



COTERIE



LONDON: HENDERSONS, SIXTY-SIX CHARING CROSS ROAD

COTERIE *A Quarterly* ART, PROSE, AND POETRY

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Contributors who desire the return of rejected MSS. are requested to enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

COTERIE is published Quarterly, price 2s. 8d., post free. Yearly subscription, 10s. 8d., post free.

New York, U.S.A.: Copies may be purchased at Brentano's, price 75 cents; or yearly, \$3.

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JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE STONE PLACE

I COME and I return to a place of stone;
Where there is nothing left but granite and silence,
And on the upland, spotted with heather, stand
Weatherworn blocks that time has not taken away.
I come to where rain and dust are quiet at last;
Here I set forth at evening long ago,
And as of old the bumble-bee goes by,
The crickets are all shrilling in the grass
The dry blades lightly press the naked stone.

Last night the wind
Shook the great beech-trees, ramped about the house,
Covered the heather with trailing wisps of cloud,
Left pools of rain in cup-shaped hollows of turf.
To-day again
There is peace everywhere and the worn stones
Patiently look out upon the mountain,
That to the south spreads out
Naked grey ridges on a bank of cloud.

To a place of stone I come and I return:
Granite to granite is my destiny,
The lips of rock pressed closely to my lips,
The strength of stone renewing all my own;
Whatever the seagull to the east is seeking,
Or the grey raincloud follows, I know not.
Drops without number falling have worn down
My heart to rock in this grim wilderness.

GATES

TH**E**R**E** are red gates of painted ivory,
And smoky gates of horn ;
And secret gates within our lives,
Where once shut out, we never can return :
But the day I drifted through
The gates of blue and green,
I have not yet forgotten
And never can forget.

The sun lay listless on the water.
The distant lands on the horizon
Were utterly blotted out
By veils of slate-grey haze.
The hills stood up, quite naked,
Made as of glass with the sun burning through them ;
The hills swung open,
On the day when I set forth.

It was noonday within my life,
Noonday upon the hills,
Grey calm on the glassy water,
When I went out to sea.
I did not seek to wander ;
I merely drifted by
Towards the desolate ocean
Which held for me my path.

There are dark gates on which we vainly beat,
And others we pass by,
And some that suddenly let us through
When we find there is no returning ;
But the gates of blue and green
Which opened for me that hour,
The thundercloud that lifted like a door
And showed for me glassy untroubled oceans
Ringed wide to the horizon,
I shall not ever forget.

E. R. DODDS

LOW TIDE ON THE FORESHORE AT
MERRION

TO-NIGHT there is nothing, nothing at all, down on the
strand.

Even the women who gather cockles have gone away.
The adventure of waters has ebbed away from the grey sand,
All but a dribble of white foam on the lips of the Bay.

Obstinately, like the feet of a dream, your two feet crawl
Over the dumb weed and the glaucous ridgy pools.
Nothing lives or laughs or cries on the strand at all.
Nobody walks on the strand but dead persons and fools.

You have seen the shallow pools blazing white,
Mirrorwise, to meet the moon; you have seen
Them cry and laugh with windy ripples; but to-night
It is as if no moon nor wind had ever been.

Only, under the weight of the dark, like a slow beast
All the night through, close and closer, padding obscene
Across the limitless void unechoing multiple-creased
Terrible sand, fear will follow you, soft and unclean.

Until you, too, are of those that are outcast from the city,
Outcast from singing girls and from laughter, hiding your
face,
Ashamed under the lamps, self-slain with your own self-pity,
Entangled between two worlds in the sunken marginal place.

* * * *

Until you forget how in the South above your fears,
Above the sea-pools, the dead things and the sand,
Dividing the level-folded night with heavy spears
Patient in immortality the mountains stand.

THE BLIND GLEN

WHEN I came first to the valley of Saint Colum
I was clean of women and heart-free.
Because I was quiet, the quiet souls, the grave uncovetous
souls of places
Mirrored their pieties in me.

Hastening down at moonrise out of the moors to the valley,
I saw the lift of waters like flame in the west.

In the heart's leap then I dreamed myself priest, dreamed
myself child and bridegroom and master
Of an uncomprehended breast.

Cleanly still the wind blows from Saint Colum's beaches
And clean the tide sets where the last fields cease.
Still the moorland, still the unpastured honey-scented boughs
interpret
Their timeless hieratic peace.

But I'll come back never, never again to the valley,
Knowing time, and what women are, and men.
I am ashamed now before the steadfast faces of the Undesiring.
I am afraid of the Blind Glen.

THE MOON-WORSHIPPERS

WE are the partly real ones
Whose bodies are an accident,
Whose phantasies were never meant
To fix their unsubstantial thrones
Inside a house of blood and bones.
All day we creep about the brain,
Benumbed and deafened with the noise
Of carnal pains and carnal joys,

That thrust their stupid joy and pain
Across the peace of our disdain.

But when the grosser senses swoon,
Then with dances privily
And the wordless litany
A million ghosts will importune
Our vestal mistress, Lady Moon :

“O undefiled, O lucid Moon!
Hear our attenuated cry!
O little fish of the cold sky,
O swimmer of the void lagoon,
O Moon, shall our release be soon?”

WHY SHOULD BEAUTY ENDURE ?

“ **W**HY should beauty endure,
Once in its perfect act
Manifest and secure ?

“ Although to-day retract
The breath that yesterday
Informed the body's fact,

“ Still from the angry clay
Some ripe significance
Is reaped and laid away,

“ Out of the husk of chance
Drawn clear, and purified
Of earthy circumstance.”

So they said. I tried
To believe what they said,
Because my friend had died. . . .

But the dead are dead.

SACHEVERELL SITWELL

WEEK-ENDS

BLOW your long horn,
red cloud,
before the wide-thrown gates
and fresh-lit braziers of heaven;—
to move the snowy mane
like mist above the plain,
and thus uncover
lawns like level seas,
and houses cool as trees
run round by balconies
that lead from house to house
and shew the sky against
a web of shivering leaves
struck through with gold.

The gardener must drop his fruit
and running down the ladder from the tree
must bow respectfully
to Mrs.
who walks into her Paradise
like a young deer playing in its park—;
and I must enter as a friend
to watch her wise commandments—

“The roses must be sprayed,
and judging from the apples in your hand
a thousand wasps have dug there.”

“Yes, M’um.”

“Yes! I think so;
and the borders are not neat enough,
these stalks again are short enough,
why aren’t they longer?”

“Yes! M’um.”

“ Well then, you see,
I want the tree-tops trimmed
and then at tennis
one can watch the steamers
through Lord Dodo’s chimneys.”

“ Exactly.”

“ Yes! M’um.”

“ And growing in the beds,
embroidering the paths,
gazing in each other’s eyes
wherever there is water
I’ve laid geraniums
like this one.”

“ I see.”

“ Yes! M’um.”

“ Hold it!”

“ Yes! M’um.”

“ Whilst I show this gentleman
the way I’ve dug the lake
just lying where it nets the houses
and reflects them with their window-boxes.”

“ Fascinating.”

“ Yes! M’um.”

“ What do you think my husband
waits for in the train.”

“ Tell me!”

“ M’um.”

“ Every yard the train comes
nearer to the station
he’s thinking of the view;
steps on to the platform,
leaves the station,
turns the corner,
and it’s there before him.”

“ M’um.”

“ A moment, m'um !
Miss Argentine was telling that her trees . . . ”
“ You see it is no selfish pleasure,
not a private toy—— ”
“ May I speak a moment, m'um. . . . ”
“ Others share the joy.”

That moment there came
ringing through the leaves,
shaking the canopies
and falling from the branches like soft snow,
the voice of some one from a balcony ;

Mrs. . . . was listening
to recognise the call
that deals a death-blow to each afternoon.
With but a brief farewell
this lady left us,
and all the while
we saw her white dress
glistening through the boughs,
and heard her footsteps
leave the lawn
to sound upon the gravel,
till she left a railing of gold spears between us ;
while even then
we heard her answer
mocking questions lowered through the air.

E. C. BLUNDEN

THE PIKE

FROM shadows of rich oaks outpeer
The green-mossed bastions of the weir,
Where the quick dipper forages
In elver-peopled crevices.

And a small runlet, glistening down the sluice
Into the broad pool's flaming empery,
Gentle as gossamer tires not to unloose
The music of her charmed soliloquy.

Else round the broad pool's hush,
Nothing stirs.—

Unless sometime a straggling heifer crush
Through the thronged copsewood whence the pheasant
whirs;

Or martins in a flash
With shrill-voiced mirth dip, dimpling silver rings,
While in the shallow some doomed bulrush swings,
At whose hid root the vole's teeth sap and gnash.

And nigh this toppling reed, still as the dead,
The great pike lies, the murderous patriarch,
Watching the waterpit sharp-shelved and dark
Where through the plash his lithe, bright vassals thread.—

The rose-finned roach and bluish bream
And staring perch steal up the stream
Hard by their gluttoned tyrant, now
Motionless as a sunken bough.

He on the sandbank lies,
Sunning himself long hours,
With stony gorgon eyes:
Westering the hot sun lowers.

Sudden the gray pike changes, and quivering poises for slaughter ;
Intense terror wakens around him, the shoals scud awry, but
there chances
A chub unsuspecting ; the prowling fins quicken, in fury he
lances ;
And the miller that opens the hatch stands amazed at the whirl
in the water.

AN EVENSONG

MOONSWEET the summer evening locks
The lips of babbling day :
Mournfully, most mournfully
The light dies away.

There the yew, the solitary,
Vaults a deeper melancholy,
As from distant dells
The pale music wells
Of the thaives' quaint bells.

Thus they dingle, thus they chime,
While the woodlark's dimpling rings
In the dim air climb :
Over the alleys' lulling loneliness
Born of calling springs.

If the sight seek heaven,
There the citizens of night
Seem to kindle cresset lamps
To guide the nightingale aright
To Time's delight—
With chanting ecstasies he spins
And weaves among the linden-leaves ;
And such a coronal he wins
As soothes his sprite.

Rivers evermore entombing
Something of eternity,
Lonely evermore, but lovely
When the sunset lies in purples
On the amice of the glooming
Water-witches' errantry—
Steal on the dreamer, and are fled
With the closing in of shade:

Thoughts of bridges come instead
Where the loitering man and maid
Look down on the deep, deep pool
Moving slow, and smooth, and cool,
With pale mirroring of stars
In its dim grotts beautiful.

Trenches, 1916.

THE UNCHANGEABLE

THOUGH I within these two last years of grace
Have seen bright Ancre scourged to brackish
mire,

And little Belgian becks by dale and chace
Stamped into sloughs of death with hideous fire,—
Spite of all this, I sing you high and low,
My old loves, Waters, be you shoal or deep,
Waters whose lazy and continual flow
Learns at the drizzling weir the tongue of sleep.

Dear Sussex cries from primrose lags and brakes,
“Why do you leave my woods untrod so long?
Still float the bronze carp on my liliated lakes,
Still little wood-folk round my spring wells throng;
And chancing lights on willowy waterbreaks
Dance golden arabesques to elfin song.”

1917.

*Looking out from Larch Wood Tunnels
on the railway cutting.*

A WATERPIECE

THE wild rose-bush lets loll
Her sweet-breathed petals on the pearl-smooth
pool,
The bream-pool overshadowed with the cool
Of oaks where myriad mumbling wings patrol.

There the live dimness burrs with droning glees
Of hobby-horses with their starting eyes
And violet humble-bees and dizzy flies:
That from the dewsprings drink the honeyed lees.

Up the slow stream the immemorial bream
(For when had Death dominion over them?)
Through green pavilions of ghost leaf and stem,
A conclave of blue shadows in a dream,
Glide on; idola that forgotten plan,
Incomparably wise, the doom of man.

HAROLD MONRO

OCCASIONAL VISITOR

“ **I**F she’s your guest, and staying in your house,
You surely know her ways.
Does she not ever tell you how she means
To pass her days?”

“ No . . . Never tells me. She is here sometimes,
A week, a month, a year :
I never know when she will come or go,
Appear, or disappear.”

“ You’d better lift your senses for a while,
Learn to forget about her.
If Beauty will not live with you, then you
Must live without her.”

A CAUTIONARY RHYME FOR PARENTS.

“ **A** CURIOUS thing,” said Mrs. Lack,
“ However many times I whack
That girl of mine, she still complains
Whenever she has growing pains !”

The girl, like any other child,
Looked hurt, but in her heart she smiled,
As, after each repeated smack
She cursed the ancient name of *Lack*.

She grew, as every child is wont,
And learnt the splendid law of *Don’t*,
And now, not very strange to say,
She beats her mother every day.

ROBERT NICHOLS

THE SPRING SONG

*(From Sundry Songs suited to Civilization.
For Osbert Sitwell.)*

IN the spring the young man's fancy
At Eastbourne, Felixstowe, or Hove,
Turning to Corah and to Nancy
Hails thee O ageless Queen of Love!

* * * *

Sinclair's looks can never lie,
He is well shaved, he has curved lips,
His nose is straight, so is his eye,
Also he boasts substantial hips.

Sinclair has bought a new top-hat,
A jetty coat and honey gloves,
A cane topped by a glass-eyed cat,
And Sinclair goes to meet his loves.

Sinclair would make his muslin choice,—
Spring and his father say he must :
Corah has ankles and a voice,
Nancy has French and a neat bust.

Corah does *not* make eyes at him,
Nancy's lips often have a pout . . .
Corah—(girls should be nice not prim),
Nancy—(no gentleman should doubt) . . .

Kupris who from a foam-flowered sea
Didst lift thy limbs of pearl and rose
More fell in thy nude majesty
Than the sunned flanks of icy floes,

Kupris, the Desirable and Dire,
Who over cities sacked didst tread,
Whose brows were bound with sheaves of fire,
Whose titan hands with blood ran red,

Whose couch was in the mountain place
Canopied by primal night and stars,
Who took'st all gods to thine embrace,
Striving in love, like war, with Mars,

Tumbled with Neptune in the deep,
Drugged Bacchus with unorphic charms,
And worn with pleasure sank'st to sleep
In thy last love Adonis' arms,

Now waken from thy flame-like trance,
Couched where the cedars idly stir,
Lulled by the fountain's indolent dance
And fume of sandalwood and myrrh;

Lift up thy violet-cinctured head,
Clap thrice thy slim lascivious hands,
Part thy faint lips, rose-soft, rose-red,
To breathe thy honey-sweet commands:

Bid the rogue babes who by thee dwell,
Garland thy bower, asperge thy floor
With perfumes of the Paphian well
Or with spread plumes shield thine amour,

Spring upward from the golden courts,
Wheel in a drove of irised vans,
And stoop toward our coast resorts
Where Sinclair broods on beds and banns.

Spring hurtles in his reddened veins:
Babe, with your wings, disperse the blown

Scandal if Sinclair, dancing, gains
Brief pause with Nancy quite alone.

And you, O cherub, smite your lyre
That when the dulcet Corah sings
Her song, more suitable desire
May wake in Sinclair's breast and strings.

Grant thou, great goddess, a demure
Evening, unscented by thy rose,
That, far from the sinister pier's allure,
Among pot-herbs he may propose.

Grant this, nor let fair Nancy pine :
Another Sinclair let her boast,
And let th' engagements, line by line,
Jostle within 'THE MORNING POST.

Sinclair has bought a new top-hat,
A black frock-coat and dove-grey gloves ;
Sinclair with Sinclair sits to chat :
To-morrow they will wed their loves.

Passion is on each manly tongue,
And as they speak each eye must shine :
Goddess, thy last few loves among
Why hidest thou thy face divine ?

Come forth—discreetly sheathed in silk,
Corsets, a boa, a plummy hat ;
Take station with the Sinclair ilk
And follow the Service in B flat.

That when they bustle down the aisle
And the starched loves, neat choir-boys, leer,
Into thine eye in proper style
May steal the long-expected tear,

Until while Amor, pedalling, peals
The Wedding March of Mendelssohn,
You, at Miss Aunt Matilda's heels,
May, as To-day does, follow on!

* * * *

In the spring the young man's fancy
At Eastbourne, Felixstowe, or Hove,
Turning to Corah or to Nancy
Hails thee all-powerful Queen of Love!

F. S. FLINT

ON RICHARD ALDINGTON

HAD you no other evidence than his books, you still could say: Here the poet is the man. His work is a record of his own spiritual experiences; and these are the experiences of a man who lives fully in his own day. He does not exclude some things because of a theory that they should not be said, or include others because it is a fashion to dote on them; and his poems are no mere rearrangement of echoes of bygone literature, chosen by the common ear of a clique, and tuned to its common fads.

The vice of modern English poetry is the pretty line and the fine-sounding word. Aldington is as sensitive to verbal beauty as anybody; but he is careful of the sense of his words, before he looks to their beauty; and, as with the word, so the line is subordinate to the poem, and the poem to the general effect of the whole work. Each one of his three books of poems has been written with a dominating idea. The theme of "Images" is the spiritual contest between imagined beauty and the outer ugliness that is thrust upon you. In this book you have poems like "To a Greek Marble" and "The Poplar," which create a mood of loveliness; and you have others, like "Cinema Exit" and "Childhood," which are simply statements of ugliness. The contest between these two attitudes is seen, in synthesis, in "Eros and Psyche" and in "The Faun Captive." *Images of Desire* is a book of love-poems, in which the human and fallible passion of love is exalted as the only sanction for the weariness of human existence. *Images of the War* translates the emotions and sensations of a civilised man suddenly transported into the barbarous and crushing circumstances of modern battle.

The first book, *Images*, is written from a detached and intellectual standpoint; the other two from the standpoint of common humanity; but the development of the poet is continuous, and the personality revealed is an attractive one. I think of two other poets—Catullus and Horace—who lived in their own century, and left its record in their verse; and I remember the soldier—an ordinary middle-class, hard-headed Yorkshireman—at Bedford, to whom I lent the American edition of *Images of the War and of Desire*. He spent his afternoon off-duty in his billet reading the book, instead of paddling a punt on the Ouse. The book held him. It would hold many more, but for the barrier of insincerity built up by the versifier between the people and the poet.

RICHARD ALDINGTON

BONES

NOW when this coloured curious web
Which hides my awkward bones from sight
Unrolls, and when the thing that's I—
A pinch of lighted dust that flashes—
Has somehow suddenly gone out,
What quaint adventures may there be
For my unneeded skeleton?

Some men's bones are left (like trees
Which cannot move from where they root)
On open hills or low damp hollows,
Wherever war has struck them down;
And some bones after many years
A waggish bomb digs up and strews—
Thigh-bones and ribs mixed up with coffins—
About a well-bombarded town:
And some are plunged with ancient wreckage,
Where fishes with blue bulging eyes
Slide past, and clouds of tiniest shells
In ages make a rocky cover;
And some lie here and some lie there
Until they moulder quite away,
Some in the village garth and some
In quiet suburban labelled rows,
And some are powdered up in fire
And some are shown in dull museums. . . .

Now while his flesh remains, a man
Is something; but who feels akin
To any nameless poor old bones?
Even she, who with miraculous lips

Set little flowering plots of kisses
Over our body, will not care
To hug us when our bones are dry ;
And she who carried us nine months
And built them with her vital blood
Might pass them by and never know
These were the bones so hard to bear ;
And, likelier still, our dearest child
Would scorn to know us so unveiled,
Unwilling to believe his flesh,
Still firm and petal-sweet, was bred
By such a pitiful old wreck.

But, in the end, the bones go too,
And drift about as dust which hangs
In a long sun-shaft, or dissolve
Into the air to help build up
The pulpy tissues of fine leaves
Or heavier flakes of ruddy flesh,
Or even someone else's bones.

I leave to those superior minds
Who make theology their care
The task of settling whose shall be
These much-used frameworks at the last ;
I rather see a wearier world
Shed, æons hence, its comely flesh
To dance, a mournful skeleton,
Sedately round a dingier sun.

OSBERT SITWELL

THE NEW LEGEND

IT has now
Been discovered
That Judas
Did not hang himself
Immediately,
As was supposed,
But that, after the Crucifixion,
He went for a holiday
To a quiet little fishing village,
In Brittany,
From which he wrote
To Pontius Pilate, and the High Priests,
Saying: From the rest
Of this quiet little fishing village,
Where no sound disturbs my reflections,
But the distant hooting
Of the motor-car,
Or the shy rustle of bank-notes
In the gaming rooms,
I am able
To take a large view of the future,
People must be more economical.

You must all work harder
To cut down
Unnecessary expenditure.
It appears
That thirty pieces of silver
Are missing from the common funds,

I cannot think where they have gone,
But it is very wrong ;
People must be more economical.

It seems to me
That the general extravagance
Is very shocking.
The labour situation is very unsettled ;
It almost looks
As if the workers
Were going to demand
Enough money
To live upon.
This would constitute
A Revolution.
It has never even been considered before,
And is not
In consonance with my resolve
That other people
Should live more economical lives.
I doubt whether the masters
Would even be able
To make sufficient money
To live in quiet little fishing villages,
Like Deauville,
It would mean shocking want,
And on those least accustomed to it.
People must be more economical.

It is really
What I call
“ Bolshevism ”-and-all-that.
What shocks me
Is that the Bolshevik leaders
Are not really Russians at all.

They are Jews!
Whereas the leaders
Of international finance
Are obviously
Russians,
Who long to help their countrymen.
It is very pathetic.
People must be more economical.

As Ananias
Observed to me,
Shortly before he went to the Rhine,
The Russian workers shall realise
That their present Anarchist system
Of Government
Not only means
That they themselves will starve,
But brings intolerable want
On the free Democracies
Of Western Europe.
One cannot even
Get sufficient fur
To line
A fur coat.
This is very wrong.
People must be more economical.

I am glad to see
That we have had
A great naval victory
In the Baltic
—Seven Englishmen killed
And eleven missing.
Ananias, however,
Is annoyed.

He says that
If he had been at the Admiralty
It would never have happened.
He says it is extraordinary
How easily things go wrong.
He had just promised a retreat,
When the Navy go
And gain a victory.
All the other times
He has promised victories,
And we have had retreats.
I expect that if Ananias
Had been at the Admiralty,
We should have had
A really fine naval retreat.
He says a retreat
Is more impressive
Than an advance.
More men are killed,
And though it costs less money
It is more utterly wasted
Than in an advance.
People must be more economical.

I cannot understand
All this talk
About "Direct Action."
I have always
Hated
Direct action in any form,
It is very dangerous,
And I shall not put up with it now ;
I think the workers
Have lost their heads.
If they would only

Save up
Till they earn
Thirty pieces of silver,
And then invest
In some Company
Managed
By straightforward Russian gentlemen.
They would be able to retire
For a holiday
To quiet little fishing villages.
People must be more economical.

And people are so unkind.
When I think
That a great portion of my life
Has been given
To doing the workers—
I mean to say
Doing good to the workers,
It makes me . . .
 But the cock crew thrice.

SUMMER WIND

SUMMER wind,
 where do you wander,
Through the thicket, through the grove?
Where the purple shadows slander
Heat of Sun; where treasure-trove
Of bees is found, where hidden sweetness
Of hidden flowers is unloosed by your hand
To make your robe? And in your fleetness
Ruffled leaves seem silver sand

TURNBULL



JOHN FLANAGAN



Stirr'd to patterns by the passing
Of pursuing Satyr-Hooves. And then
Softly linger on the hill-tops, laughing
On your way to weary men ?

Summer wind,
 where do you slumber
Through the hot night ? In the field
Of misted moonlight, or in umber
Shade of trees, beneath a shield
Of half-heard sound and moving shadow ?
Thus your world-old gifts you yield
To the dead men whom we echo,
Those who loved you long ago ?

WHAT THE SYREN SAID TO THE SEA-HORSE

HOW can I practise vocal scales
While you go galloping about ?
I'd rather hear ten thousand whales
Heave thro' the ocean, pause to spout

Pillars of water in the air,
Than hear you plunging through the foam,
Snorting and stamping. Is it fair
To act thus when I sing ? Go home !

When first damp hills began to swell
From wat'ry chaos, I was thin—
But now I barely fit the shell
From which I warble, and the din

Of bands and hokey-pokey men,
Or nigger minstrel on the shore,
Confound my sense and ear; and then
You must come bouncing to the fore!

You know romance and singing are
A syren's very stock-in-trade,
Yet you, like every one, now dare
To snort past, unmoved, unafraid.

It's hard enough to sing a note
When peace and privacy have gone:
Just when I start, a pleasure boat
Hoots by, and plays a gramophone!

Once, too, I ventured near the band,
Where the pier rises from the sea;
With wife and child, upon the sand,
I saw a curate watching me.

He shuddered, and I heard him say,
Black and reproachful as a rook,
'Emma, dear heart, we will not stay:
I should not like the child to look!'

But you are not a tidal wave;
Be quiet! Leave stirring up the foam.
It is not civil to behave
Thus when I sing. Will you go home?

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN

MALIBRAS

THE sun laughed through the rain on Malibras,
For Malibras was dead,
And in the trooping city
The light paused overhead.
We shall not know the little clinging secret
That crept behind the door,
Nor why the slanting dust went singing gaily
Across his face to the floor.
But in the morning thunder leaped from the eastward
And lightning dazzled our eyes,
As Malibras went onward to the rendezvous
Without surmise.
There was a roar of cheering in the city,
A wind of gold,
And a swirl of air stole upward from his body,
Exultant and very old.
Down the winding pathways of Delauney
The cortège turned
To an anthill under beech-trees boled and mossy
The light had spurned,
And in the city of the other dreamers,
Who labour not nor spin,
There was an arch prepared with suitable inscriptions. . .
He entered in . . .

From left to right and north to south he wandered,
For Malibras was glad,
And he crept through a door in the twilight
That led to the dream he had.

Grasses curled round his eyelids,
Roots round his heart,
And you may see him in the eyes of a violet
Laughing apart.
For the ants took the dust of him crumbled to grayness,
But found not the rest,
And Malibras shall win when he rouses at the trumpet
The flame that his heart suppressed.

L. A. G. STRONG

CHRISTOPHER MARLYE

CHRISTOPHER MARLYE damned his God
In many a blasphemous mighty line
—Being given to words and wenches and wine.

He wrote his Faustus, and laughed to see
How everyone feared his devils but he.

Christopher Marlye passed the gate
Eager to stalk on the floor of Heaven,
Outface his God, and affront the Seven :

But Peter genially let him in,
Making no mention of all his sin.

And he got no credit for all he had done,
Though he grabbed a hold on the coat of God
And bellowed his infamies one by one,
Blasphemy, lechery, thought and deed . . .

But nobody paid him the slightest heed.

And the devils and torments he thought to brave
He left behind on this side of the grave.

Heigh-ho ! for Christopher Marlye.

A DEVON RHYME

GNARLY and bent and deaf 's a post,
Pore ole Ezekiel Purvis
Goeth creepin' slowly up the 'ill
To the Commoonion Survis.

Tap-tappy-tappy up the haisle
Goeth stick and brassy ferule;
And Parson 'ath to stoopy down
And 'olley in ees yerole.

FROM THE DUBLIN STREETS

AN OLD WOMAN OUTSIDE THE ABBEY THEATRE

IN this theayter they has plays
On us, and high-up people comes
And pays to see things playin' here
They'd run to hell from in the slums.

A FATHER ADVISES HIS SON

SHE'S the loveliest girl? Ay, maybe—by moonlight!
But ye'll do well not to trust the deceivin' moon.
I was walkin' along the metals to Dalkey one night,
When I seen on the groun' a shiny two-shillin' bit:
When I stooped for to grab it, what was it only a spit.
Ye'll do well not to trust the deceivin' moon.

THE TRAIN RUNNED OVER JOE

THE train runned over Joe
This side o' Prowse's 'ut.
'E thought 'e'd bring the sheep
'Ome by the shorter cut.

The wind was blawin' wrong,
'Twas dimpsey, Joe was deaf:
And w'en 'e seed the engine
There wasn't no time lef'.

The engine cut in 'alfs
Four sheep, the dog, and 'e.
Bill went up there nex' mornin'
To see wat 'e cude see.

They'd took away the rummage
And sprinkled cinders fresh:
But 'longside of a sleeper
'E found a 'unk of flesh.

'E knowed by the 'uman skin
It was a bit o' Joe,
So 'e put it in 'ees pocket
And goed to the "Spotty Doe";

And w'en us was to supper
'E comed 'ome dree parts drunk,
And showed it to the missis
And turned 'er stummick runk.

EDITH SITWELL

AT THE FAIR

I. SPRINGING JACK

GREEN wooden leaves clap light away,
Severely practical, as they

Shelter the children candy-pale,
The chestnut-candles flicker, fail . . .

The showman's face is cubed clear as
The shapes reflected in a glass

Of water—(glog, glut, a ghost's speech
Fumbling for space from each to each).

The fusty showman fumbles, must
Fit in a particle of dust

The universe, for fear it gain
Its freedom from my cube of brain.

Yet dust bears seeds that grow to grace
Behind my crude-striped wooden face

As I, a puppet tinsel-pink
Leap on my springs, learn how to think—

Till like the trembling golden stalk
Of some long-petalled star, I walk

Through the dark heavens, and the dew
Falls on my eyes and sense thrills through.

II. THE APE WATCHES "AUNT SALLY"

THE apples are an angel's meat ;
The shining dark leaves make clear sweet

The juice ; green wooden fruits always
Fall on these flowers as white as day—

(Clear angel-face on hairy stalk :
Soul grown from flesh, an ape's young talk !)

And in this green and lovely ground
The Fair, world-like, turns round and round

And bumpkins throw their pence to shed
Aunt Sally's wooden clear-striped head.—

I do not care if men should throw
Round sun and moon to make me go—

As bright as gold and silver pence . . .
They cannot drive their black shade hence !

ALDOUS HUXLEY

IMAGINARY CONVERSATION

M. DE COLIGNY'S bed was an heirloom. His father and mother had had it made against their wedding night, and surely the voyage to Cythera was never undertaken in a more splendid galleon—a ship whose hull was of carved and polished walnut wood, embellished by gilding and heraldic panels, whose masts were four twisted pillars all inlaid with ivory, and the sails of yellow damask and the ensigns of stiffly worked brocade. The heaven of the bed was a tapestry representing the story of Leda, and when the yellow curtains were drawn it formed the ceiling of a little scented chamber that was entirely shut off from the outer world. That Flemish Leda embracing a swan whose home was some leaden canal between high houses in Bruges, had seen and heard many secret things in her time. To-night, when the curtains were drawn and the little silver lamp, fastened by a bracket to one of the posts of the bed, had been lit, she beheld a more than usually delightful spectacle.

Two persons, both of them in the flower of their youth and beauty, were sitting in the broad bed, propped up against the mountainous pillows of down. One of them was a girl of marvellous loveliness and, to judge from her appearance, not above seventeen or eighteen years of age. She was clad only in a smock, and even that had a habit of slipping off her shoulders to reveal the exquisite contours of a young breast. She was engaged in combing out a great mass of curling brown hair that tumbled in a wild cascade, full of glinting golden lights, about her face. The other was M. de Coligny, the owner of the bed. He was a young man of twenty-two or three, with dark hair and a dark pointed beard and moustache, under which his teeth showed white and regular when he smiled. He was of a Roman

cast of countenance and strikingly handsome. His eyes, brown and piercing, were fixed on his companion as, with body bent forward and hair over her eyes, she tugged at the recalcitrant tangled curls with her comb. She straightened herself up and shook her hair back with a little quick movement that made him catch his breath with delight to see—it was so beautiful and his desire was so great.

“Coligny,” she said, turning to him with one of those smiles that had already made Mlle. de Lenclos famous, “I am quite exhausted with carding my fleece. I wish you would tease it out for me. These curls are the plague of my life.”

“They are the delight of mine,” responded Coligny, gallantly, as he took the comb from her, and began to pass it through the tangled tresses.

“Harder, harder!” cried Ninon, turning round to look at him over her shoulder. “You’ll never get the tangles out unless you comb harder.”

“But doesn’t it hurt?” Coligny was horrified at the prospect of inflicting pain on his mistress.

“Of course not, if you’re not clumsy.”

Coligny went on combing with a set and careful face. He winced at every tug he had to give, as though it were his own hair that were being pulled. Besides, her bare shoulders were so beautiful and so close to him, and the nape of her neck, when he lifted the clustering curls to look at it, was so inviting where the white skin was shadowed by the first tiniest tendrils of her hair. He threw down the comb.

“There!” he said, “that’s enough. I won’t comb any more.” And he put his arm round her and began to kiss her neck and shoulder.

A little shiver ran through her at the touch of his lips, and she laughed.

“What will happen to my poor tangled hair then?” she asked.

“It will get more tangled,” Coligny replied.

“Very well,” said Ninon, and she lay back on the pillow with an air of smiling resignation.

This was not the first, nor the second, time that Ninon had passed a night in M. Coligny's *hôtel* and in M. de Coligny's family bed. Coligny had appeared on her horizon some four or five months before, and it was not long before she had given him the amplest proofs of a first love that had overwhelmed her with irresistible violence. Mme. de Lenclos, her mother, was not only respectable but pious—pious to the verge, Ninon considered, of bigotry. She even cherished a secret hope that Ninon might some day feel moved to embrace the religious life; meanwhile, she kept a very good eye on her daughter. Necessity, however, is the mother of invention, and since the satisfaction of desire is the first of necessities to one in love, Ninon and Coligny were at no loss to devise schemes for outwitting Mme. de Lenclos' severe vigilance. Ninon, for instance, went very often to pass a night or two with a girl friend who lived at Saint Cloud: she was staying at Saint Cloud to-night, and when she returned home to-morrow she would have a whole fund of stories about Marie and her sisters, Anne and Barbe, to divert her mother with at dinner. She was always very tired and sleepy when she got back from St. Cloud, and Mme. de Lenclos would explain to her friends that the air in that neighbourhood was too nimble, too pure and keen and bracing; so much so that it kept the animal spirits in a state of perpetual activity, not suffering them to stagnate and repose in their canals; so that, paradoxical as it might sound, the sluggish, impure atmosphere of the city was in a sense healthier than the country air, because its very sluggishness was a curb upon the spirits and therefore conducive to sleep—a fact which was empirically proved by her daughter Ninon, who always slept heartily when at home in Paris, while, at Saint Cloud, she never closed an eyelid.

“My love, my life . . .” Ninon murmured between two kisses.

“You are my soul,” said Coligny; “for life comes to an end, but the soul is immortal, even as my love for you.”

The prettiness of the phrase pleased them both, for they belonged to a courtly society which delighted in giving and

receiving compliments; the manifest artificiality of M. de Coligny's wit in no way cooled the ardour of their emotions and their senses, but served rather to quicken and refine and beat up the flames.

"My soul, then," whispered Ninon; "but be careful I don't damn you." And she put her arms round his neck and crushed him close and closer against her.

"What's this?" asked Coligny, whose caressing fingers had come upon a little metal disk which hung by a thread round Ninon's neck and lay low down between her breasts. "What's this?" He lifted it out into the light and began to scrutinise it closely.

"Let it be, my love," said Ninon. "It is a medal of the Blessed Virgin that was sent me to-day from Rome, where it was blessed by the Holy Father himself."

Coligny laughed contemptuously. "Take it off," he said. "There shall be nothing between us when we love, not even so much as this counterfeit silver crown. As our souls escape from our bodies to join together, so our bodies must escape from their clothes—yes, down to the last thread and medal. Besides, it is all a vain superstition."

He made as though to snap the thread by which the medal hung, but Ninon put up her hand and checked him. "No, no. I have promised to wear it always. I forbid you to take it off; I shall never forgive you if you do."

Her tone was so serious that Coligny let the medal fall again and kissed it where it lay on her breast.

"It's the first time," he said with a laugh, "that I've ever kissed such a bit of trumpery, and if it were in any other place in the world but where it now is, I wouldn't touch it. But your bosom has blessed it as a legion of popes couldn't do."

Ninon lay a little while in pensive silence. "You know," she said at last, "you know, Coligny, I am often very much troubled in mind at the thought that you are a heretic. It is terrible to think that people should endanger their souls when it is such an easy thing to believe what is true and be saved."

Coligny laughed rather bitterly. "You may have heard, my Ninon, of one Gaspard de Coligny, who was my grandfather's brother and Admiral of France, and who on a certain twenty-fourth of August, on the eve of St. Bartholomew's Day . . ."

"Hush, hush," said Ninon, putting her hand across his mouth. "I know; but it is all over now. It is not the past we have to think about, but the present, and," she added significantly, "the future. Why won't you think as other people do, my beloved? It is madness to be a heretic when one might belong to the true Church."

The one flaw in Coligny's perfect good manners was his deplorable habit of arguing about religion. All unwittingly Ninon had called up this combative devil from its lurking-place in a corner of his mind.

"My dear child," began Coligny, in a sententious and didactic tone, which was peculiarly irritating, "I do not believe in what you are pleased to call the true Church, because I consider it to be false. The pretensions made by the Bishop of Rome are based upon the so-called Donation of Constantine," and he went on to explain at considerable length how and why the Pope was a pretender. Ninon could only stop him with a kiss.

"Darling," she said, "all this happened very long ago, and I know nothing and believe less than nothing of it. You do not explain to me why it was necessary for such demons as Luther and Calvin to crucify the Mother Church, and tear the world in pieces over a few foolish words."

"They wished to reform the crying abuses within the Church, and to bring back religion into its primitive purity. The lives of the Popes were an open scandal."

"So was Luther's," retorted Ninon. "Why, he ravished a nun, disgusting beast!"

Coligny did not heed the interruption. "The religious houses," he continued, "were full of abominable corruptions. They pillaged the people and then quarrelled over the spoils. The one thing on which monks and nuns ever agreed was disregarding their vows of chastity."

“Poor people!” said Ninon, commiseratingly. “But can you blame them if they erred occasionally?”

Coligny looked at her a moment, and the cloud of seriousness cleared from his face, and he laughed. “No, I honestly can’t blame them,” he said, “if they ever saw any one as beautiful as you.”

“Well, then,” cried Ninon, triumphantly, “I can’t see why you should remain a heretic. Consider, my darling, the company you’re in. There are some Frenchmen of your belief, to be sure, but most of them burghers, dowdy people. How can you associate with them? or with these square-toed Geneva republicans? or nasty, gross, drunken Germans? or ill-mannered Englishmen? I really can’t imagine. You can’t deny that all the best people do belong to the true Church.”

“But what would become of my conscience if I deserted my faith?” inquired Coligny.

“Conscience? I don’t know what you mean. You will just go and acknowledge your errors and confess your sins, and they will make it quite all right for you.”

“Ah, yes,” said Coligny, scornfully; his controversial spirit was roused again. “I know their Jesuit morality. It can condone anything if there’s any profit to be got from doing so. It can swallow a camel . . .”

“Swallow a camel . . .?” echoed Ninon, in perplexity.

“Yes, swallow a camel. It’s a phrase out of the Bible.”

Ninon nodded comprehendingly. “Oh, I see; I’ve never read it.”

“They can swallow more than a camel,” cried Coligny, waving a bare muscular arm above the bed-clothes; they can swallow elephants, leviathans, and mountains with their pernicious doctrine of Probable Opinions and all their devilish casuistical arts. My conscience is tender and nice, but it would soon grow robust enough if I put it into the hands of Escobar and his crew. No, Ninon, my conscience forbids me absolutely to desert the faith in which I was brought up for a faith which has persecuted my ancestors, and which I regard as false to the core.”

Ninon drew close and rubbed herself like a kitten against his side. "Wouldn't you give up being a heretic even for my sake?"

Coligny took her in his arms and began kissing her urgently, violently. "You ask me what is impossible, Ninon. I can't, even for you."

"Heretics never will listen to reason," said Ninon, making a profound generalisation. "Ah, my beloved . . ."

There was a long silence. From her position in the canopy of the bed the Flemish Leda regarded the lovers with equanimity, unmoved as ever. The tiny flame of the lamp burned motionlessly. Time passed, but Ninon and Coligny were beyond time in the dusk of one another's hair.

They were lying quietly and happily side by side when Ninon spoke again. Her thoughts had evidently strayed back to the old subject. "My beloved," she said, "suppose I were to have a baby—I say 'suppose,' for I hope I shan't—but suppose I were to; would it be a Protestant baby or a Catholic baby?"

"That," said Coligny, who had been perhaps a little too well educated for a nobleman's son, "raises the whole question of generation. If you have read philosophy . . ."

"But I haven't," said Ninon.

". . . you will remember," Coligny continued, "that God's two most important instruments in creation are Form and Matter. Matter without form is shapeless and gross; it is chaos, in fact. Form without matter is angelic and altogether too spiritual to be perceived by creatures of our stamp who are a mixture of both. Now, just as the Holy Ghost brooded upon the waters of chaos and informed them so that out of them emerged a world of beauty, shape, and life, appearing where before had been a mere lumpish stagnation; so in the creation of the Little World—for you must know that man is a Microcosm exactly corresponding in little to the universe—in the creation of the Little World, the male seed plays the part of form and the woman's womb of matter. Woman supplies the material for

MODIGLIANI



EDWARD WADSWORTH



LADLE SLAG

creation, the microcosmic chaos, if you take me; man provides the informing spirit which gives it life and shape. The soul is transmitted, therefore, by the man; and so, since religion is essentially and fundamentally a quality and attribute of the soul, any child of ours would belong to the Reformed Religion."

"Poor baby!" said Ninon. "But I should have him baptized into the true Church at once. My darling, I love you so much, almost too much to be true. Lay your head close to mine, and I will sing you a little lullaby, and we will go to sleep, for I am so tired. There, my baby, shut your eyes and go to sleep." She smoothed the hair back from his forehead and kissed his eyelids close. Then she sang softly and clearly, in a voice of flawless purity, this little song that they used to sing when the poets of the Pléiade were the arbiters of taste at court:

"Après la feuille la fleur;
Après l'épine la rose;
L'heure après le malheur.
Le jour on est en labeur,
Mais la nuit on se repose."

"La nuit on se repose," repeated Ninon, with a little laugh. "Entends-tu, mon ami?" and a moment later she was fast asleep.

WILFRED OWEN, M.C. (*Killed in Action, 4th Nov., 1918*)

MENTAL CASES

WHO are these? Why sit they here in twilight?
Wherefore rock they, purgatorial shadows,
Drooping tongues from jaws that slob their relish,
Baring teeth that leer like skull's teeth wicked?
Stroke on stroke of pain,—but what slow panic
Gouged these chasms round their fretted sockets?
Ever from their hair and through their hand-palms
Misery swelters. Surely we have perished
Sleeping, and walk hell; but who these hellish?

—These are men whose minds the Dead have ravished.
Memory fingers in their hair of murders,
Multitudinous murders they once witnessed.
Wading sloughs of flesh these helpless wander,
Treading blood from lungs that had loved laughter.
Always they must see these things and hear them,
Batter of guns and shatter of flying muscles,
Carnage incomparable, and human squander
Rucked too high up for these men's extrication.

Therefore still their eyeballs shrink tormented
Back into their brains, because on their sense
Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black;
Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh.
—Thus their heads wear their hilarious, hideous,
Awful falseness of set-smiling corpses.
—Thus their hands are plucking at each other;
Picking at the rope-knouts of their scourging;
Snatching after us, who smote them, brother,
Pawing us who dealt them war and madness.

CONRAD AIKEN

CABARET

WE sit together and talk, or smoke in silence.
You say (but use no words), "This night is passing
As other nights, when we are dead, will pass . . ."
Perhaps I misconstrue you: you mean only
"How deathly pale my face looks in that glass . . ."

You say: "We sit and talk . . . of things important . . .
How many others like ourselves, this instant,
Mark the pendulum swinging against the wall?
How many others, laughing, sip their coffee,—
Or stare at mirrors and do not talk at all? . . ."

"This is the moment" (so you would say, in silence)
"When suddenly we have had too much of laughter;
And a freezing stillness falls, no word to say.
Our mouths feel foolish. . . For all the days hereafter
What have we saved—what news, what tune, what play?"

"We see each other as vain and futile tricksters,—
Posturing like bald apes before a mirror;
No pity dims our eyes. . .
How many others like ourselves, this instant,
See how the great world wizens and are wise?" . . .

Well, you are right. . . No doubt they fall, these seconds . . .
When suddenly all's distempered, vacuous, ugly,
And even those most like angels creep for schemes.
The one you love leans forward, smiles, deceives you,
Opens a door through which you see dark dreams,

But this is momentary . . . or else, enduring,
Leads you with devious eyes through mists and poisons
To horrible chaos, or suicide, or crime.
And all these others who, at your conjuration,
Grow pale, feeling the skeleton touch of time,—

Or laughing sadly talk of things important,
Or stare at mirrors, startled to see their faces,
Or drown in the waveless vacuums of their days,—
Suddenly, as from sleep, awake, forgetting
This nauseous dream: take up their accustomed ways.

Exhume the ghost of a joke, renew loud laughter,
Forget the moles above their sweethearts' eyebrows,
Lean to the music, rise,
And dance once more in a rose-festooned illusion
With kindness in their eyes . . .

They say (as we ourselves have said, remember)
“What wizardry this slow waltz works upon us!
And how it brings to mind forgotten things!”
They say: “How strange it is that one such evening
Awakes vague memories of so many Springs!”

And so they go. . . In a thousand crowded places
They sit to smoke and talk, or rise to ragtime,
And, for their pleasures, agree or disagree.
With secret symbols they play on secret passions.
With cunning eyes they see

The innocent word that sets remembrance trembling,
The dubious word that sets the scared heart beating . . .
The pendulum on the wall
Shakes down seconds. . . They laugh at time, dissembling;
Or coil for a victim and do not talk at all.

MOVEMENTS FROM A SYMPHONY

“OVERTONES”

TWO lovers, here at the corner by the steeple,
Two lovers blow together like music blowing :
And the crowd dissolves about them like a sea.
Recurring waves of sound break vaguely upon them ;
They drift from wall to wall, from tree to tree.

“Well, am I late?” Upward they look, and laugh,
They look at the great clock’s golden hands . . .
They laugh and talk, not knowing what they say ;
Only, their words like music seem to play ;
And, seeming to walk, they tread strange sarabands.

“I brought you this . . .” The soft words plunge like stars
Down the smooth heaven of her memory.
She stands again by a garden wall,
The peach-tree is in bloom, pink blossoms fall,
Water sings from an opened tap, the bees
Glisten and murmur among the trees.
Some one calls from the house: she does not answer.
Backward she leans her head,
And dreamily smiles at the peach-tree leaves, where through
She sees an infinite May sky spread
A vault profoundly blue.
The voice from the house fades far away,
The glistening leaves more vaguely ripple and sway . . .
The tap is closed, the water ceases to hiss . . .
Silence . . . blue sky . . . and then, “I brought you this” . . .
She turns again and smiles . . . He does not know
She smiles from long ago.

She turns to him and smiles . . . Sunlight above him
Roars like a vast invisible sea,

Gold is beaten before him, shrill bells of silver,
He is released of weight, his body is free,
He lifts his arms to swim,
Dark years like sinister tides coil under him . . .
The lazy sea-waves crumble along the beach
With a whirring sound like wind in bells.
He lies outstretched on the yellow wind-worn sands
Reaching his lazy hands
Among the golden grains and sea-white shells . . .

“One white rose . . . or is it pink, to-day?”
They pause and smile, not caring what they say,
If only they may talk.
The crowd flows past them like dividing waters.
Dreaming they stand, dreaming they walk.

“Pink—to-day!”—Face turns to dream-bright face,
Green leaves rise round them, sweetness settles upon them,
Water, in drops of silver, falls from the rose.
She smiles at a face that smiles through leaves from the mirror.
She breathes the fragrance; her dark eyes close . . .

Time is dissolved, it blows like a little dust :
Time, like a flurry of rain,
Patters and passes, starring the window-pane.
Once, long ago, one night,
She saw the lightning with long blue quiver of light
Ripping the darkness . . . and as she turned in terror
A soft face leaned above her, leaned softly down,
Softly around her a breath of roses was blown,
She sank in waves of quiet, she seemed to float
In a sea of silence . . . and soft steps grew remote . . .

“Well, let us walk in the park . . . The sun is warm,
We’ll sit on a bench and talk” . . . They turn and glide,
The crowd of faces wavers and breaks and flows.

“Look! how the oak-tops turn to gold in the sunlight!
Look how the tower is changed and glows!”

Two lovers move in the crowd like a link of music,
We press upon them, we hold them and let them pass;
A chord of music strikes us and straight we tremble;
We tremble like wind-blown grass.

What was this dream we had, a dream of music,
Music that rose from the opening earth like magic
And shook its beauty upon us and died away?
The long cold streets extend once more before us,
The red sun drops, the walls grow grey.

SUDDEN DEATH

“**N**UMBER four—the girl who died on the table—
The girl with golden hair,—
The purpling body lies on the gleaming marble;
We open the throat and lay the thyroid bare . . .

One, who held the ether-cone, remembers
Her dark blue frightened eyes.
He heard the sharp breath quiver, and saw her breast
More hurriedly fall and rise.
Her hands made futile gestures, she turned her head
Fighting for breath, her cheeks were flushed to scarlet,
And, suddenly, she lay dead.

And all the dreams that hurried along her veins
Came to the darkness of a sudden wall.
Confusion ran among them, they whirled and clamoured,
They fell, they rose, they struck, they shouted,
Till at last a pallor of silence hushed them all.

What was her name ? Where had she walked that morning ?
Through what dark forest came her feet ?
Along what sunlit walls, what peopled street ?

Backward he dreamed along a chain of days,
He saw her go her strange and secret ways,
Waking and sleeping, noon and night.
She sat by a mirror, braiding her golden hair ;
She read a story by candle-light.

Her shadow ran before her along the street,
She walked with rhythmic feet,
Turned a corner, descended a stair.
She bought a paper, held it to scan the headlines,
Smiled for a moment at sea-gulls high in sunlight,
And drew deep breaths of air.

Days passed, bright clouds of days. Nights passed. And music
Murmured within the walls of lighted windows ;
She lifted her face to the light and danced.
The dancers wreathed and grouped in moving patterns,
Clustered, receded, streamed, advanced.

Her dress was purple, her slippers were golden,
Her eyes were blue ; and a purple orchid
Opened its golden heart on her breast . . .
She leaned to the surly languor of lazy music,
Leaned on her partner's arm to rest.

The violins were weaving a weft of silver,
The horns were weaving a lustrous brede of gold,
And time was caught in a glistening pattern,
Time, too elusive to hold . . .

Shadows of leaves fell over her face—and sunlight :
She turned her face away.
Nearer she moved to a crouching darkness
With every step and day.

Death, who at first had thought of her only an instant
At a great distance, across the night,
Smiled from a window upon her, and followed her slowly
From purple light to light.

Once, in her dreams, he spoke out clearly, saying,
“ I am the murderer, death ;
I am the lover who keeps his appointment
At the doors of breath ! ”

She rose and stared at her own reflection,
Half dreading there to find
The dark-eyed ghost, waiting beside her,
Or reaching from behind
To lay pale hands upon her shoulders . . .
Or was this in her mind ? . . .

She combed her hair. The sunlight glimmered
Along the tossing strands.
Was there a stillness in this hair,
A quiet in these hands ?

Death was a dream. It could not change these eyes,
Blow out their light, or turn this mouth to dust.
She combed her hair, and sang. She would live for ever.
Leaves flew past her window along a gust . . .
And graves were dug in the earth, and coffins passed,
And music ebbed with the ebbing hours.
And dreams went along her veins, and scattering clouds
Threw streaming shadows on walls and towers.

CONVERSATION : UNDERTONES

WHAT shall we talk of—Li Po? Hokusai?—
You narrow your long dark eyes to fascinate me;
You smile a little... Outside, the night goes by.
I walk alone in a forest of ghostly trees...
Your pale hands rest palm downwards on your knees.

“These lines—converging—they suggest such distance!
The soul is drawn away, beyond horizons—
Lured out to what? One dares not think.
Sometimes, I glimpse these infinite perspectives
In intimate talk (with such as you) and shrink...

“One feels so petty!—one feels such emptiness!—
You mimic horror, let fall your lifted hands,
And smile at me; with brooding tenderness...
Alone on darkened waters I fall and rise;
Slow waves above me break, faint waves of cries.

“And then, these colours... but who would dare describe
them?
This faint rose-coral pink... this green—pistachio?—
So insubstantial! Like the dim ghostly things
Two lovers find in love's still-twilight chambers...
Old peacock-fans, and fragrant silks, and rings...

“Rings, let us say, drawn from the hapless fingers
Of some great lady many centuries nameless—
Or is that too sepulchral?—dulled with dust;
And necklaces that crumble if you touch them;
And gold brocades that, breathed on, fall to rust,—

“No—I am wrong... It is not these I sought for—
Why did they come to mind?—You understand me—

You know these strange vagaries of the brain!"—
—I walk alone in a forest of ghostly trees;
Your pale hands rest palm downwards on your knees;
These strange vagaries of yours are all too plain.

"But why perplex ourselves with tedious problems
Of art or... such things?... While we sit here, living,
With all that's in our secret hearts to say!—
Hearts?—Your pale hand softly strokes the satin.
You play deep music—know well what you play.
You stroke the satin with thrilling of finger-tips,
You smile, with faintly perfumed lips,
You loose your thoughts like birds,
Brushing our dreams with soft and shadowy words...
We know your words are foolish, yet here we stay,
I to be played on, you to play;
We know our words are foolish, yet sit here bound
In tremulous webs of sound.

"How beautiful is intimate talk like this!—
It is as if we dissolved grey walls between us,
Stepped through solid portals, become but shadows,
To hear a hidden music... Our own vast shadows
Lean to a giant size on the windy walls,
Or dwindle away; we hear our soft footfalls
Echo for ever behind us, ghostly clear,
Music sings far off, flows suddenly near,
And dies away like rain...
We walk through subterranean caves again—
Vaguely above us feeling
A shadowy weight of frescoes on the ceiling;
Strange half-lit things,
Soundless grotesques with writhing claws and wings.
And here a beautiful face looks down upon us;
And some one hurries before, unseen, and sings...

Have we seen all, I wonder, in these chambers—
Or is there yet some gorgeous vault arched low,
Where sleeps an amazing beauty we do not know? . . .”

The question falls; we walk in silence together,
Thinking of that deep vault and of its secret . . .
This lamp, these books, this fire,
Are suddenly blown away in a whistling darkness.
Deep walls crash down in the whirlwind of desire.

THOMAS MOULT

THE RETURN

A SUN-SWEET day in the sundown time
Where the great hills dip to the dusking dale,
And no sound breaking the silent climb
But a lonely wheeling curlew's wail.
And the far bird's scream, and the glittering shine
Of a star on the far dim eastern line
Bring back far days and a dream once mine
Where the great hills dip to the dale.

For the world-call came even here, even here
Where the great hills dip to the dusking dale,
And the old road laughed at a young heart's fear
And lured young feet to the wonder-trail
And drew young eyes to the rosy sky . . .
And the world grew wide as the feet climbed high,
But the young heart's dream was a dream gone by
With the hills dipping down to the dale.

O the world was strange and the years less kind
Than the years with the hills and the dusking dale:
And the dale's deep calm that none may find
While the long road lures and the heart is hale.
And now in the chill of a wild bird's scream
I linger alone where the gloom is the gleam
Of a still, far star, with a far, far dream
And the hills dipping down to the dale.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

THREE SONGS

I. THE WILLOWS

IN the round hollow of the moonlit meadow
Over the pond the seven willows shiver,
And in the ghostly misty shine their branches
Rustle and glance and quiver—

Rustle and glance and quiver in the moonshine—
The seven sisters shaking sea-green tresses
Over the round pond's misty mirror, whispering
Strange secrets to the shadow in the cresses.

II. AULLA

BRONZED hills of oak, that sweep
Up to Carrara's peaks of snow
Against a blue November sky,
Burnished with evening sunshine glow
And bask in drowsy sleep—
When piercingly a cry
Rings from the little town below,
And startled echoes leap
From steep to steep.

What soul in agony
Cried out at sunset long ago
I'll never know :
But in my memory perpetually
Bronze hills and silver peaks and steely sky
Reverberate with that despairing cry.

III. RETURN

RUST-RED the bracken in the rain
Against the wet grey boulder—
Slowly the cold mist sweeps again
Over the mountain shoulder,
And the wind blows colder.

Since last I saw the mist and rain
Sweep down the mountain shoulder
Some joy that will not come again
Has left a heart grown older,
And the wind blows colder.

RUSSELL GREEN

INDIAN SUMMER

A SOUTH wind murmurs among the withered auburn bracken. The frail metallic foliage of silver birches sways in the murmuring south wind as weeds on a shallow shore at the turn of the tide. Red and brown are creeping over the verdure of the year. The air is still, a woman mourning at the obsequies of summer. The air is soft and gentle, long shadows lie prone and black along the faded grass. Through the still soft air sounds fall of life that knows longer seasons; voices of men, birds crying, distant bark of dogs, horns and purring wheels of immortal motors. But they know longer seasons. And yet their autumn comes. Not in this tranquillity fails their resilience, not in this placid sun, but in storm and darkness, in mockery, in confusion.

And we shall have our autumn. We shall lose our summer verdure. We shall return with a mute reluctance to the dark sclerosis of earth.

And shall we sit solitary, forgotten by friends, forgotten by enemies, sharing no memories with another? Shall we cry for remembered love that we have despised and rejected? Shall we know our need too late? Will time and distance and interlapsing oblivion give us but a stone when we cry for bread and only ashes when we crave the fire?

OXFORD BELLS

IT is midnight in Oxford. A hundred bells, a thousand bells, hail midnight among ten thousand towers. Ten thousand towers soar up on omnipotent wings into the summer midnight. They are the eagles of human meditation spreading

omnipotent wings against the powers of darkness, against the principalities of time. The dominion of darkness and the cruel tyranny of time fall faint against the guardian wings. And the sleeping light is unquenched and the timeless city is unchanged. No shadow of the oncoming death falls through the omnipotent wings. No stellar dust of approaching age drifts down upon the immortal stone. The human challenge of the hundred bells, the thousand bells, retorts the dull mockery of the universe. The city sleeps on, a child sleeping unafraid in the open fields of eternity.

And the bells maintain their everlasting vigilance.

TO ONE

WHEN a foam of snow is hurled
Under the bare black trees
And rain is on the seas
And winter on the world,
Yet when I think of her
I know where summer is.

When friends to-day forget
Ardours of yesterday
And to-morrow turn away
As if we never met,
Yet when I think of her
I know where constancy is.

ECONOMICS

IN Petticoat Lane by Aldgate East
On jellied eels I've seen them feast.

The mute dismembered corpses roll
Salted in an enamel bowl.

Behind his stall the huckster's loud
Bass 'cello voice compels the crowd,

Whose gaunt innumerable shoes
Shuffle along the foetid ooze.

And I knew that brick-bound sun must shine
On eels that swim in wider brine,

Where estuaries drain the sea
And agile Aldgate eels go free,

Where in pre-natal silence sleeps
The god of the everlasting deeps,

Where for ten thousand years the sails
Of ships before the summer gales

Trace the great circles of the seas
From Ophir to the Caribbees,

Till sails and ships and men are rotten,
Till years and seasons are forgotten,

Till all that lives is a dead motion
Of slow winds and a sombre ocean.

INDIVIDUAL

IF I die
One star fades from the dark,
One lantern falls from the arc
Of the sky.

There are still
Millions to waste their light
On the long human night,
Millions still.

And yet, alone,
In separate magnitude,
In potent solitude,
I move, alone,

A centre of fire,
Redder than ardent Mars,
I kindle a thousand stars
To reflect my desire.

A PRAYER

“**A**BELARD, Héloïse”—
Echoed in a London street
While the wheels, black thunders beat
Like swollen veins in a last disease.

Héloïse, Abelard,—
They were lovers, so am I.
But at *my* birth, in the sky
Ruled a solitary star.

Abelard, Héloïse,
If your influence could move,
If he lives, the god of love,
To release me, to release

From incarcerating light
To an island very far,
To a mountain, to a star
In the spaces of night.

Abelard, Héloïse,
I would give you, I would give
My soul—my love—that would live, that would live
Till the centuries cease.

SOCIETY

I WISH hell were as bloody as they say?
But that's all lies, for I'm in hell and I know.
Hell's when you see the flaming colours go
Blank from your brain and blurs of pallid grey
Cover your past and future and you ache
To be taken up and cuddled vulgarly
And called a dear old thing by a sweet motherly
Plump girl who will do anything for your sake.

And when you've dreamed of this for half an hour
You come back to your damned environment
To find your silly vacant eyes are bent
On the infernal oilcloth on the floor,
And you remember that there's no such girl
This side of death unless you've got the cash
To buy them up like any other trash.
And then you damn and curse at life and hurl
Your rotten clinging soul against the wall
Of this terrestrial isolation cell.
Oh, yes! You've got it,—the disease of hell,—
The germ of solitude. It's in them all.
But they don't feel it, damn them, all those others,—
They've got their wives, their sisters, and their mothers!

DOUGLAS GOLDRING

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THE
REVOLUTION

ANY one who picks up one of the weeklies, provided he knows something of literary London, can visualise the cliques and sets, the personal animosities, the log-rolling and the snobbishness which underlie their smooth-flowing columns of praise or blame. A writer who does not lunch with other writers, who has no friends among the literary "best people," who is not published by some smart publisher clever enough to exhale an aroma of "Oxford," will not as a rule receive much attention from the "leading organs of critical thought." The London papers whose reviewing ignores social or commercial influences can be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Now it is the function of criticism to act both as a tonic and as a corrective. When criticism decays and loses vigour the arts at once fall into an unhealthy state. The progressive decay of criticism in England during the past half-century has now brought English literature to such a pass that only the most violent remedies can cure it of its many diseases. During the past fifty years writers with original or "revolutionary" ideas have found it increasingly difficult to get a hearing during their lives. Publishers have declined their MSS. as being unsafe, and in cases where the publisher's vigilance has been eluded, the reviewers have either received the dangerous works in silence or have violently denounced them. Mr. Bernard Shaw, realising all this clearly enough, has managed, it is true, by sheer force of character, to make himself the exception which proves the rule. No doubt a knowledge of what Samuel Butler had to

put up with showed him at an early stage in his career what precisely he was "up against." But though Mr. Shaw has triumphed over the shoddy crowd of literary parasites who guard the pass to public recognition, he has not done so without making enemies. These people are like a certain kind of toad. If you step on them they squirt a poisonous liquid at you. Readers of a certain notorious review of Mr. Shaw's *Heart-break House* will realise what it is that he has been able to tread on and to overcome.

Mr. Shaw's success in this direction is, so far as I can discover, unique. For the most part, authors have not his cheerful combative instinct, his capacity to lay about him with freedom and good-humour. Thus it is that the devices which have been, and are, adopted by English writers, small and great, to enable them to squeeze past the barrier into the charmed circle of literary fashion are often so pathetic. The employment of these devices very often causes an agony so excruciating that, although confessions of all kinds have lately had an unprecedented vogue, no man of letters has to my knowledge dared to lay his soul bare in regard to the things he has done to "get through."

To the commercial author the problem is, of course, merely a business problem like another. The man born for success will have begun his career by making friends with the best people at school and university. These friends, when he makes his descent on London, will stand him in good stead. If he writes verses they will soon log-roll a literary prize for him. If he begins by reviewing other men's work, the usual process, he will be sure to find some man of an older year already installed in the office of a comfortable review, who will make the way easy. And then, when his first novel is ready, his social *savoir-faire* will have smoothed the path for its reception. The wife of his future publisher will have gone down to dinner with him, and found him "such an interesting boy." Perhaps he will have floated about London a little with one of those girls whose veneer of culture—added to good looks and an inherited

position—enables them preposterously enough to make or mar a reputation. Thus even his amours will push him along the road to fame and fortune!

There are, of course, many other routes open to the commercial author who is determined to arrive. They could be described in detail, but the psychological interest attaching to them is very small, because the commercial author feels no uneasy shrinking from those methods of achieving his aim which present themselves to his intelligence. The commercial poet does not feel uneasy if, for example, he combines with half-a-dozen other poets in an offensive and defensive alliance formed for mutual “boosting.” The commercial novelist does not shudder at the necessity of giving evening parties with a purpose, or strategic luncheons. It is only when we consider the authors whose motive is ambition to succeed in their art and to achieve the admiration of those who can appreciate, the authors with whom that powerful vanity which has given the world half its loveliest things is the real stimulus to production, that the psychological interest begins. And among these, what miseries have been endured in the struggle for recognition, what foolish, pathetic, and even base things have been done to attain it! Very often these unfortunates ape the methods of their brass-bound commercial competitors with tragic inefficiency. They blow ear-splitting blasts on the trumpet, when the situation requires delicate and flute-like modulations; they cringe when they should prance, toady when they should contemn. And always the unsatisfied vanity, more violent in its operations than the unsatisfied appetite of sex, forces them relentlessly forward. It has pushed them, before now, to suicide as a last resource.

This, roughly, is the position of English writers to-day: to the creative effort required to produce a work of art must be added the *finesse* of a social struggler and the bland assurance of a bagman, or else either the MS. will not be printed at all, or if printed and published will be smothered in unbroken silence. The root of the evil is deep-seated in our social life; it is one

more of those symptoms of national corruption and spiritual deadness which are the preludes to upheaval.

Now a revolution is a setting free of forces which have been violently constrained. The intellectual energies of England, so far as her younger writers are concerned, are to-day bottled up. The natural outlets are closed and barred. The written word must go through a watering down, trimming and softening process before it can hope to squeeze through the needle's eye of a publisher's office and reach the open. The social and commercial censorship exercised by English snobbery, and made possible by the decay of English criticism, is in its effects far more deadening than that naïf censorship which absurd and rather lovable officials exercised during the war. And so in England to-day the artist's way to freedom lies through that drastic change in our social life which it is convenient to refer to as the Revolution. That this is no idle fancy but a statement of fact must be realised by all those who have any appreciation of the change which has come over the continent of Europe during the past two years.

Those who have visited Soviet Russia, those who saw something of Hungary under the revolutionary government, even those who have visited Germany during the past few months, will know to what I am referring. The effect of revolution on the creative capacity of a people is like a renewal of youth; like a change from winter to spring. The windows of the stuffy room are thrown open, the unhealthy stove extinguished. Sunlight pours in and fresh air, and in all the world there is an uttering of joyous leaves. Germany has not yet achieved her revolution politically, but in the domain of thought it is already accomplished. It was my good fortune to spend some weeks in Germany in the month of September, and the difference of intellectual atmosphere which I found between Berlin and London defies description. In Berlin all was energy and activity. "Sorrow brings forth," says Blake in one of his aphorisms, and it seemed that the sufferings of the German people had indeed rejuvenated their creative instinct. The

interest in ideas was universal, and everywhere ideas were finding no hindrance—other than a negligible political censorship—to their expression. Every line of thought which presented itself to the human intelligence could be followed up without fear, and the results of these intellectual explorations published for the examination of other travellers. In Germany to-day, the intellect has been set free, the imagination of the artist liberated from bondage. And in London? Stagnation, intrigue, snobbery, log-rolling, deadness! Our ideas, like the air in our House of Commons, are subject to a process of warming, drying, softening and “disinfecting” before they are allowed to filter through to the public. In England the *bourgeoisie* is still established in control, and—until the New Day dawns—the man of letters must either starve or adapt himself to its standards and do obeisance before the shrines of its false gods.

CHAMAN LALL

SHAW, THE SHOW, AND THE SHAWM*

OR

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE THEATRE?

“King Melinda asked Nāgsena how many kinds of wisdom there are, and he replied Seven, but that it is by one kind of wisdom that a man becomes wise: the investigation of Truth.”

THERE is no desolation comparable to-day to the desolation which pervades the world's theatre. It opens its doors to every obscenity, and barricades its doors against all beauty. Truth is not a *prima donna* within its walls: nay, not even a poor programme-seller. In fact, the world's theatre has become a vast, well-decorated brothel, where strong wine, bad music, and forced prostitution pile up big dividends or colossal bankruptcies for the unscrupulous commercialist. A limited liability company has nothing in common with the limitations of Art. But what else can you expect? Did Darwin visualise a worse society of antagonisms than the world's system of economic *sauve qui peut* under which every man one meets is a potential enemy on a drifting raft, every profession subjugated under the cart of Commerce, every art and craft exploited by the financial magnate? Sometimes Great Art will survive in this desolation like a thrusting poppy in a field of horse-dung; but, none the less, the world presents the spectacle of a wild circus, where human beasts bend to his will, cowering to hear the sjambok of the circus-master.

Now with audiences of this sort needing continual relaxation from the drudgery of their toil in play-houses owned by people

* *Heartbreak House, Great Catherine, and Playlets of the War.* By Bernard Shaw. Constable, 1919. 7s. 6d.

interested only in making money out of their tired pleasures, pandering to the tastes of the Balham typist (every capital in the world has its Balham typist) for bedroom scenes where the couple, as on the Boulevards, symbolically switch the light off for a while as a tribute to realism, the theatres must inevitably become mere outworks of factories, playwrights become wage-slaves and the players prostitutes. Every age has deserved its literature: let us frankly face the fact that every audience deserves its theatre.

But what of the critics, the custodians of Truth, the sorters and valuers of plays? Are they not like the Roman Pontiffs the possessors of the secret law? What do they say? Unfortunately their ignorance, their stupidity, their malice are beyond question. They are like Swift's idealists, with one eye turned inward and the other heavenward, whom not even the flappers of Laputa can awaken to a sense of their high work. None can say after the scandals of *Heartbreak House* that the scandals of *A Doll's House* are *comme les neiges d'antan*; whereas the real crime Shaw has committed is to lay waste the whole realm of English drama with his overshadowing genius. The tragedy of St. John Hankin is the tragedy of the barrenness of all Shaw's successors. Oscar Wilde reviving the humors and methods of Fielding, is hailed as the regenerator of the drama. Fielding talking of fornication is hailed as a classic. Artzibasheff talking of fornication with the tremendous difference between a libidinous quack and a scientist-artist is called a pornographer. Look at this:

Oscar's Dumby, in Act VI., says:

“In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it.”

Shaw's Mendoza, in Act IV., says:

“Sir, there are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire; the other is to get it.”

And Shaw remembering a speech from *LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN* for Mendoza's last hit in *MAN AND SUPERMAN* does not elicit a single significant remark. But Shaw writing the play of his life and the play of the decade is execrated for the sake of sensationalism.

Truly the advertisement columns of the newspapers are more interesting to read than the first-night notices by hired critics. As the audience deserves its theatre, the theatre deserves its critics. With managers as they are, critics as they are, above all audiences as they are, what are the prospects for the playwright ?

Literature is of two kinds—of commercialism and convention, and of freedom and revolt, which latter deals, as does *The Way of All Flesh*, the originator of the realistic novel, with “the natural history of our emotions.” Now the world's theatre has a great past of freedom, revolt, and experiment. The lonely dramatists of the great tradition have left us a rich inheritance of emotion and technique, and a marvellous chronicle of trial, error, and success. From as far back as the Greek chorus, the child of Sanskrit drama, from the Morality, from the Elizabethan soliloquy, we have learnt the technique of introducing argument and discussion. From as near as Yeats (note *Reveries*) we should learn new methods of depicting individual psychology. Ibsen introduced the thesis; Shaw broke in the walls dividing tragedy and comedy, introduced a hundred tricks for forcing attention, above all told the truth. Gorky and Chekov, Evreinov and Barker, Andreyev and Joyce, like Synge and Strindberg, have added new meaning and beauty and blown their new trumpets; but the walls of Balham Jericho still stand erect. Go into any modern theatre pandering to the tastes of the Balham typist, with its stale jokes and obsolete mechanism, and you will find that the past might just as well not have been; and you will find that technically and spiritually the drama is far ahead of the managers, far ahead of the critics, and, alas! far ahead of the audiences. Is there nothing to be done ?

Firstly, let us realise that Verse-Drama is a dead thing. The Shawm is quite obsolete. Our ears can no longer strain to familiarity with the sustained diction of uttered verse. *The Dynasts*, the plays of Claudel and of Yeats, may contain great beauty, untold emotional value, but as enacted plays they are negligible, adding an unnecessary strain to the stretch of credibility requisite in an audience. Too long has art been the pastime of the esoteric few. Theatrical art is the only art which breaks through the esoteric circle because its appeal is to the wide, indiscriminate, uninitiated masses. For this reason alone the days of Verse-Drama are extinct. Without doubt if a Moscow Art Theatre were built in London, Joyce's *Exiles* would be an ordinary feature, but *The Dynasts* a curiosity.

Secondly, let us cease bleating for small mercies. The inheritors of a great tradition have handed over to the purveyors of human flesh also the truth in their souls, and here they are clamouring stupidly for National theatres, Repertory movements, Shakespeare memorials, like a child trying to empty the tide with its pail. Why one National theatre? Why not all theatres national? I dare say when the dictatorship arrives it will not be cruel enough to inhibit those who wish to see Delysia's bare back and Gaby's laughing eyes and what they call Life. But it is certain that the Ballets, the Beecham operas, the Stage Societies will be nationalised, one and all.

Finally, let us realise that the new theatre can never be built or the new movement set going without a new audience.

The present system commercialises art and puts it under the Iron Heel of wage-slavery. It deprives the world of art by depriving the artist of bread. Blake died so poor that no one can even identify his grave, and a good deal of his work perished with him. There is Titian under economic pressure creating a chaste Venus for the monks and a voluptuous bawd for the debauchees. Notice the banal effect of Commercialism on Art-product in the abasement of all that is best to the requirements of commercial success. Is it not necessary for the artist to recreate the whole fabric of Society and base it on such foundations that free Art

can thrive without commercial taint? Is it not necessary for the playwright, whose material is humanity, that his material should be improving, displaying newer beauty, newer freedom, newer thought, newer conflicts. "In no man yet has the spirit of all humanity dwelt. The world will, must, bring this about." Only then will the artist understand his business which is to show not merely life but life in relation to his own vision, which is not necessarily a golden vision. Only then will all Great Art become what it should never cease to be, truly prophetic. Only then will the new master-idea arise, giving birth to the new masterpiece to be played in the new theatre before the new audience. "Oh that the poets would again be such as they were wont to be—Seers."

And the playwrights? What are they going to do about it?

E. H. W. MEYERSTEIN

LOVE AND SIN

TWO creatures stood by a house and one went in,
The name of the first was Love, of the other Sin.

Sin seem'd a man right fair with a cheek of joy,
Love was begrim'd and patch'd like a beggar boy.

Sin brake bolt with a laugh, "Shall we to her straight?"
Love knelt down on the step, "Better dream and wait."

Night and the stars appear'd while Love slept there,
But nothing came to disturb his uncut hair.

Sin sallied forth at dawn with a splendid brow,
"She's awake, brother Love," he said, "you can have her now."

ENIGMA

I AM dead yet I live, a most wonderful thing;
I laugh and I talk and my fancy takes wing.
Here's to you and to you, and I hope you're quite well;
Your mother was ailing when last I heard tell,
And that walk, you remember, on Salisbury Plain,
How gaily we sparr'd in the thunder and rain!
And moreover I eat and I drink just as ever,
And put finger to brow when I want to seem clever;
But all this long while I am dead as a stone,
With no sense of the difference 'twixt seven and one,

And my friend and my foe are the same to me quite,
And daylight's as darkness and crimson's as white,
And old folks as children and children as cats,
And cats as tin kettles and kettles as bats.
And if you would know how this marvel took place
I can no more explain it than alter my face,
Which is dead, though it moves with a smile or a frown ;
Yet I died, I bethink me, in old London town.

SEASONS

SNOW on the fields, a spray of briar
Across the window creaking,
Two by a sunken fire
Estrang'd, unspeaking.

O for the radiant mist of leaves,
The oak upon the meadow,
And the twin souls with sheaves
Chasing a shadow.

HERBERT READ

HUSKISSON SACRED AND PROFANE

Another Jest too deep for Laughter

“Three metamorphoses of the spirit have I designated unto you: how the spirit became a camel, the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child. Thus spake Zarathustra. And at that time he abode in the town which is called the Pied Cow.”—NIETZSCHE.

I

*Prelude in
Arcadia*

EARLY dawn and the nymphs are gliding
In an elusive sequence
Of gold light along the woodland's edge;
And the songs
Of roused birds are making
Dawn vocal in leafy domes.

Huskisson is yet sleeping.
And when at last light slits his puffy lids
The nymphs have taken to their far recesses,
And the birds are busy on their wings.

But soon he takes his whittled stick
And goes out into the early morning.
Down the lanes to the garth-pen
He urges the mournful milky cattle.

The milkmaids meet them in the sheds
With bright-scoured pails and milking-stools:
They lean their pretty heads
Against a cow's roan glossy flank
And languidly impel
The juicy dugs.

Huskisson leaves for the meadows
Where the woolly ewes munch cool grass.
Koy-bé, koy-bé, he calls to the lambs
Who bleat in the wide loneliness.
He lifts the old ewes' feet to scrape the rot,
And scatters fresh swedes for them to eat.

The pewits cry; the sun climbs high;
Huskisson is gay in the meadows.

II

*The Sacred
Progression*

EVENTUALLY
Huskisson fell on a spiral vortex,
The revolutions of which lasted
Each a decade.

At the end of the first decade
He had transcended rusticity:
His natural force
Melted a way through the pale brains of citizens.

At another revolution of the spiral
He is eminent and despotic.
He has taken to wife Emily,
Daughter of a City Magnate.

The next decade he spends
Growing rather gross.
Florid cheeks and intimations of a paunch
Ruffle his equanimity.

He lives in a northern suburb,
And his ménage
Is the ménage of all model men—
The apex of his distress is infinite.

* * * *

One night towards the end of the third decade,
Clad in a pink vest,
Huskisson crouched on a bedroom chair,
Scratching his hairy legs.
Emily
Made mountains in the bed.
Said Huskisson: "We have begot
Children to the number of seven.
Seven children in their turn beget . . . God only knows.
Our progeny
Ultimately lapses into cosmogony."

Emily was mute.

For a while
Huskisson watched a spider crawl
Across the cracked white ceiling,
His vision sinking
Through deep sub-conscious seas.

Coming suddenly to the surface,
He donned his flannel pyjamas
And presently
Slept peacefully by the side of Emily.

III

*The Profane
Rumination*

TO woo his Lady in the National
Lord Nelson descends from his ornate high
Pedestal the while the passional
White fountains sigh.

Huskisson leans against a lion
And faces down the Strand;
He gives his mind to meditation,
Resting his brow on a slender hand:

“ The euphonies of Cockspur Street
Assail mine amorous ear:
Dim palæolithic crickets screech
About Cophetua's bier.

I have been solemn over-long
When I might have been an antelope:
I would fill my universe with song
From the vantage of a far Andean slope.

The pendulous trunks of elephants
Disturb my peace of mind:
A twilight settles on Energies,
And I must flee my kind.

To Amazonian forests bilious and lush,
Where the gobbling boa-constrictor glides,
And pachyderms twist their nervous tails
In the middle of absurdly big backsides.

IV

*The Profane
Progression*

AT the age of forty-seven,
Having settled an annuity on his wife Emily,
Huskisson disappeared one August evening.
The newspapers talked of him for less than nine days,
And the detectives were anything but active at that
time of the year.

Emily, after a spasmodic grief lasting fourteen days,
Found consolation in the works of Boehme.

Huskisson, down in the docks,
Booked a passage in the *Queen of the Incas*.
En voyage
He grew a beard like Walt Whitman's

And became
Companion of low men and lascars.
He disembarked at Rio,
Smiling like Mona Lisa,
And all his worldly possessions
Wrapped in a bandana handkerchief.
He made immediate dispatch
Into the unknown hinterland—
His movements meteoric.
See him! See him!
Over the rolling savannas he strides,
Essential shagginess.
His boots kick the skyline
And his nose is rheumy in the clouds.
His scimitar
Devised of the converging orbits of the sun and moon
Swings adrift the ether,
Dismaying the stars.

When among the rustling leaves
The humming-birds settle at late night.
Huskisson will kindle his camp-fire,
And the serenades of tanagers
Will soothe him till he sleeps.

BABETTE DEUTSCH

TO —

SCARRED from the war-ploughed fields
You sing of love.
As those too tired
With the monotony of their agony
To know they have desired
Aught but soft lips and kinder breast,
And the quick key
To the undoing of the old unrest.
The stale and filthy tale of war,
The golden grace you burned and rotted for
Are done.
Poor animal,
Crawling so sick and lonely from your trench,
Having seen
Unburied bones and flesh turned green,
Swallowed the stench and cleaned your gun,—
Now there is nothing underneath the sun
You want
But the sweet flesh, the lovely bones of her.
Poor lover,
We cry, whose nights you envied, lying alone;
Who have seen peace ride the years,
And love go before dawn.

ENTR'ACTE

YOUR eyes
Are ruddy amber, fired with wit.
Your mouth
Trembles with mockery
Too exquisite for any word.
Only your body you hold tense,
With the stiff grace of a sad diffidence.

H. J. MASSINGHAM

EVE

DO not think, Eve, I do not know you, Eve,
Sailing your body down this London way,
Sowing the air with rosy loves to weave
Around us, Eve—or is it Lesbia?

Robed in the graces of all Paradise,
In body, Eve, or is it in the soul?
Circe, Medusa, whose enchanting eyes
The script of Nature's debt shall here unroll.

Close to those eyes now shuddering I drew,
Into your eyes for Paradise I gazed,
And I found nothing, Eve, nothing but you,
You in your trophies, Paradise all waste!

For leagues across the wilderness
I watched you prowl and rove
And leap and in your talons press
The moaning wounded dove.

Faster they fled, the many-hued,
The wingèd thoughts unfurled
Of God, whose ecstasy has strewed
Them thick upon the world.

But you have followed after,
Fresh-blooded with your prey,
Howling in your Mænad laughter,
And torn their wings away.

And panting here I found you lain
In the down of all your slain.

I saw you smiling pass down Oxford Street ;
On carrion full fed, a smiling ghoul ;
A surcubus ; sunk, huddled at your feet
Creation drained : Eve exquisite and foul !

WILFRED CHILDE

THE TOWER IN THE LANE

WHEN the Spring returned to Challfont's, many of the people had died of the winter-fevers, and the churches were draped with purple and glittering with the mortuary tapers. A funeral mass was going on in Saint Werdagh's, and the muted bells tolled a melancholy peal. But the children, to whom Death was merely a mysterious fairy, trooped out gleefully to meet the sun; cats and old women warmed themselves in the pure crocus-coloured light; burning crocuses pushed up their little luminous cups in the green plots and drenching yards; many a bird sang in the leafless boughs, timidly at first, later with ever sweeter, ever more courageous triumph. They knew very well that the sun's victory was now assured.

In Petkin Lane, in the shadow of the grey crumbling tower of the ancient mariners' church, six brats tumbled on the cobbles, quite warm in the young heats, and their tawdry-coloured toys made splashes of brightness in the dingy street. Susan had a bunch of crocuses and primroses in her hands; with the wanton cruelty of children she tore off the petals and scattered them over the brawling mouths of her companions. Joe wrestled with Arthur, and at the door of Number Ten, old Mother Hannakyn, in her red shawl and battered bonnet, peered sharply over her horn spectacles at her noisy charges. The clock in the tower struck twelve: a rout of jarring daws came screaming out of the belfry: between the faded scarlets of the house-roofs the sea showed, dim and far off, vaguely blue like some fragrant flower.

The smoke went up from Petkin Lane, solemn and remote

from the world, and the stone image of Saint Mary, dark and time-worn over the church porch, seemed to include the street in its monotonous benediction. Housewives in the fire-lit kitchens laboured over their cooking, for many fishermen were expected to return at one. The golden weathercock on the tower's top glittered as it pointed to the south, from whence blew a warm and kindly breeze, instinct with a new mysterious life.

AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS . . .

I

HER dark green robes embroidered all with flowers
Trail to the ground their velvet lengths and fill
The chapel with a cloud ; like a town of towers
Upon a silent, solitary hill

Stands up the splendour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel :
A noise of singing fills the fumèd space,
Where incense rises in blue sweetness whirled
Before Her painted calm most holy Face.

The nuns have brought dry withered wreaths of flowers,
Verbenas mild, syringas honey-sweet,
To sigh out their souls in a serenity of silence
Amid the waxen drips and tinsel at her feet :

Saying : Avè, O Mother, Mercy of flowers and leaves,
And of all green growth, of all things lovely and pure ;
Lo, where we Thy children perish at Thy feet
In the perfume of death—but Thou dost ever endure !

II

NUNS in green chambers have made chaplets: yea,
Sitting in small dark rooms looking out upon
A garden dun with yews at the ending of day,
Where a few small tapers mourn for the sunken sun

With primitive light in silvern candlesticks,
A few white tapers small and slender-clean—
Flowers amid bays and prickly leaves they mix,
To strew about the feet of their only Queen:

And the voices of the children in this House of Carmel
Going up before Her, punctual noon, dawn, eve,
Are as flowers breaking open into spring,
A soft-balmed spring, dreams of even deeper silence.

She is even as the ancient Earth, mother of all,
The flowers embroider Her dark green mantle round;
She is even as the grey winds crying out in barren winter,
As the first blue flower that starts up out of April ground.

ELIOT CRAWSHAY WILLIAMS

A PSALM OF PEACE

- W**E asked for Peace; and they have given us a stone.
We besought them to forge a plough-share; and lo! a badly-tempered sword.
- We requested a symphony; they promptly played "The Battle of Prague."
- We ordered a statue of Liberty; and they executed a plaster group of Mars and the Furies.
- We wished for sunshine; and we find ourselves in a thunder-storm.
- We hungered for a good, simple meal; we have to eat a second-rate French *table d'hôte*.
- We desired a well-constructed and appointed home; and we are offered a jerry-built villa where the door-handles come off and the hot water is cold.
- We longed after a pleasant garden; alas! we shall toil in a wilderness where the weeds are more numerous than the flowers.
- We begged them to paint for us a peaceful landscape; and they have produced a cubist sketch of a battlefield.
- We asked them to write another "Paradise Regained;" but they have only been capable of a *Daily Mail* feuilleton.
- In fact, we wanted a clean peace; and they have made us a bloody mess.

BESIDE THE STILL WATERS

BESIDE the still waters I will lie me down
Beside the still waters, solemn, sorrow-deep.
There is no comfort in the hurrying town ;
 Silence I crave, and loneliness and sleep.

Beside the still waters I will rest awhile,
 Beside the still waters, heavy as my heart,
Where there is none to stab me with a smile,
 There with my sorrow I will dwell apart.

Under the fathomless and uncaring sky
 I will lie down beside the still waters ;
Lulling my lonely sorrow will I lie,
 Far from the world and all its sons and daughters.

T. W. EARP

BROWN EARTH AND BEECH-TREE

I

THE half-moon has been caught in a small white cloud,
Its light can hardly reach down into the copse.
What is the change that has come over the branches?
Sinister, malignant, they entwine, reach out
In an obscure web across the path. Now evil
Creeps through the dusk. All had been quiet before;
A twig breaks somewhere; a bird with sudden clatter
Whirrs up; and that last sound was almost a scream.
Now hoofs and horns shoot, and the rough pelt steals
Over sleek thighs. This is enchantment. Quickly!
Out, out to the open and the bare brown fields!

II

Growth, ripening, and fruitage, these have passed;
The burden has been borne. The large square fields
Lie open to the sky. The rain descending
And the great, sweeping winds search through each pore,
Washing and cleansing. O beauty of bare earth!
Before the sower comes you may take rest,
A little rest, O constant, labouring earth.
Here is no shame in nakedness; nought here
Save patient, furrowed soil, stripped of all splendour,
And yet more splendid, being stripped. To-day,
Is not this field the queenliest, first mother?
Heaved on the hill-crest up to the clear sky,
Silent, outspread, she lies. This is her pause,
Her little respite between labour and labour.
Watch well, and you will say you see her breathe.
Listen, and you will hear the bare earth breathing.

MERLIN

MERLIN the wise and good,
The counsellor of kings,
Has gone out to the wood
And in cracked voice sings ;

Because a maid has caught him
That had all the world's lore,
And love's new learning taught him
That never loved before.

He droops his old, thin hands
To dabble in the pool,
And laughs, and understands
And knows the world a fool.

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