished the mystery.

" Ye-es," he said, smiling, in a slow, ' sober,' professional sing-song.

" Or rather, for an opinion. What is your opinion of German women ? "

Lowndes had spent two years in Berlin and Munich. Many of his friends were Austrian.

" German women ? But I must know first why you ask me that question. You see, it's a wide subject."

" A wide subject—wide. Yes, very good ! Ha ha !—Well, it is like this. I think that they are superior to Englishwomen. That is a very dangerous opinion to hold, as there are so many German women knocking about just now.—I want to rid myself of it.—Can you help me ? "

Lowndes mused on the ground. Then he looked up brightly.

" No, I can't. Because I share it ! "

" Lowndes, I'm surprised at you. I never thought you were that sort of man ! "

" How do you mean ? "

" Perhaps you can help me nevertheless. Our ideas on females may not be the same."

Tarr always embarrassed him. Lowndes huddled himself tensely together, worked at his pipe, and met Tarr's jokes painfully. He hesitated to sally forth and drive the joke away.

" What are your ideas on females ? " he asked in a moment.

" Oh, I think they ought to be convex if you are concave—stupid if you are intelligent, cold if you are cold, frigid if you are volcanic. Always white all over, clothes, underclothes, skin and all.—My ideas do not extend much beyond that."

Lowndes organized Tarr's statement, with a view to an adequate and light reply. He gnawed at his pipe.

" Well, German women are usually convex. There are also concave ones. There are cold ones and hot ones." He looked up. " It all seems to depend what *you* are like ! "

" I am cold ; inclined to be fat ; *forte tête* ; and swarthy, as you see."

" In that case, if you took plenty of exercise," Lowndes undulated himself as though for the passage of the large bubbles of chuckle, " I should think that German women would suit you very well ! "

Tarr rose.

" I wish I hadn't come to see you, Lowndes. Your answer is disappointing."

Lowndes got up, disturbed at Tarr's sign of departure.

" I'm sorry. But I'm not an authority." He leant against the fireplace to arrest Tarr's withdrawal for a minute or two. " Are you doing much work ? "

" I ? No."

" Are you ever in in the afternoons ? I should like to come round some day——"

" I'm just moving into a new studio."

Lowndes looked suddenly at his watch, with calculated, ape-like impulsiveness.

" Where are you having lunch ? I thought of going down to Lejeune's to see if I could come across a beggar of the name of Kreisler. He could tell you much more about German women than I can. He's a German. Come along, won't you ? Are you doing anything ? "

" No, I know quite enough Germans. Besides, I must go somewhere—I can't have lunch just yet. Good-bye. Thank you for your opinion."

" Don't mention it," Lowndes said softly, his head turned obliquely to his shoulder, as though he had a stiff neck, and balancing on his calves.

He was rather wounded, or brusque, by the brevity of Tarr's visit. His " morning " had not received enough respect. It had been treated, in fact, cavalierly. His " work " had not been directly mentioned.

When Tarr got outside, he stood on the narrow pavement, looking into a shop window. It was a florist's and contained a great variety of flowers. He was surprised to find that he did not know a single flower by name. He hung on in front of this shop before pushing off, as a swimmer does to a rock, waving his legs. Then he got back into the street from which his visit to Lowndes had deflected him. He let himself drift down it. He still had some way to go before he need decide between the Rue Martine (where Bertha lived) and the Rue Lhomond.

He had not found resolution in his talks. That already existed, the fruit of various other conversations on his matrimonial position—held with the victim, Fräulein Lunken, herself.

Not to go near Bertha was the negative programme for that particular day. To keep away was seldom easy. But ever since his conversation at the Berne he had been conscious of the absurd easiness of doing so, if he wished. He had not the least inclination to go to the Rue Martine!—This sensation was so grateful that its object shared in its effect. He determined to go and see her. He wanted to enjoy his present feeling of indifference. Where best to enjoy it was no doubt where she was.

As to the studio, he hesitated. A new situation was created by this new feeling of indifference. Its duration could not be gauged.—He wished to stay in Paris just then to finish some paintings begun some months before. He substituted for the Impressionist's necessity to remain in front of the object being represented, a sensation of the desirability of finishing a canvas in the place where it was begun. He had an Impressionist's horror of change.

So Tarr had evolved a plan. At first sight it was wicked. It was no blacker than most of his ingenuities. Bertha, as he had suggested to Butcher, he had in some lymphatic way, *dans la peau.* It appeared a matter of physical discomfort to leave her altogether. It must be done gradually. So he had thought that, instead of going away to England, where the separation might cause him restlessness, he had perhaps better settle down in her neighbourhood. Through a series of specially tended ennuis, he would soon find himself in a position to depart. So the extreme nearness of the studio to Bertha's flat was only another inducement for him to take it. "If it were next door, so much the better!" he thought.

Now for this famous feeling of indifference. Was there anything in it?—The studio for the moment should be put aside. He would go to see Bertha. Let this visit solve this question.

SECOND-RATE SUPERMEN

NIETZSCHE has been vigorously exclaimed against as the fountain-head of this war. It is hard to imagine that Prussian statesmen and officers were ever wrapt in the study of any philosophy, yet it may be that some of Nietzsche's rather random utterances served the Prussians by fostering a spirit of crude aggression.

Though the idea of a Superman remains as an inspiriting feeler into future possibilities, where we all seem to go wrong is in supposing that vital superiority can be gained by the acquisition of mastery over a weaker people. That the stronger, once having gained superiority, do then dominate the weaker to a large extent, is beside the point. We are arrived at the idea of supremacy being gained by direct force, through assuming that because man is the most destructive and predatory of animals, he therefore attained to this supremacy by the exercise of those very qualities. But though, once having gained ascendancy, he kept other species off by force, he probably originally gained his supremacy by accident. His relation to his environment—the ground he walked on—became different to that of other animals. Instead of going on four legs he acquired the habit of going on two, which change led to the development of hands and later of brain. As a result man is able to give far more effect to his rapacity and combativeness than, say, the tiger—a gun is a more effective weapon in the long run than claws and fangs—but it does not follow that man is therefore more rapacious or combative than the tiger.

We conceive of a Superman as exercising more force than an ordinary man, and we are therefore inclined immediately to jump to the false conclusion that he will gain the capacity to exercise this force by subduing weaker men, and that, in fact, any man exercising more force than another will automatically rise into being a Superman. Whereas, what superiority some men do possess over their fellows is probably due to some development in themselves which modifies their relation to their environment. Where other men, metaphorically speaking, go on four legs they will go on two. They are superior because of some very definite difference and not just because they possess some ordinary quality in a greater degree. There is all the difference between a great man and an ordinary man on a large scale, who might be called an imitation great man. Grandeur is not merely a matter of scale but a different initial conception.

The Germans certainly seem to have thought that to ensure their own supremacy and their future as progenitors of a race of Supermen, all that was necessary was to be more vigorous and more industrious and to subdue weaker nations; whereas other nations are perhaps just beginning to discover that the directly planned subjugation of weaker nations is no immediate step to such an end.

All the rather nauseating rhetoric we hear about England fighting for Right and not Might means only that we are fighting not for direct conquest but that, having gained a certain ascendancy, we intend to maintain it by force—which is another matter.

To attain to lasting power individuals and nations must be able to think better, feel more. It is as unreasonable to expect the death of a workman to help an engineer to effect some intricate plan successfully, as to expect the Superman to be generated as a result of the slaughter of other men. Periodical slaughter may or may not be inevitable—that is another question—but it has no direct bearing on the creation of superiority. The difference between the tyrant and the superior man is that the former tries to gain eminence by pushing others back and the latter to achieve a quality of excellence not possessed by them. It is only the second-rate Superman who obtains eminence by direct force. The genuine article is rarely either pushful or domineering—though extraordinarily combative if attacked—for the good reason that he has nothing to gain by being aggressive.

One cannot conceive, for instance, of a Superman without a large amount of sympathy for his fellowmen: not for the sentimental reason that sympathy is "good" but because it is an immense source of power. It is an instrument wherewith to fathom human psychology and it means insight. Exercising sympathy is not a case of "living for others," which is only a loose formlessness of living, but of living through others without losing the sense of our own identity. Sympathy, I think, might be classed under a definite achievement not common to the ordinary man—a man without it being the ordinary man on a large scale, for whom I think there is not much use.

HONOR M. PULLEY.

NOTICE

In the MAY NUMBER of THE EGOIST **MISS DORA MARSDEN** will resume her Editorial Articles.

MR. EZRA POUND will start a series of translations of the **"DIALOGUES OF FONTENELLE."**

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