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HOPE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*SCOTTISH STORIES*

*SUCCESS*

*PROGRESS*

*HIS PEOPLE*

*FAITH*

*CHARITY*

*A HATCHMENT*

# HOPE

BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM



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TO  
SANTIAGO PEREZ TRIANA  
(MINISTER OF COLUMBIA)  
WRITER, PATRIOT AND FRIEND

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## PREFACE

### TO HORSEMEN AND OTHERS

“TYNE hope, tyne a’!” the Scottish proverb says, and it is right, for hope is like a northern hawthorn bush, late flowering but continuing long in bloom.

There is an element of speculation in it which faith quite lacks.

Thus, faith is for youth, hope for middle life, and charity, which only comes when faith and hope are dead, for age.

Sometimes, indeed, hope and her half-sister faith run almost into one another.

I remember once, in the Republic of the Banda Oriental del Uruguay, close to the frontier of Brazil, we came, my partner and myself, driving a troop of horses, to what in South America is called a “pass,” that is, a ford. What was the river’s name I cannot tell without an atlas, and that would be to put a slight upon my memory, so I refrain; but the

ford was "El Paso de los Novillós," and to get to it you had to ride down through a wood of "espinillo de olór."

The trail that we followed to the pass was steep and sandy, and cut by the passage of the animals into deep ruts, leaving long hummocks here and there, called "albardones" (that is, pack-saddles), on which grew thorny shrubs. Great cactuses with their flat leaves, looking like gigantic seeds of honesty, white, gaunt, and sear, stood here and there, and seemed to guard the road. They had an almost human look, and report said, not very long before we passed, a band of robbers had stripped themselves, and standing naked by the whitish stems, were so invisible that they were able quietly to kill some travellers, who rode right into them before they were aware. Therefore we rode with care, hitching our pistols now and then round nearer to our hands as we urged on the troop, swinging our whips about our heads, and pressing close upon the driven horses to prevent their cutting back or separating when they came to the "pass." Humming-birds fluttered like gigantic day-moths hung poised, with a thin whir of wings invisible, so that they seemed all body,

then darted off so swiftly that no eye could follow them. In the hot air myriads of insects, seen and unseen, raised a shrill melody. Upon the trees black cormorants sat and discoursed, and herons, white, slate-coloured, and brown, stood fishing silently. Carpinchos, looking like little hippopotami, just showed their backs above the surface of the water as we came to the crossing of the stream. We closed upon the troop, Mansel, myself, Exaltacion Medina, Raimundo Barragán, and the two peons; one of them rode a white and dun piebald, whose coat was curly as a sheep's. It had a strip of hide tied round the lower jaw to which the reins were fixed, for it was still unbitted. I see them now just as I saw them then, through a thin cloud of dust. The horses—there were about two hundred—entered the water in a bunch. The stream flowed strongly, yellow and turbid, and in the middle rose a low island, almost awash, long and grass grown, and looking like one of those "albardones" in the road which I have spoken of before. The horses took the water well, and we stood back to give them space, so that they should not crowd upon each other and get choked.

How well I see them, their heads laid flat

upon the stream, the lines made by their backs in the swift current, their tails spread out, and all of them swimming a little sideways, just as a carp swims sideways when he comes up for bread. Their eyes were fixed upon the bank, and in their wake a little wave as of a boat washed to the shore. We stood and gazed, watching a piebald mare, fat, strong, and wild, who led the troop. Her too I see and well remember, for she was barren and therefore just as good as is a horse. Moreover, though a natural pacer, she could bound forward like a deer when you but closed your legs upon her sides. *Linda la overa negra!* Well, just as we were thinking about entering the stream ourselves, having taken off our clothes and piled them on our heads, cinched up our saddles a little forward, and with our boots and pistols round our necks, the spurs inside the boots, one of the peons cried out the mare was drowning. I, sitting sideways in my saddle, saw that the current, which ran strongly just below the island, had swept her on her side; perhaps she was a trifle fat to swim. Little by little she appeared to sink, her quarters dropping perpendicularly and then the water creeping up round her neck. Once for

a moment her fore feet emerged, battling for life, her eyes were blue with terror, and then with a loud snort she disappeared.

One of us, I think it was Medina, exclaimed, "It was a pity of the mare, and she a barren mare as good as any horse . . . but God is not a bad man after all, the rest have landed safe." We crossed, the water lapping up almost to our mouths at the first plunge. I rode a horse that swam a little low, and on the other side we drove the troop into an open glade, and then dismounting, spread our clothes to dry.

The horses, after rolling, began to feed, guarded by a man who rode naked but for a light vicuña poncho, and we sat in the shade and boiled a kettle to take maté, in the lee of a fire of smoky wood to keep the flies away.

It may have been Raimundo or Exaltacion, most certainly it was not either of the peons, who observed, "Life is a fandango," and received the answer, "Yes, but all do not dance."

This time I am almost sure it was Exaltacion Medina who replied, "Yes, but all hope to dance."

As we sat thinking on his dictum, and also on the poor mare's death, one of those sudden

panics that at times befall a caballada, set our horses off.

When we had got them turned and we were riding slowly round them with the sun blistering our naked backs, I noticed that our feet were bleeding, for we had mounted barebacked in the hurry of the fright and ridden through the thorns.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.



## HOPE

SNOW had fallen ceaselessly for hours, blotting out all the features of the landscape, but leaving here and there the red earth, bare, upon the trail that led from San Antonio to La Bandera as it wound about between the scrub of huisache and mesquite. It lay congealed upon the half-transparent twigs of the pinched redbuds that looked as miserable as does a ruffled parrot in a cage on a cold winter's day. In the deep hollows horses thrust their muzzles into the powdery snow, and now and then beat at it with their feet impatiently, as if they thought that Nature had played some joke upon them that they found out of place. The Helotés Creek, half frozen, formed the boundary between the post-oak country that stretched out like a natural park and the low plains thick with a scrub of thorny bush. Upon the mound, shaded by a thick grove of dark pecans, a low-eaved house surrounded by a low snake-fence looked down upon the creek.

The unfamiliar snow piled on the roof gave a false air of Northern Europe, which the wild howling of the prairie wolves intensified. Inside and blinking at the fire sat the old Swabian peasants, who had emigrated years ago, and now in their old age had become rich and owned the ranche and the wide range for cattle that ran from the Helotés, to the north fork of the Pipe Creek. Their children, born Americans, had left them when they grew up, and lived, some on the Rio Grande, others in Arizona, but all of them thousands of miles away in tastes, in sentiment, and in their view of life. Hard and unsentimental, they had all received that education which their parents lacked, but the old people had preserved their pristine ignorance of modern life and wonder at the world. Gretchen and Hans they had remained to everybody, and spoke a mixture of bad English and their native tongue. They sat and gazed into the fire, and the wreathed snow perhaps had set them thinking on their old home and life, for it was Christmas Eve, and memory stirred in their hearts.

After a silence the old man turned to his wife and said, "Gretchen, to-morrow will be Christmas Day. That Mexican who herd the

sheep say it is Noche Puena, just as he saddled up his horse to go to town. It is the night of nights . . . dat night the Kings all come to Bethlehem . . . it set one thinking, eh?"

Gretchen, after a long look in the fire, rejoined, "Yes, lieber Hans, I think of many things—of the old country, of you when you was young . . . myself too, mit my yellow hair, you say was like de gold, and of our life . . . where has it gone to, so long and yet so quick, it seems as yesterday?"

Hans drew his chair across the hearth, and, taking up her hand, patted it tremulously and said, "Ach, I think too of many things; but your hair, Gretchen, still is golden, for old Hans. . . . What a night, eh? How de coyotés howl, just like the wolves in Swabia in that long time ago you speak of."

They sat holding each other's hands, till Gretchen said, "To-night the children all put out their shoes for Santa Claus . . . you will laugh, but—no, I hardly like to say it—I still have one of the wooden shoes that little Gretchen mit de golden hair was wearing long ago in the old country. . . . What if we put him out?"

The old man ran his hand affectionately

over his wife's grey, wiry hair, and pinched her withered, but still rosy cheek, just as he might have done in the far-off time towards which their thoughts were straying on that night.

Rising, he walked across the room and, throwing back the shutter, looked out into the dark. The clump of tall pecans formed a vast snowy dome; in the corral the horses huddled close together with their tails to the blast, owls hooted, and the wind roared amongst the trees. "It is still snowing, and the creek is rising; dat Mexican did well to start for town: in an hour more no one could cross," he said. "If the black schelm was a white man he'd lose the trail to San Antonio and die in the drifts; but, never fear, the devil knows his own. . . . Ah, yes, the shoe, you say—put him out then, little old fool; all we can hope for now is that Santa Claus take us for children and send us something; for what shall we hope for now, eh, little old fool? . . . Well, put him out."

All the time that he had been speaking, his wife had had her head bent over a great box, and now drew out, wrapped in a piece of flannel, an old wooden shoe. She held it tenderly, but half ashamed, just as a savage

might have held some fetich in his hands, after conversion to the true faith, before a missionary. Clumsily, but artistically made, somehow, out there on the Helotés Creek, removed from all tradition, and face to face with Nature, it spoke of Europe and of an older world. The pebbles of the village street had dented it and left impressions of themselves upon the sole, just as life leaves its wrinkles on the face. As the old couple looked at it, unbidden tears rose to their eyes, and Hans stretched out a bony finger and touched it timidly, just as a man touches the face of his first child, half proudly, half in alarm at the new fetter he has forged upon his life. He said, "Ach, Gretchen, your foot was not so big then, back in those days. I tink I hear you now run like a little pony on the street." Taking the shoe, he crossed the room and, opening the door, let in the driving snow with a cold blast that made the cheap petroleum lamp flicker and jump, and set it down outside.

Gretchen had thrown new logs upon the hearth, and, drawing up her chair, said to her husband, "Come and sit down, and let us drink glass beer. I always hope for something, something that come into our life even

now and make us happy . . . not that we are not happy . . . but something wonderful.”

Her husband, either impressed by her simplicity—the one thing in the world impressive—or to humour her, answered her with a smile, “Ja . . . yes, and Santa Claus, he send us something, maybe . . . at any rate, tomorrow, if the trails are passable, some of the children will be here.” The glare of the great logs, of hard mesquite, fell on their wrinkled faces as they sat, married by Time, before the fire. Hans, in a suit of homespun clothes, his trousers tucked into his boots, with his bald head as shiny as a billiard ball, his grey and tangled beard, red cheeks, and hands like roots of trees, looked hale and prosperous. His wife, in her bed-ticking gown confined about the waist with a broad string of tape, her feet encased in slippers down at heel, and a white cap upon her head, was thin and angular; and as she sat holding her husband’s rugged hand in hers, looked like a wooden toy, made in Thuringia, in an old-time Noah’s ark.

Still there was something spiritual in her face, as if the world and all its trials, toil, disappointments, and the cares of a large family had left no mark upon her soul, and as if the



wrinkles on her brow were but the work of Time and went no deeper than the skin.

A German clock, brought from their home across the sea, ticked on the wall, measuring out time, as it were, in an old-fashioned Swabian way, pausing a little every now and then and whirring wheezily before it struck the hour. An air of cleanliness almost unnatural was over everything. The plates and dishes shone as if they had been varnished, in the rough wooden rack above the dresser, and chairs and tables had been beeswaxed over till they appeared to glow. The air of comfort and of home contrasted strangely with the wild night and the position of the ranche on the north fork of the Helotés Creek out on the Texan plains.

Sleep fell upon the couple sitting by the fire, and as they slept the fire burned low upon the hearth. Outside nothing was heard but the wild seething of the wind, and now and then a rush as of an avalanche in miniature, as the snow slid down from the steep roof. An hour or two slipped past, and the storm moderated. The moon shone brightly, and in the snow the tracks of animals were seen—the small, round holes that the deer's feet had made, the footsteps of the wolves like those of

a large dog, the bear's flat trail, as if a man had passed on snowshoes, revealed as on a chart their passage through the storm. The sleepers stirred uneasily, and then, awakened by the cold, sat up and looked at one another.

Hans piled fresh logs upon the fire, stamping them in position with his foot, and then, when they had warmed themselves at the red blaze, said, "Did you dream, Gretchen?" "Yes, Hans," she answered. "I dreamed a lovely dream. We were both young again and walking in a wood. You take my hand and say, 'Gretchen, I love you . . . your hair is golden, your lips so red, I want to kiss them.' . . . Oh, it was lovely. . . . Did you dream, Hans?"

A shadow ran across his face as he replied, "Yes, I dream too. I dream of all our struggles—how we came to America without a heller, and how we starved and fought . . . of how we slaved, and then of how we build this house. Of our first son—the one the Indians killed . . . of all the rest; and then it seemed I saw us both sit sleeping here before the fire."

"Oh, Hans!" his wife rejoined, "what for a dream was that? You have not been asleep." She paused and saw her husband really had



dreamed, and then, smiling a weary smile, said, "Go, lieblich schatz—this is the way I used to speak to you in the old days—and bring the shoe you put outside the door. I hope that Santa Claus may have put something in it, something wonderful."

Her husband kissed her cheek, and, gained a little by her faith, opened the door and carried in the shoe. Something was in it of a truth, for Santa Claus, who never disappoints people who trust in him, had filled it up with snow. As they stood looking at it ruefully, the long-drawn howl of a coyoté sounded far out upon the plain.

## THE GRAVE OF THE HORSEMAN

A LITTLE town just glimmered in the distance, lost in orange groves, with a few date palms waving above the saint's tomb near the gate, their ragged tops looking like seaweed in a pool left by the tide upon the beach. High mountains flanked the road, which ran between great boulders, with here and there flat slabs of whinstone cropping up, shiny and slippery with the heat. A grove of cork trees shadowed it on one side, and at the other the precipitous street of the strange mountain village called Bahallein, with the houses separated by a brawling stream which roared and foamed eternally, ran surging into caverns, and, again emerging into view, made a right angle to its course.

Smoke rose from many of the houses, and a wail of Arab women pierced the noise of the tumultuous stream. A band of horsemen, with a scout or two thrown out on either side, picked their way through the stones, their horses prop-

ping themselves on their forelegs, drawing their quarters after them when they had found a foothold, making their riders sway upon their saddles as when a camel rises to its feet. Some of them bore fresh-cut-off heads upon the muzzles of their guns, either stuck stiffly on, as boys stick turnips on a stick, or with a lap of skin left on the throat, through which the gun was thrust, leaving the head to hang down limply like a fish. They drove before them cattle, urging them onwards with their spear-like guns. Occasionally a man stood out upon a rock and fired his long and slender-barrelled gun, which went off sullenly as the rough, home-made powder, ill rammed home, ignited slowly, sending the bullet over the heads of the retiring band. Sometimes a woman stood close to their path, shaking a ragged haik and cursing, and when a horseman passed he turned a little out of his way and rode on with his eyes fixed far away, as if he had seen nothing, leaving her wailing by the road.

They closed their ranks and rode into the track that leads from Fez to Séfru, the scouts falling back on the main body when the last dropping shots of the harried villagers were spent. Horses neighed shrilly, and when they

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passed mares feeding by the outskirts of the cork wood, danced sideways or plunged into the air, their riders checking them so sharply with the curb that a red foam hung round their mouths as they fell back upon the bit. A cloud of dust hung over all the band, through which at times appeared a horse and rider, the man dressed all in white, save for a long, blue cloak which streamed out in the wind, and the horse saddled with the high-cantled Arab saddle covered with orange silk. Faces tanned to the colour of a boot or white as ivory and set in jet-black beards looked out from under hoods drawn up above their turbans, with here and there a flat-nosed negro, looking still blacker in the white clothes he wore. Black, grey, and chestnut, with roans and piebalds and the mixed colours that the Arabs call "stones of the river," their horses looked as if they had all stepped from pictures by Velazquez, with tails that swept the ground, manes reaching almost to their knees, and forelocks falling to their nostrils, covering their eyes like veils. Their riders, thin and wiry, were of those who live by "clashing of the spurs," as goes the Arab phrase, and their wild eyes appeared to be eternally fixed on the horizon and to see

nothing nearer than a mile away. Except the love of blood and pillage, they had but one thing in common—the fear and hatred of their chief, who rode along behind them, swathed to the eyes in white, on which a spot or two of blood served as a sort of trade-mark of his interior grace.

Seated a little heavily upon a chestnut horse with a white tail and mane, Si Omar had returned his gun to its red flannel case, but held it still across the saddle, balanced against the pommel with an occasional motion of his hand. His horse reared and plunged forward now and then, fretting to join the others, but its rider took no notice except to slack his bridle hand a little, and when the animal came back upon the bit and gave its head, he threw the long red silken reins across his shoulder, where they remained, looking as if someone had drawn a bloody finger down his clothes. His spear-like, single-pointed spurs hung loosely from his red-and-yellow riding-boots, and just behind his heavy stirrups damascened with gold, had made a bloody patch upon his horse's flanks, which he spurred constantly, after the Arab fashion, to keep him to his pace. Dark, for a Berber, and marked a little here and there

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with smallpox, his spare black beard showing the skin between the hairs, Si Omar looked about forty-five, and had begun to put on flesh a little, after the fashion of his race when fortune smiles upon them, although he passed his life on horseback and in the open air. He wore the lock of hair, hanging down on his cheek, called by the Berbers "el kettaieh," that gave an air of fierceness to his face, which his wild eye and ever-twitching mouth accentuated. His hands were small with the nails clean and cared for, and when he raised his arm the loose sleeves of his selham left bare his wrist, slender and nervous, with something of the look as of a leopard's claw or of the leg of a gazelle. As he rode on he drew a fold of his selham about his mouth, covering his face, leaving his eyes, bloodshot and staring, alone exposed to view. Passing the cork wood, the horsemen, driving their "creagh" slowly in front of them, came out upon the plain and struck into a road which ran along the foothills of the mountains, from which the little, glistening town of Séfru appeared, a league or two away, buried in gardens and in woods. The sun was slanting towards the west and bathed the plain in a pale glow which blended every-



thing together, making the pastoral Arab life a perfect illustration of the Old Testament as we conceive it, in the glow of the imagination of our faith. Herds lowed, and sheep drawn out in lines straggled towards the fold, preceded by a boy who piped upon a reed whose twittering notes hung in the air like the faint echo of a lark's song when it has soared into the clouds.

The women went and came about the wells dressed in the desert blue that makes their supple figures look even more slender than they are, with pointed amphoræ upon their shoulders or balanced on their heads. Foals frisked beside their mothers, and here and there camels stood up outlined against the sky or browsed upon the thorny bushes, their outstretched necks writhing about like snakes. Elders sat at the doors of tents in groups, and the whole plain looked peaceful, happy, and exhaled an air as of eternity, so well the life fitted the scene and the scene sanctified the life. Above it, the marauding band passed, as a kite may pass above a dovecote, a wolf prowl past a fold, or as a train rushes at sixty miles an hour through some quiet valley in the hills. The horses neighed and passaged, and a cloud

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of dust covered the horsemen and the animals they drove, whilst in the rear the solitary chief rode silent and as if buried in a dream.

The world was going well with him, and the new sultan had confirmed him in his governorship both of the tribe and of the town. Indeed he was a man designed by nature to rule over such a tribe as was Ait Yusi, whose members passed their lives in fighting and in deeds of violence. His father had ruled them with a rod of iron, making himself so hated that at last the tribe had risen and burned him on a pile of hay. He knew himself detested, even by his horsemen, and for that reason always rode behind them to avoid an accidental shot, though at the same time they all feared him far too much to look him in the face. So he rode on, cursing his horse when it tripped on a stone, and muttering the proverb that declares the horseman's grave is always open when it stumbled in the mud, and keeping a keen eye on all the thickets for a chance shot from some of his own tribesmen and on his soldiers whenever they looked back. Still he had passed his life upon the watch, after the fashion of a tiger, and now he was content to muse upon the future as his



horse paced along the road. The way seemed open for him to ascend, and the new sultan was on the look out for men on whom he could rely. Visions of larger governments rose in his mind, of the great kasbah he would build—for building is a passion with the Arabs—with courts that led from courts into more courts, with crenellated walls, a garden with its clump of cypresses, a mosque, rooms paved with tiles from Fez and Tetuán, a fishpond full of gold and silver fish, with water everywhere, gurgling in little rills of white cement beneath the orange trees. He saw himself all dressed in dazzling white, sitting upon a mattress in a room open to the court of orange trees, lulled by the murmuring of the water, drinking green tea flavoured with amber amongst his women, or talking with his friends, what time his secretary wrote his letters, in his guest-chamber.

Horses, of course, were plentiful, and all of lucky colours, so that a man when he set off upon a journey might be certain to return. Some should be pacers, for the road, and others for the powder-play, light as gazelles, and bitted so as to turn, just as a seagull turns upon the wing. He felt himself assured of

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fortune and safe to rise in the good graces of his lord, whilst the declining sun, which fell upon his face, blinding him to the difficulties of the rough track on which he rode, induced a feeling of contentment which perhaps threw him off his guard.

A mare and foal feeding close by had set Si Omar's horse neighing and plunging, and he, swaying a little to the plunges, may perhaps have touched it in the mouth too sharply with the bit. After a spring or two, the horse passaged and reared, and lighting on a flat slab of rock which cropped up in the middle of the road, slipped sideways and fell with a loud crash, its shoes, in the last struggle to maintain its balance, sending a shower of sparks into the air. All passed as if by magic, and the man who but an instant previously had ridden so contentedly lay a crushed mass of draggled white under the horse, which in a moment had regained its feet. He lay pale, but quite conscious, with his hand still clasped upon his rifle, looking up fiercely like a wounded animal awaiting the final stroke. His followers, hearing the noise, turned and surrounded him, glaring down at their wounded chief with hard, unsympathising eyes. Not a

word passed on either side, and then a Berber, mounted upon a sorrel colt with four white feet and a large blaze upon its nose, exclaimed, "God wishes it; Si Omar's day is done." Then, slowly levelling his gun, he shot his fallen chieftain through the body at short range, and all the rest, crowding about him as he lay bleeding on the ground, fired into him, spurring their horses over the prostrate body on the ground. Whether Si Omar died of the first shot, or whether, seeing his day was done, he set his teeth and died as a wild boar dies, silently, without a sign, none of his slayers knew. A cloud of dust hung in the air above the spot where men rode furiously about firing their guns and shouting, and then it cleared away, leaving a small, white bundle of torn rags upon the ground stained here and there with blood.

The white-maned chestnut which the dead man had ridden stood grazing quietly a hundred yards away, and the declining sun fell on the stony hill beyond the road, flushing it with a tinge of pinkish yellow, between the colour of an old piece of ivory and a worn Roman brick. A league away Séfru lay sleeping in its orange groves, and from the plain below the road came

up the bleating of the sheep as they were driven to the fold.

The slayers, pressing their Arab stirrups into their horses' sides, rode on a little, and as they passed an angle of the road, settling their flowing robes and loading up their rifles as they went, a Berber turned and, sitting sideways on his horse, fired a last shot at his dead chief, which struck the ground a little short and, flying upwards, flattened the bullet on a rock far up against the hill. The horsemen drew together, as if by instinct, just as a flight of birds collects after some incident which has broken up their ranks, and, swaying in their saddles easily, their long white selhams fluttering in the wind, they disappeared along the road.

## VILLA FLORIDA

HE who had been an emperor, and was the lineal descendant of the last prophet that the world has known, had been deserted and dethroned, and lived with the remainder of his household in three small villas on the hill beyond Tangier. In the same way that the whole world goes out to greet the conqueror—that is when he has conquered—so does it shrink from vanquished men as deer shrink from a wounded stag. “From the fallen tree all men cut firewood,” as the proverb says; but when the wood is cut they leave the trunk to moss and rot, deserted in the woods. As fear guards vineyards more than do the walls, so sympathy really anoints a king more than the chrism oil, and usually it is more readily bestowed on kings in exile, dethroned, supplanted, or in some way or other fallen from their high estate, rather than on those monarchs who in their cotton-velvet robes and

tinsel crowns sit in the full glare of the foot-lights on the stage.

So having known him in the heyday of prosperity in Fez, the Commander of the Faithful, a man so holy that the mere virtue of his presence brought a blessing, and when his will was law to millions, I took my horse to ride and visit him in the days when the silver cord of majesty was loosened, and when the golden bowl of popularity lay shattered by the puddle, and men shot out their lips.

The steep, paved road led upwards between gardens hedged round with cypresses. On every side houses of Europeans had crowded out the low thatched huts and the white cubes of masonry which a few years ago had been one of the chiefest features of the place. Jews perched on monstrous pack-saddles housed in red flannel, clattered and chattered on the path, followed by brawny Moors who trotted patiently behind, cursing them underneath their breath. Parties of tourists, seated on donkeys, their faces dyed bright scarlet with the sun, rode past, casting their patronising glances on the "pooah Moors" and yearning in their hearts to turn them into component parts of the great scheme of life, that makes



us all adorers of accomplished facts, leaving us stripped and bare of all revolt against the meanness of our lives.

The cypresses beside the path gave out their spicy scent and shed their dry and withered cones upon the ground. The eucalyptus, with its balls of blossom, looking like clots of foam against the dark metallic leaves, stirred in the light west wind, making the strips of hanging bark rattle against their trunks. White poplars, just bursting into leaf, a maze of mystic white, so light and feathery that they appeared as if they must have been transferred straight from a screen made in Japan, replanted, and then by some botanic miracle endued with life, to bring the illusion of the north into the southern air in which they seemed to float, stood here and there in clumps. I passed the little saint house, which with its fluttering white flag and gnarled old olive trees stands at the roadside, and branching off into a muddy lane, whose mouth was guarded by a small thatched hut in which sat several dilapidated Moors in dingy rags, began to splash through pools of water and through mire so sticky that at each step my horse's feet sounded as if gigantic corks were being drawn

from bottles, as he struggled through the mud. The track led up between high fences made of canes, with boughs of kermes-oak and of lentiscus thrust through the spaces where the canes were tied, forming an impenetrable screen and shutting off the household of the dethroned sultan from the gaze of infidel and faithful alike, as effectually as did the palace walls in Fez. As it ascended, the path grew narrower, and by its side, squatted on stones, sat groups of Moors, with their long white selhams all daubed with mud, waiting about upon the chance of being wanted to do something, just as they waited outside the palace doors at Fez or at Marakesh when their lord was king, and all apparently as insolent and as contented with themselves as when his word was law.

The stuccoed gateway of the ill-built modern house bore the legend "Villa Florida" on a slab of marble, which was stuck crooked on the pillar of the gate, and showed the same words painted underneath, in letters rather larger than the slab, in the same way as in certain pictures of Velazquez you see the drawing of a previous pair of horse's legs looming up through the paint, as if to show the painter of the horse was mortal after all. On each



side of the gateway high tufts of canes waved in the wind, and a great clump of aloes stopped a hole where the fence ended and the masonry began. The mud, the wind, the scorching winter sun, the look as of a house in Arizona or in Western Texas, built by the Mexicans and left to be the incongruous dwelling of some incoming family from the north, produced an air of desolation, compared with which an Arab tent of camel's hair stuck down upon the sand might have looked homelike and an abode to which a man could have become attached.

The ill-fitting door, to which a Spanish knocker, formed like a hand in brass, was roughly nailed, though firmly locked, yet gave a vista through its cracks of a deserted garden, in which geraniums run to wood straggled about in beds of rosemary, and orange trees which never had been pruned sprang from great masses of white broom. The path which led up from the gate to the decaying villa through a wilderness of flowers was bordered on each side by peeling vases in red stucco, which stood dejectedly, like sentinels set up to guard a palace where the king was dead, and then forgotten on their post. It finished at a

flight of stairs, broken and with great tufts of weeds springing out from the cracks between the steps.

Mysterious voices parleyed in whispers, and now and then an eye peered through the interstices between the planks, and a soft rustling in the path showed that the household of the sultan kept a close watch over the safety of their lord. As I stood holding to a bunch of canes to stop myself from slipping down into the mud, my eyes fixed on the gate, steps hurrying down the path behind me made me turn and almost fall into the arms of a fat, white-robed secretary, who came as delicately as did Agag, to ask me for my card. Long did he look at it, holding it upside down for greater ease in the deciphering. Then, asking me what my name was, he wrote it down in Arabic, asked me if that was right, again surveyed my card, the wrong side up, and quietly withdrew. Ten minutes passed, a quarter of an hour, and then the gate at which I stood was opened cautiously and once again the secretary appeared. This time he bore a European notebook bound in shiny cloth, and once again he inquired my name, asking me, when I had told him, if I was sure of it, and

once again wrote it down carefully and once again withdrew. Two or three soldiers, with the long side-locks that the men about the sultan always wear, came down the lane, springing from stone to stone like cats, and every one of them inquired my business and my name. Half an hour passed, and, just as I had turned to go, the gate swung open suddenly, and three or four soldiers, rushing out, seized hold of my right hand, and all vociferating that Mulai Abd-el-Assiz waited for me, advanced at a quick walk.

Under a group of almond trees just bursting into flower there stood a figure robed in white, at sight of which the attendants all withdrew, leaving me to advance, bareheaded, and salute the man who once had been a king. He knew me instantly, motioned to me to be covered, with a gesture that the Tsar of Russia might have envied but never could have compassed, answered the usual formal compliments, and then stood silent, with a smile that showed his firm, white teeth, whilst I as delicately as I could touched on the mutability of fate, in Arabic quite destitute of grammar, saying not what I wished to say, but anything I could.

I floundered on, looking upon the ground,

not to embarrass him with the recollection of himself in other times ; and then, looking up for a moment, saw the tears standing in his eyes, and for the first time remarked adversity had set a seal as of nobility upon him, that he had aged, and lines had crept about the corners of his mouth. He met my eye a moment, thanked me, said "It was ordained," took my hand for a moment, carrying his own an instant to his breast, smiled again sadly, and withdrew towards the house. As I looked after the white gliding figure with its flowing robes I saw him as I had seen him first, in far Marakesh, riding before a cloud of horsemen, on a white horse, under the scarlet umbrella, revered by thousands both as an emperor and a saint ; young, hopeful, the Commander of the Faithful ; but not so noble as he had stood with the regality of adverse fortune on him, under the almond trees.

## A SEBASTIANIST

HE must have been the very last of his extraordinary sect, and naturally all those who knew him tapped their foreheads or wagged their fingers to and fro before their faces when they spoke of him, and said that he was mad. For all that, in the ordinary affairs of life he did not seem much madder than are other people, but went about his usual avocations as if he thought that he would live for ever, just as they did themselves. Still, looked at without prejudice, his strange belief that Dom Sebastian was not dead, but by magician's art had been conveyed away to some mysterious middle region of the earth after the fateful battle of Alcázar-el-Kebir, and would return again to claim his throne, was not much stranger than are other faiths which we all take on trust. Men reasoned with him, and to all they said he merely answered, "He will return some day"; and fixed in that belief he took his evening walk, when the day's work was done,

upon a terrace that looked out upon the sea, in the small town in Portugal in which he lived, to welcome home the king.

A little, wizen-looking man, with a large head to which a few scant locks of hair still clung, as mistletoe clings to an apple bough, and long grey whiskers like a fish's fins, Dom Jeremias always dressed in black, and his grave manners, with his waistcoat stained with snuff, gave him an air as if he was connected either with the Church or law. What heightened the illusion was the faint odour of stale incense that hung about his clothes, his frequent pious exclamations, and an air as if under no circumstance whatever could he have gained his livelihood at any business that required strict attention or needed much communication with mankind. Constant in church, after Our Lady, whom he adored with as much tender veneration as if he had been under personal obligation to her for the continual miracle of life, he was devoted most to S. Sebastian, the saint whose name the Cardinal Dom Enrique had given to the king for whose return he confidently looked, at the baptismal font.

Being as he was, a man more fit, as goes the saying (in the Spains), for God than man, his



business could not have gone on for a year without his ruin, had not his sisters, Maria Agueda and Peregrina, looked after it, keeping the books and seeing into everything, whilst they pretended to consult him as to the smallest detail of the shop. His days he spent behind the counter, seated on a rush-bottomed chair, with his feet resting on an esparto mat, a cigarette, usually smoked down to the stump, between his lips, and with a wicker cage in which was an extremely plethoric decoy partridge, swinging above his head. Piles of rough plates made in Manizes stood in the corners of the shop upon the red-brick floor, and on rough, ill-planed shelves were ranged strange little bulgy mugs, earthenware pipkins, flower-pots, which looked as if they had been dug up from a Roman tomb, and jars of various sizes to hold oil, glazed a metallic green. His sisters jangled with customers and gossiped with their friends, whilst he occasionally cast his accounts in a long, narrow, dog-eared ledger, so thumbed that the soft cardboard of which the binding was composed, was bare about the edges and frayed into a pulp.

Flies buzzed in myriads about the shop, flying between the links of the long chain of coloured



paper which dangled from the roof with a soft, rustling noise. The shop itself looked out upon a winding street paved with rough cobblestones, the outside walls of many of the houses springing up from the summit of the cliffs which overhung the sea. The day would slip past imperceptibly, unless a neighbour chanced to look in and set him talking on his hobby, on which once mounted he became another man, and by degrees got heated with the argument, and set forth all the reasons that appeared valid to him, to account for his belief. "Nobody saw him die," he would exclaim, "for Mesa clearly is not worthy of belief, writing as he did in the Spanish interest after the crowns were joined. Now, if he did not die, and if the Lord of Heaven is omnipotent, is it not possible that for wise reasons of his own he may have chosen to preserve him, and will again, when the fit moment comes, let him return again to earth to manifest his might? Franchi, who wrote his life, is doubtful, and it is known that many persons of good fame swore on their death-beds they had seen the king, years after the great fight."

If, on the other hand, no one looked in but a chance customer or two, and nothing broke

the languor of the day but the flies buzzing or the harsh cry of water-sellers in the street, late in the afternoon he made his preparations for a stroll. Standing a moment in front of the brown picture of a saint stuck in a corner and lighted by a lamp, he prayed a little, then after crossing himself elaborately, both on the breast and mouth, would take his hat from off the wall, where it hung dangling from a nail, and light a cigarette. This operation he performed from a brass chafing-dish in which a piece of charcoal always lay ready to be blown to a white heat. Next, calling for his cloak, which he wore all the year to keep out cold or to exclude the heat, according to the season, he turned towards his sisters, saying, "I think I shall just stroll towards the cliff, to look out for a sail." Then with a pious exclamation, or perhaps after quoting an old saw with the air of having lived through the experience himself, he stepped into the street.

Once there, he generally stopped for a moment as if he was about to take a resolution, though he had followed the same path for years, and then turned towards the sea. His friends who passed him on the way usually asked him, with a serious air, after the health of Dom Sebas-

tian and when he was expected to return. To their inquiries he said nothing, but, smiling gravely, touched his hat punctiliously, passing along the street till it led out upon an open, grassy space that overlooked the sea. Then, sitting down and taking up his telescope, he looked out seaward, scanning the horizon till his eyeballs ached to catch a glimpse of the returning caravel which should bring back the king, still young and gallant, just as he was on John the Baptist's Day, when the fleet weighed on the full tide from Belem, three hundred years ago.

These were his happiest moments, for there was none to mock at him, and by degrees he generally passed off to that interior world of visions which men like Jeremias make for themselves out of the pia mater of their brains, as a retreat against the nullity of lives, in a world made from nothing. Dom Jeremias heard the cannons roar and saw the king upon the poop, bands played, and all the housetops looked like rose gardens with women, some joyful, seeing the king so confident, and others thinking that, as the historian wisely hath it, no battle ever yet was fought without blood flowing, and that the spawn of Mahomet was

a stout foe to beard in his own territory. A great and lucid spectacle it was; at least Sebastian Mesa says so, and we can take him at his word, seeing that he was curate of the parish of S. Just and commissary of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the most loyal, noble, and crowned city of Madrid, and capital of Spain.

All passed before the eyes of the man dozing on the cliff, just as things pass before the eyes of those who look into the camera obscura of the world and have no power to alter or to aid, by the least tittle, those whom they see upon the road to ruin, for all their willingness. He saw the ship that bore the standard of the king foul a great barque from Flanders, carrying away its figurehead and part of its jib-boom, and when a man was killed just by Sebastian's side by the chance bursting of a gun, Dom Jeremias held his breath, muttering that someone surely had the evil eye amongst his followers.

Galleons and galleasses, caravels, fly-boats, and galleys with the Moorish slaves all tugging at the oars, he saw, watching them till they disappeared down the round-sided world and vanished into space. He saw them anchor in the Bay of Lagos of the Algarvés, to take

aboard Francisco de Tabora and the men that he had raised. There they remained four days, which seemed a little strange to Jeremias, knowing as he did the king's eagerness, and when they got to Cadiz, where they embarked the forces under the orders of the Ambassador of Spain, he longed to go ashore and help the preparations, for the delay but served to put spurs on his heels, as Mesa said it did on those of Dom Sebastian, as he lay idly in the port.

Tangier was reached successfully, and though he cursed him for a misbelieving dog, Dom Jeremias still was glad that the Sherif Mulai Mohamed was there and waiting for the king with a large force of Moors. Half waking and half sleeping, he would sit musing upon his visions, in his waking moments, and, when he dozed, seeing that which he thought about awake, unrolled before his eyes. Being a simple-minded man, he was not puffed up by the thought that he alone remained faithful to to the delusion which had brought all the happiness he knew into his life, for faith, like virtue, is its own reward, though he may still have had a little pride in his sincerity. So may a Jesuit in the old times in Paraguay, in the recesses of the Tarumensian woods, meeting



his unknown martyrdom alone, certain his death would be unchronicled and his bones moulder into dust without a hand to throw a little earth upon them, still have rejoiced that he had found the strength to stand his torture, and for a moment looked up with a smile, before the club descended or the swift arrow plunged into his heart.

Waking or sleeping, he still followed as he sat the fortunes of the expedition, seeing it disembark near the small, grassy knoll where now the saint-house nestles in its palms outside Arcila, knowing it was an error not to have gone on to Laraché and taken it at once. This saddened him, though he reflected that even kings are liable to err, a fact the Lord permits, no doubt, to show them they are human ; and so fell musing on his hero's grace of person, his wit and gravity of bearing, his pleasantness in all his commerce with mankind, and boundless courtesy. Much did it please him to reflect, when he thought on the world in which he lived, that in Sebastian's heart no malice or suspicion ever found a place, that he was open in his dealings, patient in hardships to a miracle, looked kindly on the faults of others, and never once condemned a

man to death, in his brief journey through his life of four-and-twenty years.

In everything proportioned like a king (as says Sebastian Mesa), he saw him, active, alert, short-waisted, legs long and bowed from riding in his youth, of middle height and fair, with a thin beard, and eyes large, blue, and open, which seemed to look beyond the man he spoke to, into the firmament. Still he gazed on the fated expedition, and saw it march towards Alcázar-el-Kebir, encamp upon the west bank of the Wad-el-M'hassen, and awake early on the fourth of August (S. Domingo's Day), to find the enemy in countless numbers blackening the plain. He saw the king, like an experienced captain, set his host in array ; and then, when all was ready, Dom Jeremias seemed to hear him tell them to call to prayers, and see the Jesuit, Father Alexander, raise up a crucifix on high, so that it was in view of all the soldiery. When the king kneeled before his kneeling troops Dom Jeremias fervently crossed himself and prayed for his success. He saw him, still upon his knees, receive the message from his second in command, that they were waiting for the signal to advance, rise up and at a bound, armed as he was, spring



on the back of a black horse of middle size, not gay to look at, but the best bitted and most fit for war of all the horses either in Portugal or Spain.

Long did the battle rage, with varying success, till about eventide, when everything was lost, he saw the king charge with a knight or two into the thickest of the enemy and battle furiously. Then losing sight of him, and when the sounds of warfare had grown dimmer in his ears, he seemed to find himself upon the ramparts of Arcila and listen to the voice of a mysterious stranger asking for shelter, and, when the guard refused, saw him turn away desperately and ride into the night. This vision strengthened his belief that the king had escaped alive; so when the evening breeze brought Jeremias back into a world in which he was the one Sebastianist alive he used to rise, and throwing back his cloak, walk homewards, his spirit shaken by the scene that he had conjured up, and his faith magnified.

He died as he had lived, and when they found his body seated on the cliff, his eyes wide open, staring out across the sea, his telescope was lying by his side, with the brass cap fixed firmly down with rust over the object-glass.

## A REPERTORY THEATRE

THE red-haired Spaniard from Ceuta, who had been hired to keep the mules from eating up our horses' corn—for in a fondak an Arab never ties his mule—was a sententious man. After having thrown a stone which narrowly escaped knocking out a horse's eye, he said in answer to a question, "No, Tetuan is not a bad place on the whole. . . . I am a mason, and just now am working on a mosque—a nice job for a Christian, eh?" No one compassionating him, he continued: "The worst thing is that there are no amusements in the place. A man without amusements soon grows vicious." This he enunciated with so grave an air, some might have thought he had evolved and not inherited the phrase. "The infidel, of course" (he meant the Moors), "do not require amusement as we Christians do. Give them a cup of weak green tea, flavoured with mint, and they will sit for hours and talk about the price of barley or on the attributes of God, for all is

one to them, and be as happy as a strolling player upon the evening of a holiday." He stopped and tried to light a cigarette with a flint and steel, and, failing, put the cigarette behind his ear, saying, "I'll leave it for the next bull-fight, as we say in Spain; not that they ever have a bull-fight in this benighted land. Why do we come here? I sometimes ask myself. True, here there are no taxes, and bread is cheaper than in Spain, but after all, it is a purgatory for us who come as pioneers of progress to this accursed land."

He did not look precisely like a pioneer of progress as he stood in the muddy fondak yard, his naked feet shoved into alpargatas, which he wore down at heel like Moorish slippers, his jacket dangling from one shoulder like a cloak, and with a grey felt hat from Cordoba, battered and napless, kept on his head by a black ribbon tied underneath his chin. Still, we must take men as we find them, as we take bank-notes at their face value, and generally their estimate of themselves and of their worth is nearer to the truth than any we can form. So it may well have been he was a pioneer designed by fate to show the Moors all that is worst in European progress, and bound himself to suffer

in the showing, debarred from bull-fights, gambling, and politics in what he styled "a cursed land of unwashed burnouses and of lice."

No one could say he was not civil in his manners, or fluent in his speech to a degree that would have made the future of a public speaker in the north. Then he was tall and strong and not bad-looking in a sort of villainous and cut-throat style, and certainly a good shot with a stone. For his abilities in his craft I cannot speak, not having had the curiosity to go and see the mosque where he was working, but he possessed a flow of ready and most idiomatic Arabic, an unusual thing for a Spaniard born in "Las Plazas Fuertes," that is Ceuta, Las Alhucemas, and all the rest of Spain's possessions on the coast.

He took his cigarette from behind his ear, just as a clerk resumes his pen, and looked at it regretfully, and, when I handed him a match, lighted it, perhaps as a concession to the progress he was introducing, and then began to smoke with that peculiar relish, drinking the smoke and then expelling it a minute after in the middle of a flood of words, which only Spaniards of his class can ever perfectly attain. His action somehow called to mind a certain

Irishman who drove me to a meeting at a place, the name of which I have forgotten, somewhere near Lurgan. All that I can recall is that the meeting was in a gaunt, dilapidated hall, stuck in the middle of the fields, and had been built by an old clergyman who had lived a blameless life till sixty and then "renagered," as the people said, and turned an atheist. Such things happen infrequently except among the Keltic-Saxon race. Having "renagered," he had to testify. Just as the Moors will call in a loud voice to any European who has put on their clothes, saying, "Testify, O wearer of the haik!" so it seemed necessary to him to justify his creed.

Accordingly the quondam clergyman, now turned atheist, to show his faith in the nonentity of God, erected in the fields, a mile or two outside the village where he lived, a temple made with hands, and, having frescoed it inside with pictures of the pagan deities, called it the "Hall of Apollo," making, as it were, a sort of testimony of the bricks to his own idiocy.

The country people, more astute or more imaginative, called it the "Hall of Vanus," and to it I was bound.

Of course it rained, and as we passed by

public-house or licensed premises the driver jerked his whip towards them, remarking, as a man talks in a dream, "Finucane keeps good spirits," or "Little Bob Coleary has nate whisky." Still I was obdurate, till he, drawing a green and freckled apple from his pocket, tendered it to me.

I asked him, "What is that for?" and he replied, "Sure it will keep down the drouth"; so we stopped at the first shebeen, and he drank whisky whilst I shivered in the rain.

Perhaps the remembrance of the episode softened my heart towards the red-haired dweller in "Las Plazas Fuertes," and so I tendered him the match.

It did not break the ice between us, for none existed; but it somehow drew us together, just as that acid-looking apple drew me towards the man upon the road in the Black North whilst shivering on his car.

My friend talked on, throwing a stone or two occasionally at a marauding mule, and telling me about the lives and habits of the Europeans in the town, by which I learned that Sodom and Gomorrah had been cleanly living places compared to Tetuan. As by an afterthought, he said, "Seeing that you speak Christian you



might care to see *Don Juan Tenorio*, which is being played to-night at the dramatic circle in the consulate."

I did, and said that I would like to go, and he, calling loudly to a boy, "Oh Mojamito," after the fashion of his countrymen, who tack a Spanish termination on to an Arab name (perhaps for euphony), there and then constituted him his "caliph," as he explained to me, to keep away the mules. He added, "Now I am free to take you to the theatre, which in fact I had wished to see, but could not for want of necessary funds." Having hypothecated, as it were, some of his salary, which I advanced him on the spot, he dipped his hands into a drinking-trough for mules, sleeked down his hair with water, and having picked a marigold growing upon a wall, stuck it behind his ear, and so was ready to escort us to the play.

By devious ways he led us, through meandering lanes, talking quite at his ease to a young lady of the party, although she did not understand a word he said—which perhaps was well, considering the frankness of his speech. At last he led us to the place, having explained that in the dearth of all amusements the Spanish colony had organised theatricals to



pass away the time, their idea being to give stock pieces, such as *Don Juan Tenorio* and the like, which everybody knew. "I see," I said, "a repertory theatre"; to which he answered, "Repertory—I rather like the name." We took the most expensive places, at a peseta each, and entered through a door at which just such another as our guide stood taking tickets, smoking a cigarette.

The hall, a long, low building off a narrow Moorish street, was lit by tin petroleum lamps, some hanging from the roof and others stuck against the wall. Most of them flared and smoked, and all of them gave out a rank, metallic smell. At one end of the room was a small stage, only a little larger than in a theatre of marionettes, but high above the floor. The walls were painted a pale yellow, something between the colour of a light montbretia and a canary bird. Upon them elongated vases, reminding one somehow of stained-glass figures by Jean Goujon, were drawn in a dull red. They held bouquets of what one might call superflowers, so violent were their colours and so difficult to tell the species to which they might belong. The audience was composed of almost all the Spanish colony in Tetuan and a

few Moors and Riffs. In the front row the wives and daughters of the diplomatists and of the officers attached to the obsolescent military mission, and of the beef contractor, the doctor, and the interpreter were seated in a row. Most of them had a little run to fat, and nearly all wore white silk blouses over black silk skirts. Their fans were in their hands, and a light whir as of a locust's wings filled all the hall as they perpetually opened and shut them with the peculiar grace that only Spanish women ever attain to in the manipulation of this most potent instrument of war. Their faces were all white with powder, which in the case of those of lesser category (for all had brought their servants to the show) was carried up into the hair by natural instinct, so as to avoid a hard effect where the powder ended and the black hair began. Needless to say, their hair was done with taste, either piled high up on the head or, with the younger women, brought low about the ears and parted in the middle, looking a little like two waves upon the sides.

Though few of them were handsome seen alone, their great black eyes, long eyelashes, and the intense and jetty blackness of their hair setting their dead-white faces, as it were,

in a frame, gave to them in the mass a beauty which threw the looks of women in more ambitious theatres into the shade by its look of wildness and intensity.

The men were, on the whole, inferior to them, as often happens in the South, where Nature seems to have put out her best effort in the women of the race. Still, they had most of them that air of nervous hardness which many Spaniards have, and from the superannuated colonel who filled an elusive post on the unnecessary and futile military mission, to the stout beef contractor they looked like men no one could venture to insult.

At one end of the room a group of Moors, looking like figures made out of snow wrapped in their fleecy haiks, and silent and impressive, sat on their chairs uneasily, just as a European sits uneasily when squatted on the ground. Now and then one of them furtively drew up a leg and tucked it under him upon his chair, and nearly all of them let the beads of their Mecca rosaries slip through the fingers of one hand, leaving the other free to make a movement now and then either of deprecation or assent. The play, *Don Juan Tenorio*, as was set forth upon the green and flimsy handbill, is

one of the stock pieces of the Spanish stage, and all the actors and actresses were amateurs, drawn from the Spanish residents in Tetuan.

Nothing could possibly have been more democratic than the composition of the company. The receiver of the Customs was Don Juan; the corporal attached to the consulate, the comendador; his wife, the heroine; a tall, thin Spanish girl, the duenna; and yet they all looked, walked, and spoke as if they had been born upon the stage.

The poverty of the mounting of the piece, the common dresses made of cotton velvet, and the smallness of the stage, so far from spoiling, gave an air of such intense reality to the whole thing it would have been difficult to match in any theatre. Nothing could have been more intensely natural than the first scene, in which Don Juan Tenorio comes home from Italy. The naked stage, with a deal table in the middle of it round which were set two or three Austrian chairs, took one, incredible as it may seem, back to the Middle Ages, at the first words the actor spoke. Nothing apparently upon the stage seems harder to set forth than poverty. Here all was poverty; but for all that nothing was sordid, and it seemed natural

to see a man dressed in trunk hose, with a long rapier by his side and an imperfect recollection of his part, swagger across the stage, because you did not think it was a stage, so strongly did the actors dominate the accessories and focus interest upon themselves. They came and went, spoke (when they could recollect their parts), exactly as they must have gone about and spoken at the epoch of the play. They quarrelled fiercely, so fiercely that sometimes the phlegmatic Moors moved on their chairs uneasily, although their movements may well have been caused by the novelty of their position and the cramp in their legs. Occasionally upon the stage swords flashed, and swarthy men attired in cotton tights which bagged a little at the knee, and yet did not in the least make them ridiculous, set on each other with such goodwill it was a marvel no one was maimed for life. The prompter was a man of genius, voluble, as one could plainly hear, but yet discreet, as his remarks, "Now, Don Luis, 'tis time to draw your sword," or "Brigida, don't let him press your hand till you have got the purse," most amply testified. At times I fancied by the sudden change of voice that when an actor had for-



gotten all he had to say the prompter boldly read it from the book in a loud key, although the actor still stamped about the stage like a demoniac. These were the blemishes upon the surface, but underneath the heterogeneous company of Spanish amateurs, ill-dressed, and acting on a stage scarce large enough for marionettes, defective in their parts, and playing to an audience a good half of which knew little of the language that the actors spoke, in some strange way brought mediæval Spain before one's eyes as I have never seen it done in the most ambitious theatre in Spain. It may have been because Spain always has been poor, for three parts of the gold from Potosi filtered to Antwerp and to Genoa; it may have been because things always have been done in Spain in a haphazard way, that the haphazard method of the actors really set forth her mediæval life as in a looking-glass. At any rate, an English lady sitting by my side, who knew but little Spanish, watched the whole play in rapt attention, her colour going and coming at each episode, and when the piece was over said she had never seen such acting in her life in any theatre.

When it was finished and everybody duly

slain before our eyes, over the Spanish Consul's sweet champagne the actors wandered in and out, and a fat Moorish Custom House official involuntarily gave the measure of their unconscious art, for, seeing Don Luis Mejia still in his mediæval clothes, but smoking an anachronistic cigarette, he looked amazed, and said in halting Spanish, "By Allah, I thought that you were dead!" and wished to feel the place where he was sure the sword had run into his side.



## A VIGIA

WHEN the old Spanish navigators, sailing in virgin seas, uncharted, undeflowered by keels, passed by some islet about which they were doubtful, seeing it dimly as the mist lifted for a moment, or in the uncertain light of the false dawn, they called it a Vigia, a place to be looked out for, and their old charts are dotted here and there with the Vigia of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the Immaculate Conception, or the Exaltation of the Cross.

Their followers, sailing with ampler knowledge, but less faith, kept a look out for the mysterious shoals or islets, not often finding them, unless they chanced to run upon them in the dark and perish with all hands. These were Vigias of the seas, but there exist Vigias of the mind, as shadowy and as illusive, to the full, as any that Magellan, Juan de la Cosa, or Sebastian Cabot marked upon their charts. We all know of such islands, low-lying, almost awash, as it were, in the currents of the mind.

On them we make our land-fall when we choose, without a pilot, except memory, to guide us in the darkest night. We land and roam about alone, always alone, for those who once inhabited them and welcomed us whenever we sailed in, are now all harboured. Commonly we stay but little there, for though the men we knew are dead, their ghosts so jostle us that we are glad once more to re-embark and sail again into a world of noise, that modern anæsthetic of the mind, still knowing that one day we must return and swell the shadowy procession that walks along the shores of their dead, saltless seas. There is an island, whose whereabouts I do not care precisely to reveal, although only a little strait divides it from a land of mist, of money-making, a land of faiths harder by far than facts, yet there it rides swaying on the sea like some great pre-historic ship, looking out westward in the flesh, and with the interior vision straining its eyes to keep its recollection of the past, fresh and undimmed. Green grass, white sands, limpid blue seas, with windows here and there of palest green in them, through which you look into the depths and count the stones, watch sea anemones unfold like flowers, and follow

the minutest fish at play fathoms below your boat ; these keep it fresh, old, and uncontaminated. One likes to think of virgin souls, and so I like to think of this oasis in the desert of the sea, as virgin, in spite of tourists, steamboats, and the stream of those who go to worship and defile. They have the power to trample down the grass, to leave their sandwich papers and their broken bottles in the ling, but the fresh wind coming across a thousand leagues of sea eludes them. That they can never trample down. So may a woman in a brothel be the mattress of the vilest of mankind and keep some corner of the soul still pure ; for it is dull, befitting only to the spirit of the so-called wise, to say the age of miracles is dead. Those who have kept their minds unclogged with knowledge know that they never cease.

So old my island is that it seems young—that is, it still preserves an air as of an older world, in which men laboured naturally just as a bee makes honey ; a world where the chief occupation of mankind was to look round them, as the Creator did in Eden and to find all things good. So they pass all the morning, meeting their fellows and saluting them, and

in the afternoon repass and resalute, then work a little in the fields, lifting up hay upon a fork with as much effort as an athlete in a circus raises a cannon in his teeth, till it is time to sit down on a stone and watch the fishing-boats return upon the tides, the steersman sitting on the gunwale with his knee jammed against the tiller, and the sheet firmly knotted round a thwart. Just as of Avila, it might be said of my Vigia, that it is all made up of saints and stones, for not a stone is without its corresponding saint or saint without his stone. Thus in both places does the past so dwarf the present, that things which happened when the world was young seem just as probable as the incredible events we see before our eyes.

Upon a mound that looks out on a sandlocked bay the heathen crucified some of the new faith a thousand years ago, bringing, as we might think, their crosses with them ready made, or rigging up a jury cross, fashioned from spars and oars, for not a tree grows, or has ever grown, upon the island where now the sheep feed peacefully on the short, wiry grass broken with clumps of flags. A little further on fairies appeared the other day, not to a man herding his sheep and dazed with

solitude, but to a company of men who all declare they saw the Little People seated upon a mound. Fairies and martyrs both seem as natural as does the steamer landing its daily batch of tourists to hurry through the street where the kings sleep under their sculptured stones, gaze at the Keltic crosses and the grey, time-swept church which lies a little listed, as it were, to starboard, upon the grassy slope where once there stood the wattled temple of the Apostle of the Isles. The mud-built church, where the Apostle chanted his last Mass, is nearer to us than the cathedral, now being killed with care. We see the saint lie dying, and his white, faithful horse approach and make its moan and, bowing down its head, ask for his blessing, as is recorded by the chronicler, with that old, cheerful faith in the impossible that kept his world so young.

So standing on the Capitol, the Church, Popes, Cardinals, and Saints, the glory of the Middle Ages, the empire, the republic, and the kings, melt into mist and leave us, still holding, as our one sure possession, to the two children suckled by the wolf. Some men, like Ponce de Leon, have sailed to find the fountain of eternal youth, landed upon some flowery

land, left it, and died still searching, all unaware the object of their quest, had it been found, would have left paradise a waste. There in my island, whose longitude and latitude, for reasons of my own, I keep a secret, there is, I think, some fountain in which those who bathe recover, not their youth, but the world's youth, and ever afterwards have their ears opened to the voices of the dead.

So, seated on the ground amongst the flowers that grow in miniature amongst the grass, bedstraw, and tormentil, upon the cairn-topped hill from which the saint of Gartan saw his vision, they see the history of the isle acted before them, as in an optic mirror of the mind. The setting still remains just as it was when the Summer Sailors from the north fell on the peaceful monks one day in June, twelve hundred years ago, and sacrificed them and their prior to their offended gods. The thin, white road which cuts the level machar into two has probably replaced an earlier sheep-track or a footpath of the monks. The dazzling white houses, with their thatched roofs secured against the wind by stones slung in a rope, only require a little more neglect to fall again into the low, black Pictish huts. The swarthy



people, courteous and suave, in whom you see a vein of subcutaneous sarcasm as they lean up against a house, sizing the passing stranger up to the last tittle at a glance, would all look natural enough with glibs of matted hair, long saffron Keltic shirts, and the Isles kilt, made out of a long web of cloth, leaving the right arm bare.

Still in the Isle of Dreams remains the primitive familiarity between the animals and man, which only lingers on in islands or in the regions where no breath of modern life has set a bar between two branches of the same creation with talk about the soul. The still, soft rain yet blots the island from the world, just as it did of yore, and through its pall the mysterious voices of the sea sound just as menacing and hostile to mankind as they did when the saint preached to the seals upon the reef. Perhaps—who knows?—he preaches yet to those who have the gift of a right hearing of the soft, grating noise the pebbles make in a receding wave upon the beach. The wind continues its perpetual monsoon, blowing across the unpolluted ocean for a thousand leagues. In the white coves the black sea-purses which the tide throws up like necklaces of an antique



and prehistoric pattern are spread upon the sands, waiting the evening, when the mermaids issue from the waves and clasp them round their necks. Soft wind and purple sea, red cliffs and greenest grass, the echoing caves and mouldering ruins, with the air of peace, all make the islet dreamlike, sweet, and satisfying.

To have seen it once is to have seen it to the last day of one's life. The horses waiting at the rough pierhead to swim a mile of channel with its fierce, sweeping tide, the little street in which the houses spring from the living rock which crops up here and there and forms a reef right in the middle of the road, are not a memory, but a possession, as real as if you held the title-deeds duly engrossed and sealed. When all is said and done, the one secure and lasting property a man can own is an enchanted city such as one sees loom in the sky, above the desert sands. That, when you once have seen it, is yours for ever, and next comes a Vigia, which but appears for a brief moment, in the mind, as you sail past on some imaginary sea.

## AT DALMARY

THE road led out upon an open moor, on which heather and wiry grass strove for the mastery. Here and there mossy patches, on which waved cotton grass, broke the grey surface of the stony waste, and here and there tufts of dwarf willow, showing the silvery backs of their grey leaves, rustled and bent before the wind.

The road, one of those ancient trails on which cattle and ponies were driven in old times down to the Lowland trysts, was now half covered up with grass. It struggled through the moor as if it chose to do so of its own accord, now twisting, for no apparent reason, and again going straight up a hill, just as the ponies and the kyloes must have straggled before the drovers' dogs. It crossed a shallow ford, in which the dark brown moorland trout darted from stone to stone when the shadow of a passer-by startled them as they poised, their heads up stream, keeping themselves suspended as it were by

an occasional wavering motion of their tails, just as a hawk hangs hovering in the air.

Beside the stream, a decaying wooden bridge, high-pitched and shaky, reminded one that in the winter the burn, now singing its metallic little song between the stones, brown and pellucid, with bubbles of white foam floating upon its tiny linns or racing down the stream, checking a little in an eddy, where a tuft of heavy ragweed dipped into the flood, was dangerous to cross.

The aromatic scent of the sweet gale came down the breeze, mixed with the acrid smoke of peats. Hairbells danced in the gentle breeze, and bumble-bees hummed noisily as they emerged, weighed down with honey, from the ling.

Across the moor, from farms and shielings, and from the grey and straggling village built on each side of the rough street, in which the living rock cropped up and ran in reefs across the road, came groups of men dressed in black clothes, creased and ill-fitting, with hats, grown brown with years of church-going and with following funerals in the rain; they walked along as if they missed the familiar spade or plough-handle to keep them straight, just as a sailor walks uneasily ashore.

As they trudged on they looked professionally on the standing crops, or passed their criticisms on the cattle in the fields. Root crops, they thought, were back, taties not just exactly right, a thocht short in the shaws, and every cow a wee bit heigh abune the tail, for praise was just as difficult a thing for them to give as blame was easy, for they were all aware their God was jealous, and it did not befit them to appear more generous than He. Hills towered and barred the north, and to the south the moors stretched till they met another range of hills, and all the space between them was filled with a great sea of moss, eyed here and there with dark, black pools on which a growth of water-lilies floated like fairies' boats. A wooded hill, which sloped down to a brawling river, was the fairies' court. Another to the south, steep, rising from the moss, the Hill of the Crown, received its name back in the times of Fingal and of Bran. Gaps in the hills showed where, in times gone by, marauders from the north had come to harry and to slay. The names of every hill, lake, wood, or stream were Gaelic, and the whole country exhaled an air of a romantic past.

In it the dour, black-coated men, although

they thought themselves as much a part and parcel of the land as the grey rocks upon the moor, were strangers; holding their property but on sufferance from the old owners, who had named every stone, and left their impress even in the air.

It seemed the actual dwellers acted as it were a play, a sort of rough and clownish interlude, upon a stage set out for actors whom the surroundings would have graced.

Still, though they shared the land, just as we all do, by favour of the dead, they had set their mark upon it, running their rough stone walls across the moors and to the topmost ridges of the hills, planting their four-square, slate-roofed houses in places where a thatched and whitewashed cottage, with red tropæolum growing on the corner of the byre, a plant of mullein springing from a crevice in the wall, and flaughtered feals pegged to the thatch with birchen crockets, or kept down with stones, would have looked just as fitting as theirs looked out of place. A land in which the older dwellers had replaced the nymphs and hamadryads by the fairies, where, in the soft and ceaseless rain, the landscape wore a look of sadness, that the mist, creeping up on

the shoulders of the hills, at times turned menacing, was now delivered over to a race of men who knew no shadows, either in life or in belief. If they believed, they held each letter of "The Book" inspired, and would have burned the man who sought to change a comma to a semicolon, and if they had rejected faith as an encumbrance they could do without, denied the very possibility of any god or power but mathematics, holding the world a mere gigantic counting-house in which they sat enthroned. The moaning birches and dark murmuring pines, the shaggy thickets by the streams, and the green hummocks under which tradition held Pictish or Keltic chiefs reposed, the embosomed corries over which the shadows ran, as imperceptibly as lizards run upon a wall, turning the brown hillside to gold, which melted into green as it stole on, until it faded into a pale amethyst, faint and impalpable as is a colour in a dream, seemed to demand a race of men more fitted to its moods than those who walked along the road chatting about the crops. Still it may be that though the outward visible sign was so repellent, the unexpected and interior softness of the black-clothed and tall-hatted men was bred in them by their



surroundings, for certainly their hard, material lives, and their black, narrow, anti-human faith could not have given it.

The road led on until on the south side of it a path, worn in the heather and the wiry grass, and winding in and out between the hillocks, crossed here and there by bands of rocks, out-cropping, but smoothed down on the edge by the feet of centuries, broke off, not at right angles after the fashion of a modern road, but on the slant, just as a herd of driven animals slants off, stopping at intervals to graze.

The knots of black-clothed men, some followed by their dogs, slowly converged upon the path, and stood a minute talking, passing the time of day, exchanging bits of news and gossip in subdued voices, and mopping vigorously at their brows, oppressed with the unwonted weight of their tall hats.

“We’ve had a braw back end, McKerrachar,” Borland remarked. The worthy he addressed, a gaunt, cadaverous man, so deeply wrinkled that you could fancy in wet weather the rain down the channels in his face, spat in contemplative fashion, rejoining in a non-committal way :

“No just sae bad . . . markets are back

a wee." A nod of assent went round the group, and then another interjected :

"I dinna mind sae braw a back end for mony a year ; aye, ou aye, I'll no deny markets are very conseederably back."

Having thus magnified his fellow, after the fashion of the stars, he looked a moment with apparent interest at his hat, which he held in his hand, and ventured the remark :

"A sair blow to the widow, Andra's death ; he was a good man to her."

No one answering him, he qualified what he had said by adding :

"Aye, sort of middlin'," and glanced round warily, to see if he had overstepped the bounds by the too indiscriminating nature of his praise.

The house towards which the various knots of men were all converging stood at the foot of a green, grassy mound, which looked as if it might have been the tumulus of some pre-historic chief. On it grew several wind-bent ash trees, and within twenty yards or so of the front door of the grey cottage, with its low thatched eaves, there ran a little burn. Two or three mulleins, with flowers still clinging to their dying stalks, on which they stuck like

vegetable warts, sprung from the crevices between the stones of the rough byre. A plant or two of ragweed grew on the midden on which a hen was scratching, and out of it a green and oozy rivulet of slush filtered down to the stream. On one side was a garden, without a flower, and with a growth of straggling cabbage, gooseberry bushes, and some neglected-looking raspberry canes, as the sole ornaments. In the potato patch a broken spade was stuck into the ground. All round the house some straggling plum trees, with their sour fruit half ripened and their leaves already turning brown, looking as if they had struggled hard for life against the blast, in the poor, stony soil, gave a peculiar air of desolation, imparting to the place a look as of an oasis just as unfruitful as the waste which stretched on every side. On one side of the door, but drawn a little on the grass, not to obstruct the way, there stood a cart, with a tall, white-faced and white-pasterned horse between the shafts, held by a little boy. Peat smoke curled lazily out of the barrel stuck into the thatch that served as chimney, and cocks and hens scratched in the mud before the door, bees hummed amongst the heather, and once again

the groups of men in black struck a discordant note.

Inside the house, upon four wooden chairs was set the coffin of the dead ploughman, cheap and made in haste, just as his life had been lived cheaply and in haste, from the first day that he had stood between the stilts, until the evening when he had loosed his horses from the plough for the last time, his furrow finished and his cheek no more to be exposed to the November rain. Now in the roughly put together kist he lay, his toil-worn hands crossed on his breast, and with his wrinkled, weather-beaten face turned waxen and ennobled, set in its frame of wiry whisker, and his scant hair decently brushed forward on his brow. The peats burned brightly in the grate and sent out a white ash which covered everything inside the house, whitening the clothes of the black-coated men who stood about, munching great hunks of cake and slowly swallowing down the "speerits" which the afflicted widow pressed upon them, proud through her tears to say, "Tak' it up, Borland," or "It will no hurt ye, Knockinshanock; ye ken there's plenty more."

The white peat ash fell on the coffin-lid just

as the summer's dust had fallen upon the hair of him who lay inside, and lay upon the polished surface of the thin brass plate, on which were superscribed the dates of the birth and of the death of the deceased, his only titles to the recollection of the race with whom his life had passed. Now and again the widow, snatching a moment from her hospitable cares, brushed off the dust abstractedly with her pocket-handkerchief, just as a man might stop upon the way to execution to put a chair straight or to do any of the trifling actions of which life is composed. As she paused by the coffin the assembled men exchanged that furtive look of sympathy which in the North is the equivalent of the wild wailings, tears, and self-abandonment of Southern folk, and perhaps stamps on the heart of the half-shame-faced sympathiser even a deeper line.

When all had drunk their "speerits" and drawn the backs of their rough hands across their mouths and shaken off the crumbs from their black clothes, the minister stood forth. Closing his eyes, he launched into his prayer with needless repetition, but with the feeling which the poor surroundings and the brave struggle against outward grief of the woman

sitting by the fire in the old high-backed chair, in which her husband had sat so long, evoked, he dwelt upon man's passage through the world.

Life was a breath, only a little dust, a shadow on the hills. It had pleased the Lord, for reasons of His own, inscrutable, but against which 'twere impious to rebel, for a brief space to breathe life into the nostrils of this our brother, and here he made a motion of his hand towards the "kist," then to remove him to a better sphere after a spell of toil and trouble here on earth. Still we must not repine, as do the heathen, who gash themselves with knives, having no hope, whereas we who enjoy the blessings of being born to a sure faith in everlasting bliss should look on death as but a preparation for a better life. No doubt this hope consoled the speaker for all the ills humanity endures, for he proceeded to invoke a blessing on the widow, and as he prayed the rain beat on the narrow, bull's-eye window-panes. He called upon the Lord to bless her in her basket and her store, and to be with her in her outgoings and incomings, to strengthen her and send her resignation to His will. He finished with the defiance to



humanity that must have wrung so many tears of blood from countless hearts, saying the Lord had given and that the Lord had taken, blessed be His Name.

All having thus been done that all our ingenuity can think of on such occasions, four stalwart neighbours, holding their hats, which tapped upon their legs, hoisted the coffin on to their shoulders and shuffled to the door. They stooped to let their burden pass beneath the eaves which overhung the entrance, and then emerging, dazed, into the light, their black clothes dusted over with the white ashes from the fire, set down the coffin on the cart. Once more the men gathered into a circle and listened to a prayer, some with their heads bare to the rain, and others with their hats held on the slant to fend it off as it came swirling down the blast. A workman in his ordinary clothes took the tall, white-faced horse close by the bit, and, with a jolt which made the kist shift up against the backboard, the cart set out, swaying amongst the ruts, with now and then a wheel running up high upon one side and now and then a jerk upon the trace-hooks, when the horse, cold with his long wait, strained wildly on the chains. The rain had

blotted out the hills, the distant village with its rival kirks had disappeared, and the grey sky appeared to touch the surface of the moor. A whitish dew hung on the grass and made the seeded plants appear gigantic in the gloom. Nothing was to be heard except the roaring of the burn and the sharp ringing of the high caulkins of the horse as he struck fire amongst the stones on the steep, rocky road.

Leaning against the doorpost, the widow stood and gazed after the vanishing procession till it had disappeared into the mist, her tears, which she had fought so bravely to keep back, now running down her face.

When the last sound of the cart-wheels and of the horse's feet amongst the stones had vanished into the thick air, she turned away and, sitting down before the fire, began mechanically to smoor the peats and tidy up the hearth.

## AVE CÆSAR!

THE very loyal, noble, and crowned city of Madrid was all out in the streets. The sun poured down upon the just and the unjust, the rich and poor, making all feel alike the equalising gladness of his rays. Troops lined the Castellana, for a lucky fate had added, as it were, another day to Carnival by taking off a foreign minister whose funeral the Government was celebrating with due pomp. Lightness of heart and not insensibility—for the dead minister had been a man whom all respected—had brought the people out, for life is short, food not abundant, and the streets are, as they were to the Romans and the Greeks, the general meeting-place whenever the sun shines. In the bright light the scene looked like a pageant on the stage. Generals, ablaze with orders, grey-bearded, their abdomens bulging a little on the pommel of their saddles, sitting up brown and immobile as if they had been Moors upon their high-nosed horses from the plains

of Córdoba and of Jeréz, rode to their posts, followed by groups of officers looking like flocks of parrots or macaws, so harsh the colours of their uniforms and so metallic the crude blues and scarlets of their plumes. Batteries of horse artillery had unlimbered, and gave an air to the quiet streets as of a city in a siege. The short but lithe Castilian infantry, descendants of the "tercios" of Flanders who once shook the world, were grouped about in masses of dark blue, their grey-topped caps reflecting back the sun. The Judas trees were bursting into flower, and the confetti which had been thrown about during the previous days of Carnaval marbled the sandy footpaths as if a shower of blossoms had just fallen from the trees.

All was bright, hard, and scintillating in the keen white air, which in Castile is so translucent that it scarce throws a shadow, and acts on character and art just as a key upon a piano string, screwing them up to the intensest point. Men passed each other as if they had been enemies, glaring at one another in the way Strabo so many centuries ago depicts their ancestors, and still, in spite of railways and of time, chiefly arrayed in black. Girls heard

without a blush remarks that if they had been said in other countries would have been answered by a blow or a revolver-shot from those accompanying them, and looked about a foot above the heads of those who uttered them, and passed upon their way. Horses neighed shrilly, stamping and tossing foam upon the passers-by, and through the sombre crowd girls, selling water carried in porous earthen jars supported on one hip, moved in and out, just as in Eastern towns, their harsh and Oriental voices resounding through the air.

The seats were thronged, and all the streets that led out on the Castellana, near the Embassy, blocked thick with people, all quiet and well behaved, with something Eastern in their restrained and compassed movements and their low tone of speech. In serried ranks they stood and gazed, not with loud exclamations like crowds of other nations, but silently and with unblinking eyes. Grave children stood beside their elders, held by black-haired and black-eyed women with unstable busts, who wore either black veils or else enormous hats which must have been rejected by the Paris shops as quite unfit for human use, or were of a special manufacture for countries such as

Spain. The insubstantial house of mourning, with its cheap-looking palm trees and iron railings with the national emblem on the gate-posts, looked somehow meretricious, and the black blinds and banner at half-mast but half redeemed it, leaving an air of unreality about the ceremonial as if the owner was not really dead, but only setting out upon some journey from which he might return. The bursting trees and the fierce life of everything, people and vegetation, fostered the feeling that the ceremony was but the entry of some potentate into his kingdom rather than the extinction of a man who had played out his part.

Children played gravely, as only children in Castile can ever play, fitting themselves by their grave, compassed games for their grave, compassed lives; and yet beneath their quiet movements there was an air of an intense and almost savage life which linked them in an inexplicable way, bound as they were in the hats and hosen of the north, to the brown Arab children who sit about the doors of the black tents of some lost duar on the plains. Whilst the troops had been getting to their places in the streets a constant stream of cabs and carriages had driven up to the door, from



which pale, fair-haired men, the members of the foreign colony of which the dead diplomatist had been the chief, descended, either to write their names in the great mourning-book which with due coronet was open in the hall, or else to leave a bouquet of immortelles, neatly tied up with crape, with the stout German porter at the gate. An hour or two of waiting in the dust had dimmed the helmets, dulled the steel scabbards of the swords, and made the horses hang their heads. Generals were sinking back into their ordinary look of sacks of flour upon their horses, and underneath the gun-carriages of the artillery the gunners sat and smoked, when, swinging and swaying to and fro, an enormous funeral car drawn by four horses made its way along the street. Hastily generals straightened themselves up, artillerymen got to their saddles, the infantry stood to attention, and an air as of a troop of schoolboys suddenly surprised by the apparition of an unexpected master pervaded all the line.

The groups of people in the streets pressed forward on the troops, but gravely, quietly, just as they gaze each Sunday at a bull-fight, silent but fascinated. Hours seemed to pass, and still the soldiers stood immobile in the

fierce sun. At last, when even Spanish patience was almost exhausted, down the broad flight of steps the coffin, covered with a purple pall, was borne upon the shoulders of eight stalwart soldiers to the hearse. Amid a cloud of dust and glory the catafalque rolled down the street, an interminable line of cabs and carriages following stuffed full of black-clad men who sat upright and stifling, with the air that men assume at funerals, half of contentment that they are alive, and half as of a person who has seen a man fall from a scaffold, with eyes averted and with terror in his heart.

Thus the procession took its way right down the Castellana, with all Madrid afoot to watch the passage of the dead minister, plumes waving, horses passaging, soldiers with arms reversed, and all the pomp and ceremony of war tamed for a season and made subservient to death. It passed by streets guarded by mounted men, who, sitting gravely on their horses, saluted solemnly. Generals rode both in front and just behind the hearse. An endless line of mourning-coaches followed. The King, seated in a gorgeous carriage, his Austrian chin outlined against the glass and his retreating forehead disappearing under a plumed,

three-cornered hat, was there to honour the dead man. Street after street the procession passed, and still the olive-coloured crowd stood silent, the men raising their hats, whilst now and then a woman of the older generation crossed herself.

The pageant slowly took its way towards the cemetery in all the glory of the sun, the spring, the bursting trees, and all the pomp of circumstance. Nothing was wanting but a human note to make the scene pathetic and as if someone really sorrowed for the man for whom so much was being done. It seemed as if, even in death, wealth, state, and rank had triumphed, and that there was a death we must all die, and yet another for the great, distinct in essence. Rank, wealth and state, science and progress, and all the gods that we have made and worship, and to whom we call for help in our necessity, oblivious they are all our own creation, appeared for this once only to have listened to our prayers and taken out death's sting, all was so glorious and so well arranged.

Just where the Calle de Olózaga runs down to Recoletos, in the full view of all Madrid, when the whole pageant was about to pass in all its majesty and pomp, a humble hearse,

drawn by two shambling horses that looked as if they had originally been black, but had turned rusty-brown from want of food and care, coming out from a side street found its passage cut off by the troops. It stood forlornly waiting to go by, with the light wooden canopy above the open body of the hearse swaying a little on its four flimsy posts as the tired horses breathed. The cheaply put together coffin, with its great yellow cross upon the lid, appeared about to fall to pieces as it lay scorching in the sun, and the brown rug about the driver's knees was worn so threadbare that it would have been a mere mockery to put it upon one of the apocalyptic horses in the hearse to cover him at night. The little band of mourners in their ordinary clothes, most of them with their cloaks about them—the cloak hides everything—stood huddled round the hearse and horses as they waited, as if in parody of the rich funeral that had stopped them on their way to lay their brother in the ground, and to return to work.

The Civil Guards guarding the corners of the streets, perhaps as it were by intuition that the need of the humble dead, or at the least that of his mourning friends, was greater than

that of those following the body of the minister, signed to them to pass on. The driver of the rusty hearse, who had been looking interestedly at the assembled troops, whipped up his horses, and, as the soldiers made an opening in their ranks, shambled and shuffled through the line. The ranks closed, swallowing the dilapidated hearse, and blotted out the straggling band of mourners, leaving their brief and humble passage through the street but a mere vision stamped for ever on the mind, just as when at a theatre a scene gets stuck during a moving passage on the stage and leaves a carpenter or two, bareheaded and perspiring at their work, full in the public gaze.

After the brief halt the procession once more started, winding about like a great boa-constrictor through the streets. Then it too disappeared, leaving a cloud of dust still floating in the air and powdering the fresh young leaves upon the trees. In the far distance a dull sound of muffled music now and then was heard, and the faint rumbling of the wheels of the artillery upon the ill-paved streets. The people slowly disappeared, and once again the very loyal, noble, and crowned city resumed its wonted air of a vast wind-swept steppe on

which a town had grown by accident, still keeping recollections of the time when it was known but as a hunting-ground, good for both bears and swine. Lastly, when all the troops had slowly ridden and marched back, the soldiers sitting carelessly upon their horses and talking in the ranks, and when the last of the interminable string of cabs and carriages had left the Embassy, after having stopped a moment to let black-coated men descend and leave the all-healing card with a black edge, a creaking noise was heard. Up the now silent and deserted Castellana came a rough bullock-cart drawn by two dark Castilian oxen, bearing a block of stone. The oxen moved relentlessly as fate, swaying a little to one side and the other, each looking at his mate with his large, limpid eyes, either from love or else to see he pulled his fair amount upon the yoke. Slowly and imperturbably they passed, bearing their burden for some architect to go on building up a world from which the new-made equals had just departed, each having laid his stone.



## A SAILOR (OLD STYLE)

HE was, I think, my earliest recollection of the distinct personality of a man. No one, it appeared to me, could ever have been half as strong, or half as impervious to cold, as he was. I can still see him in my mind's eye, when I had to accompany him in a Sunday walk in the breezy little watering-place where we usually passed the winter—striding along, not with long steps, after the fashion of my other relations, who were mostly sportsmen before their Lord, but with a short, rapid, decided gait, as if he half expected the esplanade might pitch, under the influence of the perpetual northerly winds which swept across the strait.

My brother and I used to trot shivering beside him, and stand huddled up with misery, when he met and hailed some other old sea-going craft such as himself, who was now safely harboured. He never, as far as I can remember, wore a greatcoat, nor did his large,

muscular, hairy but well-kept hands ever grow red with cold. On his fourth finger, above his wedding-ring, he wore a large, antique cornelian, with the head of a Roman emperor or Greek philosopher cut deeply in the stone.

Somehow or other this ring and his strong, hairy hands set one a-thinking (in those days) upon the Spanish Main; upon long, raking schooners with tapering masts and a mere rail for bulwarks; on barracoons and slaves; on the Blue Mountains and Port Royal; on Yellow Jack, and on enormous sharks that followed boats, their dorsal fins emerging now and then as a perpetual *memento mori* to the crew, who dressed in huge wide trousers and pigtails to a man. All had great, hairy hands, well set with heavy rings beaten out on a marlinespike from a doubloon. No ship could anchor at Spithead without his knowing it at once. Sometimes he would ask one of the longshoremen her name, and get the answer: "As far as I makes out, she be the *Warrior* or the *Black Prince*, or one o' that class, admiral." He, after shutting up with a click the telescope which he had borrowed from the longshoreman, would hand it back to him with

a "thankee," and perhaps remark, "Yes, yes, fine class of ships those are, better than that sea-coffin in which I saw poor Cooper Coles go off on his last cruise."

We, that is my brother and myself, who all the time had stood and shivered on the pier, our heels just fitting neatly into the cracks between the planks, assented cheerfully, for naturally we knew most of the ships of that remote, long-buried period, at least by name, and had heard often from the admiral the story of the ill-fated *Captain* and how she turned turtle in a stormy night outside Corcubión, on nearing Finisterre. The tale was ever fresh to us, and when it came to the episode of several men clambering upon her bottom, and there hearing the stifling stokers scream through the keelson valves, we felt we had been there.

The admiral had passed his twelfth or thirteenth birthday at sea (in the old *Barham*), and since that time, till he had made his final land-fall in the Isle of Wight, had always been at sea. The suns and winds of forty years had tanned him a fine, clear brown, without a patch of red; nothing in after life altered the colour of his skin, neither the summer heat nor the

winter<sup>1</sup> cold had power either to deepen or to redden it, and looking at him you divined at once that he had walked hundreds of miles upon ships' decks, during the long commissions of his youth, when ships were months at sea. He used to tell us, how after three years, chiefly in Marmorice Bay, or just off Acre, he had anchored at Spithead on Sunday and "gone ashore, my boys, on Monday to see my mother, who lived at Gosport, and on Thursday night I was officer of the middle watch (in the old *Castor*) going down Channel on a three years' cruise. Not time to get my linen washed, and only managed to get my traps aboard, out of the old *Pyramus*, just as the *Castor* was getting under weigh. Quick work! Oh, yes! Times have altered since those days. . . . I never saw my poor old mother after that, as I was transferred from the *Castor* and stayed six years out in the West Indies. Sailors were sailors then." They were indeed, and when one looks back on their lives one does not wonder that they were a race apart, and certainly the admiral was as far removed from a mere landsman as it was possible to be. He had something of candour and simplicity, combined with a shrewd common sense, which

showed itself in unexpected ways and which you half expected, when you looked at his sturdy build and his immense square head, thatched with perennial grey hair and set in bushy whiskers, which early in his life had turned snow white, but yet conveyed no look of age.

Born during the French War, in which his father fought, he touched with one hand, as it were, the fighting captains of an older age, having passed all his youth, as they had theirs, eating salt pork and junk, and biscuits which he tapped upon the gunroom table to knock the weevils out. So much of the old time he had, he never could endure to see fresh water wasted, but would exclaim: "I cannot bear to see it run away to waste, nor would you had you been like myself upon two pints a day down in low latitudes. Two pints a day, boys, for washing and cooking, and I had to hold my nose when I drank it without a dash of rum." With the other hand, so to speak, he touched not the present but the days of the transition navy. Not of course with his own goodwill, but by force of circumstances.

Standing beside him on a little undercliff

which looks out over Spithead, thirty-five, or was it five-and-forty, years ago, I still can hear him say: "Yes, there lies my old ship the *Edgar*, a hulk like her old captain, and that little paddle-flopping thing" (pointing with his glass to an Admiralty tender) "is the tin-kettle sort of thing that takes her place." Why he brought up in the cramped, hilly, sandy, stucco-built watering-place in which he lived, with its long ranges of rubble walls stuck with glass bottles, its pill-box houses, shut in by hedges of dusty bay and laurestinus, I never understood. Time could not change its infinite vulgarity, nor has it changed it in the least, as I am told.

It still lies facing north, a veritable wind-trap with its two piers, one made of wood, the other fashioned, as I imagine, out of tin, stretching out far into the sea, and giving it an air as of a kind of ship. Perhaps he was attracted by that air as of a ship, perhaps it was because it offered an easy access to Portsmouth dockyard, to which the admiral used to gravitate occasionally to see new ships and to compare them disparagingly with the old, in the same way that farmers gravitate towards the nearest market-town to watch the price of corn.



Well can I see the place, looking down through a vista of long years, with rows and rows of invalid bath-chairs moored up outside the pier. The shops, now probably long altered, I could enter one by one, and ask for things that I remember as a boy, especially of the jeweller at the first corner of the chief street, on the left (going up from the pier), in which a red enamel watch, with a dog in rather brassy-looking gold, hung in the window, as it appeared, for all created time. The arcade, in which glass bottles filled with sand from Alum Bay jostled shell baskets, and boats constructed never to sail with any kind of wind, which fell helpless on their broadsides as soon as they were launched, must surely still be there. It had, as I remember, a mysterious annexe, behind the veil (of mystery) so to speak, in which displayed on a raised staging, such as one sees in an old-fashioned greenhouse now and then, were pincushions, cases for needles, and yard measures in which the tape was hidden in a shell. Over both "cades," such was the name we and our bold compeers had given to them, presided damsels with long ringlets, dressed in black gowns, with linen cuffs and collars, the latter fastened at their necks by a

neat artificial bow of ribbon either rose-pink or blue.

Churches, of course, abounded in the place, all very low as regards ritual, and in them admirals and generals galore repeated the responses fervidly in voices of command. In one of these the admiral was a churchwarden, why I could not make out, as he had generally something disparaging to say of clergymen; though, I believe, he held religious naval views, knowing the articles of war enjoined attention upon public worship, in a disciplinary way. So, neatly dressed in a well-cut frock-coat, which he referred to as a "jimmyswinger," he would devoutly look into his hat for a few moments when he entered church, and then compose himself square by the lifts and braces in his seat, and opening his Prayer Book, which he took out of a hassock with practicable front, assume an air as of a criticising worship—that is of criticism towards the clergyman, but of devout belief in the church service, until the sermon time. This always irritated him, so when the time arrived to carry round the plate, he would step busily out into the aisle looking unfeignedly relieved, doing his duty like an officer and a

gentleman, crossing his fellow-churchwarden in an elaborate sort of maze as they met at the lectern. There they fell into line, advancing bowing to the altar-rails, where they gave up their plates. When he came back and took his seat, he usually informed us underneath his breath as to the probable amount collected, commenting freely on the sums contributed in a low grumbling way.

This sort of Pyrrhic dance, in which the admiral took a part each Sunday morning, as it were half against his will, just as a rabbit lacks the power to run before a weasel, was a delight to us as boys, and sometimes during its execution, even in the sacred edifice, built as it was according to the canons of congregational Gothic, without a clerestory and with the roof jammed flat upon the walls, we used to pinch each other and murmur an absurd old negro song, with the refrain, "Cross over, Jonathan; figure in, Jemima," as the churchwardens waltzed through the aisle.

Most of the day the admiral sat painting in water-colours, an art which he had learned in youth, and been confirmed in by having taken the first prize at the old Naval College some fifty years ago. It gave him infinite enjoyment,

and he filled sketch-book after sketch-book with ships and sailors, brigs, schooners, yawls, and *chasse-marées*, luggers, feluccas, and Bahama boats, barges, canoes, caïques, and anything that sailed. His colouring was muddy and his seas wooden and opaque, so that the craft appeared to sit upon blue boards, but still were life-like, each rope and every sail being depicted in its proper place, a fact he would remark upon with some complacency in talking of his work.

Nothing would please him better than to sit down and copy sea-pieces, which occupation often took him weeks, and when at last concluded, threw quite a novel look on the original, for he corrected any errors in the rigging, now and then putting the ship upon a different tack, and adding here and there a rock, or lighthouse, if it should come into his mind.

Landscape he seldom painted; but when he did, looked on himself apparently in the light of a pivot, for generally his pictures turned out panoramic and so minute that the first time I entered Lisbon I knew the harbour from the squat Tower of Bélem to the Ajuda Palace, with every street and a percentage of the

houses, from plans that he had made. I believe that had I gone to any harbour in the Levant, starting at Malta and finishing in Marmorice, I might have, though a landsman, taken in a ship without a pilot, so well I knew the lighthouses, capes, rocks, and castles in each and every port.

The morning's work achieved and the great yellow goblet of Bohemian glass, in which he always dipped his brushes, emptied, and all his paints and apparatus safely bestowed in cupboards, like the lockers of a ship, that is the lockers of a ship of those days, and lunch over, the admiral generally went for a walk. If it was blowing fresh from the north-west, the prevailing wind of the delectable half seaport, half watering-place, he walked upon the pier. Young ladies in tarpaulin hats and blue serge jerseys promenaded up and down showing as much as was convenient of their ankles, and each one with her baronet in tow, for I should say, though peers were scarce, that baronets abounded in the town, each with his single eye-glass in his eye; for in those days all self-respecting men looked out upon their fellows, as it were, darkling; through a pane of glass. The admiral cared for none of these things,

but only looked upon the pier as, in the summer, a good sketching-ground, and in the winter as a sort of deck on which to snuff into his frame the odour of the sea.

We looked upon a walk upon the pier in weather such as this with terror, for the admiral was sure to stop and say to some old mariner, one in especial, Josiah Southcote, a Plymouth Brother and the owner of a wherry called the *Pearl*: "Nice day for a sail, Southcote," and then we trembled in our shoes. Sometimes the owner of the abominable craft in which we passed so many hours limp and sea-green, as he leaned up against a sail, dressed in blue pilot-cloth as thick as a thin plank, a brownish duffel shirt, sea-booted to the knees, and with his loose blue trousers coming close to his armpits, supported by stout leather braces about a foot in length, would answer: "Lor, admiral, it does blow a leetle fresh for the young gentlemen." This sometimes was a respite, and at others served but as an incentive, and we used to put to sea, seated down in a sort of well, where we saw nothing, but at the same time received plenty of salt water down our backs, shivering miserably. At times one or the other of us steered, jam-



ming the *Pearl* about across the Solent, in the agonies of sea-sickness, till we relapsed upon the seat inert and miserable. Still I believe we liked it, and I am certain that the admiral enjoyed it hugely, saying it did us twice the good of any medicine ; and as for Southcote, of course, it was his business, and so we all were pleased.

All these slight foibles and an infinity of tales he had about the "Nix Mangiare" stairs of Malta, Dignity Balls in Kingston, or Port Royal and the like, were but excrescences upon the bark. The tree was of the sort from which the Navy of old times was built—round, honest, and English to the core.

All novelties were his abomination, and so he hated double-"taupsles" from the bottom of his soul, and yet would frequently condemn Cunningham's reefing patent, which he declared was a mere lubberly affair more fitted to a blind than to a sail, which it was sure to wear to tatters at the bunt, and carry spars away.

Quite naturally he never could pronounce a single word in any foreign language so that any one could recognise it, with the exception of Portuguese, which he spoke pretty fluently,

having acquired it, I suppose, in theatres and cafés about Lisbon during the days in which he laboured at the minute, ingenious plan in water-colours which had been so useful to me in making my first landfall on that coast. Treated as he had been, during the most part of his sea time, to all the rigours of the Admiralty, now freezing off Newfoundland, and again melting off St. Helena or Port Royal; lacking advancement always, and seeing others younger than himself put over him, by intent or chance, he never grumbled at his luck. In fact, I think, he thought he was a lucky man always to have been employed, and to have been flag-captain in the Channel for a brief space of time. Of such as he was, is the kingdom of the sailor's heaven, that is, if single-mindedness and kindness, with a high sense of honour and a charity which though it naturally began at home extended to the limits of his world, entitle any man to a free pass.

No one whom I have met had such a large collection of "forebitters" in his repertory. Not that he ever sang, as far as I know; but on the other hand he whistled all the day, between his teeth, just like the wind between the hinges of a door, which habit made

some people nervous, but to me seemed natural, as natural as it was to the longshoremen about the port to chew tobacco or to hitch up their slacks. When out of doors, especially when walking on the pier or seated in the abominable *Pearl* wherry, he hummed in a low voice such lyrics of the sea as "Tom's gone to 'ello!", or the adventures of poor Reuben Renzo, who, if I recollect, shipped in a whaler and underwent strange things. These "chanties," if he caught Mr. Southcote looking at him, or observed that we were dwelling on the words with interest, anxiously waiting for the verses which ended in an oath, he stopped at once and usually essayed to turn to ridicule, saying that no one sang them nowadays. This certainly was true; but still they photographed themselves upon my memory, one in especial, which told of something in the French wars and had a chorus, which I can hear occasionally (in my mind's ear) during the piano passages at an opera. It was as follows:—

The little *Weazel* brought up the rear,  
 Her guns and quarters being clear,  
 The guns being primed ready for to discharge,  
 She went through the fleet like a twelve-oared barge.

This song, in my opinion as a boy, went far to constitute a sort of apostolic succession from Sir Cloudesley Shovel, from Drake and Frobisher, and from the other worthies, who, as the old sea phrase goes, entered the services through the hawseholes and by degrees got aft. I do not think the fact of his full repertory of old sea songs was probably the reason of his being made a magistrate, the people of the place most likely never having heard of Fletcher of Saltoun and his dictum that he cared not who made a nation's laws as long as he could write its songs. Truth in the abstract (such as the above) seldom appeals to those who dwell in watering-places.

Thus I am forced to think (against my reason) that in some way or other the mere fact of the admiral's patent honesty had recommended him to the mysterious powers who appoint magistrates, for I am certain no one ever lived less capable of pushing himself to any kind of place. Once duly on the bench, "a beak" as he himself would say, he must have been rather a thorn in the sides of all his fellow-magistrates, who generally were dissenting tradesmen, with an occasional Low Church general of marked religious views. The

admiral's view of law in general (with the exception of mutiny and piracy on the high seas) was that the culprit was a poor devil whom it was best to handle gently, remembering all are frail. Indeed, he gave great scandal, in the case of a woman whom he referred to as "a poor whore," charged with solicitation, or prostitution, or some one or another of the lesser misdemeanours of that sort, by saying, "After all, it took two people to commit the fault." Sound reasoning in its way, and human, and of a kind that law-givers often forget, having grown too old or become too circumspect for any cakes and ale.

About this time, for nothing, even in watering-places, succeeds so well as does success, certain fly-drivers and bath-chairmen began to trim their whiskers after the pattern of the admiral's. Whether they did it as a compliment to him for his humanity upon the bench, or only from the fact of his promotion to that elevated seat, is difficult to say. Perhaps it was as theologians tell us, that mankind must always worship something or another, and when we worship it is natural to wish to look as like as possible to those whom we adore. No speculation of that kind, I think, entered the admiral's head. In fact I am sure of it, remembering a story



of a chaplain in a ship that he once sailed in, whose captain having heard a sermon upon Faith, in a disciplinary manner called the preacher into his cabin and commanded him next Sunday to hold forth on Works, or never preach again. "A damned good order," he was wont to say, after referring to the episode; not that in any way himself did he reject the spiritual side of things, as his assiduous carrying round of the plate went far to testify.

No oak could have been stauncher than he was, so that when first we noticed that he began to fail, it struck us with surprise, and when we saw that he was, so to speak, preparing to set sail, leaving each day some of the lumber that would have been of no use to him on his voyage, it seemed impossible. Clearly it was unjust that he must go and join the other admirals and generals whom he had seen drop off, as it were, naturally, leaving the watering-place as little altered as if they had but swaggered down the pier, and then forgotten to come back.

Time touched him tenderly. At first but shortening the area of his walks, intensifying gout; then by degrees forbidding his excursions in the *Pearl*, a deprivation which he



endured with the more equanimity because Josiah Southcote had for some time rested in the churchyard, his sailings over, his ropes all flemished down, and with "affliction sore" inscribed upon the headstone, which bore a cable twisting round the rim.

What actually took him away I cannot recollect. The kind of man he was, ought to have died at sea and been committed to the deep, in the sure hope of joining Drake and Frobisher, upon some main where there is always a fair wind. I helped to lay him in his coffin and to cross the strong, brown, hairy hands upon his breast, and I remember wishing that he could just have waited long enough to see a red Aurora Borealis which lit the sky upon the night he died, for I am sure he would have said that it was most unusual to see the Northern Lights below some latitude or other, or something of the kind.

## MIRAHUANO

WHY Silvio Sanchez got the name of Mirahuano was difficult to say. Perhaps for the same reason that the Arabs call lead "the light," for certainly he was the blackest of his race, a tall, lop-sided negro, with elephantine ears, thick lips, teeth like a narwhal's tusks, and Mirahuano is a cottony, white stuff used to fill cushions, and light as thistledown. Although he was so black and so uncouth, he had the sweetest smile imaginable, and through his eyes, which at first sight looked hideous, with their saffron-coloured whites, there shone a light, as if a spirit chained in the dungeon of his flesh was struggling to be free. A citizen of a republic in which by theory all men were free and equal by the law, the stronger canon enacted by humanity, confirmed by prejudice, and enforced by centuries of use, had set a bar between him and his white brethren in the Lord which nothing, neither his talents, lovable nature, nor the esteem of everyone who knew him, could

ever draw aside. Fate having doubly cursed him with a black skin and an aspiring intellect, he passed his life just as a fish might live in an aquarium, or a caged bird, if they had been brought up to think intelligently on their lost liberty.

The kindly customs of the republic, either derived from democratic Spain or taken unawares from the gentler races of the New World, admitted him, partly by virtue of his talents, for he was born a poet, in a land where all write verses, on almost equal terms to the society of men. Still there were little differences that they observed as if by instinct, almost involuntarily, due partly to the lack of human dignity conspicuous in his race; a lack which in his case, as if the very powers of nature were in league against him, seemed intensified, and made him, as it were, on one hand an archetype, so negroid that he almost seemed an ape, and yet in intellect superior to the majority of those who laughed at him. No one was ever heard to call him Don, and yet the roughest muleteer from Antióquia claimed and received the title as a right, as soon as he had made sufficient money to purchase a black coat.

In the interminable sessions in the *cafés*, where men sat talking politics by hours, or broached their theories at great length, on poetry, on international law, on government, on literature and art, with much gesticulation, and with their voices raised to their highest pitch—for arguments are twice as cogent when delivered shrilly and with much banging on the table—the uncouth negro did not suffer in his pride, for there he shouted with the rest, and plunged into a world of dialectics with the best of them. His Calvary came later, for when at last the apologetic Genoese who kept the *café* politely told his customers that it was time to close, and all strolled out together through the arcaded, silent streets built by the Conquerors, and stood about for a last wrangle in the plaza, under the China trees, as sometimes happened, one or two would go away together to finish off their talk at home. Then Mirahuano silently would walk away, watching the fireflies flash about the bushes, and with a friendly shout of “Buenas noches, Mirahuano” ringing in his ears from the last of his companions as they stood on the threshold of their houses, holding the door wide open by the huge iron knocker, screwed high

up, so that a man upon his mule could lift it easily.

Beyond that threshold he was never asked except on business, for there dwelt the white women, who were at once his adoration and despair. With them no talents, no kindness or generosity of character, had any weight. They treated him, upon the rare occasions when he recited verses of his own composition at some function, with grave courtesy, for it was due to their own self-respect to do so, but as a being of another generation to themselves, who had, for so their priests informed them, an immortal soul, which after death might be as worthy of salvation as their own, in its Creator's eyes.

He, though he knew exactly his position, midway between that of the higher animals and man, was yet unable to resist the peculiar fascination that a white woman seems to have for those of coloured blood. Those of his friends who had his interests at heart, and were admirers of his talents, argued in vain, and pointed out that he was certain to bring trouble on his head if he attempted to presume upon his education and tried to be accepted as a man.

His means permitted him to live a relatively idle life, and as he read all kinds of books in French and Spanish, his intellect always expanded, and it was natural enough that he should think himself the equal of the best, unless he happened to take up a looking-glass and saw the injustice which from his birth both God and man had wrought upon him. As now and then he published poems, which, in a country where all write, were still above the average of those his brethren in the Muses penned (for all the whiteness of their skins), his name was noised abroad, and he was styled in newspapers the Black Alcæus, the Lute of Africa, and a variety of other epithets, according to the lack of taste of those who make all things ridiculous which their fell pens approach.

The Floral Games were due. On such occasions poets write on themes such as "To the Immortal Memory of the Liberator," or dedicate their lyrics to the "Souls of those who fell at Mancavélica," or simply head their stuff "Dolores," "Una Flor Marchita," or something of the sort. Poets of all dimensions leave their counting-houses, banks, regiments, and public offices, and with their brows all "wreathed in roses," as the local papers say, flock to the



“flowery strife.” All are attired in black, all wear tall hats, and all bear white kid gloves, sticky with heat, and generally a size or two too large for those who carry them.

Each poet in the breast-pocket of his long frock-coat has a large roll of paper in which in a clear hand are written out the verses that are to make his name immortal and crown his brow with flowers.

Now and again their hands steal furtively to touch the precious scrolls, just as a man riding at night in dangerous country now and then feels at the butt of his revolver to assure himself that it is there, when his horse pricks his ears or any of the inexplicable, mysterious noises of the night perplex and startle him. On this occasion, after the other sports, the running at the ring, the feats of horsemanship, in which men stopped their horses short before a wall, making them rear and place their feet upon the top, the tailing of the bulls, and all the other feats which Spanish Americans love to train their horses to perform, were over, the poets all advanced. In the fierce sun they marched, looking a little like a band of undertaker’s mutes at an old-fashioned funeral, and stood in line before the jury, and each man in

his turn read out his verses, swelling his voice, and rolling all the adjectives, like a delicious morsel, on his tongue. The audience now and then burst out into applause, when some well-worn and well-remembered tag treating of liberty, calling upon the Muses for their help, or speaking of the crimson glow, like blood of the oppressor, which tinged the Andean snows, making them blush incarnadine, or when a stanza dwelling on alabaster bosoms, teeth white as pearls, and eyes as black as those the Houris flash in Paradise, struck their delighted ears. All read and stood aside to wait, looking a little sourly on their fellow-competitors, or with their eyes fixed on a girl, the daughter of a Senator, who, dressed in white, sat in a box beside her father, ready to crown the successful poet with a limp wreath of flowers. The last to read was Mirahuano, and the Master of the Ceremonies, after due clearing of his throat, read out his title, "Movements of the Soul." Holding his hat in his left hand, and with the perspiration, which in a negro looks white and revolting to our eyes, standing in beads upon his face, and in the thick and guttural tones of all his race, the poet nervously began.

At first the audience maintained that hostile air which every audience puts on to those it does not know. This gradually gave place to one of interest, as it appeared the verses all ran smoothly ; and this again altered to interest as the figure of the uncouth negro grew familiar to them. As he read on, tracing the movements of the soul, confined and fettered in the flesh, lacking advancement in its due development owing to circumstances affecting not itself, but the mere prison of the body, a prison that it must endure perforce, so that it may be born, and which it leaves unwillingly at last, so strong is habit, even to the soul, the listeners recognised that they were listening to a poet, and gazed upon him in astonishment, just as the men of Athens may have gazed on the mean-looking little Jew, who, beckoning with his head, after the manner of the natural orator, compelled their silence in the Agora. The poet finished in a blaze of rhetoric after the fashion that the Latin race in the republics of America demands, depicting a free soul, freed from the bonds that race, sex, or conditions have imposed on it, free to enjoy, to dare, to plan, free to work out its own salvation, free to soar upwards and to love.

He ceased, and a loud "Viva!" rent the air, and though some of the men of property were evidently shocked at the implied intrusion of a mere negro soul into an Emyrean where their own would soon have atrophied, the poor and all the younger generation—for in America, whatever men become in after life, in youth they are all red republicans—broke out into applause.

Long did the jury talk the poems over, weighing judiciously the pros and cons, but from the first it was quite clear that Mirahuano's composition would receive most votes.

Again the Master of the Ceremonies stood up, and in dead silence proclaimed the prize had been adjudged to Señor Sanchez, and that he was requested to step forward and be crowned.

Shoving his papers hastily into his pocket, and clinging to his hat, just as a drowning sailor clutches fast a plank, the poet shuffled up towards the box in which the jury sat, and stood half proudly, half shamefacedly, to listen to the set oration which the President of the Floral Games stood ready to pronounce. Clearing his throat, he welcomed to Parnassus' heights another poet. He was proud that one

of their own town had won the prize. The Muses all rejoiced; Apollo had restrung his lyre and now stretched out his hand to welcome in the son of Africa. The eternal verities stood once more justified; liberty, poetry, and peace had their true home in the Republic. Europe might boast its Dantes and Shakkispers, its Lopes, Ariostos, and the rest, but Costaguano need not fear their rivalry whilst poets such as Mira—he should say as Silvio Sanchez—still raised their pæans to the great and indivisible.

He could say more, much more, but words, what were they in the face of genius?—so he would bring his discourse to a close by welcoming again the youngest brother of the lyre into the Muses' court. Now he would call upon the fairest of the fair, the Señorita Nieves Figueroa, to place the laurel on the poet's brow.

Applause broke out rather constrainedly, and chiefly amongst those who by the virtue of their station were able to express their feelings easily, really liked Mirahuano, and possibly admired the poem they had heard, that is as much of it as they had understood.

Dressed all in white, with a mantilla of



white lace upon her head, fastened high on her hair to a tall comb, shy and yet self-possessed, the Señorita Nieves Figueroa advanced, holding a crown of laurel leaves, with a large silver ornament, shaped like a lyre, in front of it, and with long ribbons of the national colours hanging down behind. Her jet-black hair was glossy as a raven's wing. Her olive skin and almond eyes were thrown into relief by her white clothes, and gave her somewhat of the air of a fly dropped in milk, or a black-bird in snow. Clearly she was embarrassed by the appearance of the man she had to crown, who, on his side, stood quivering with excitement at his victory and the approach of the young girl.

Raising the crown, she placed it on the negro's head, where it hung awkwardly, half covering his eyes, and giving him the look as of a bull when a skilled bull-fighter has placed a pair of banderillas in his neck. Murmuring something about the Muses, poetry, and a lyre, she gracefully stepped back, and Mirahuano shuffled off, having received, as he himself observed, "besides the wreath, an arrow in his heart."

From that day forth he was her slave, that



is, in theory, for naturally he never had the chance to speak to her, although no doubt she heard about his passion, and perhaps laughed with her friends about the ungainly figure she had crowned. Debarred from all chance of speech with her he called the "objective of his soul," dressed in his best, he called each Thursday morning at Señor Figueroa's house to deliver personally a copy of his verses tied with blue ribbons at the door. The door was duly opened and the verses handed in for months, and all the town knew and talked of the infatuation of the negro poet, who for his part could have had no illusions on the subject, for from the moment of the Floral Games he had never spoken to the girl except, as he said, "by the road of Parnassus," which after all is a path circuitous enough in matters of the heart.

His life was passed between the little house, buried in orange and banana trees, where his old mother, with her head wrapped in a coloured pocket-handkerchief, sat all the day, balanced against the wall in an old, high-backed chair, watching his sisters pounding maize in a high, hardwood mortar, with their chemises slipping off their shoulders, and the *Café del*

Siglo, where all the poets used to spend their time.

Poets and verse-makers were as much jumbled up in people's minds in the republic as they are here, and anyone who had a rhyming dictionary and the sufficient strength of wrist to wield a pen, wrote reams of stuff about the pangs of love, the moon, water, and flashing eyes, with much of liberty and dying for their native land. When once they fell into the habit, it was as hard of cure as drinking, especially as most of them had comfortable homes, though they all talked of what they underwent in the Bohemia to which they were condemned. For hours they used to sit and talk, reading their verses out to one another or with their hats drawn down upon their brows to signify their state.

To these reunions of the soul, for so they styled them, Mirahuano came, sitting a little diffidently upon his chair, and now and then reciting his own verse, which, to speak truth, was far above the rest of the weak, wordy trash produced so lavishly. As it cost nothing to be kind to him, for he would never take even a cup of coffee, unless he paid for it himself, they used him kindly, letting him sit

and read when they were tired, help them to consonants, and generally behave as a light porter to the Muses, as he defined it in his half-melancholy, half-philosophising vein.

One night as they sat late compassionating one another on their past luck, and all declaiming against envy and the indifference of a commercial world, whilst the tired waiters dozed, seated before the tables with their heads resting on the marble tops, and as the flies, mosquitoes, and the "vinchucas" made life miserable, their talk drew round towards the hypothetical Bohemia in which they dreamed they lived. Poor Mirahuano, who had sat silently wiping his face at intervals with a red pocket-handkerchief—for in common with the highest and the lowest of his kind he loved bright colours—drew near, and sitting down among the poets, listened to their talk. The heavy air outside was filled with the rank perfume of the tropic vegetation. The fireflies flashed among the thickets of bamboos, and now and then a night-jar uttered its harsh note.

In the bright moonlight men slept on the stucco benches in the plaza, with their faces downwards, and the whole town was silent except where now and then some traveller

upon his mule passed by, the tick-tack of the footfalls of his beast clattering rhythmically in its artificial pace, and sending up a trail of sparks as it paced through the silent streets. Nature appeared perturbed, as she does sometimes in the tropics, and as if just about to be convulsed in the throes of a catastrophe. Inside the *café* men felt the strain, and it seemed natural to them, when Mirahuano, rising to his feet, his lips blue, and his face livid with emotion, exclaimed, "Talk of Bohemia, what is yours to mine! Mine is threefold. A poet, poor, and black. The last eats up the rest, includes them, stultifies you and your lives." He paused, and, no one answering, unconscious that the waiters, awakened by his tones, were looking at him, half in alarm, half in amazement, broke out again. "Bohemia! Think of my life ; my very God is white, made in your image, imposed upon my race by yours. His menacing pale face has haunted me from childhood, hard and unsympathetic, and looking just as if He scorned us whom you call His children, although we know it is untrue. Your laws are all a lie. His too, unless it is that you have falsified them in your own interests and to keep us slaves."

Seizing his hat, he walked out of the *café* without a salutation, leaving the company dumb with amazement, looking upon each other as the inhabitants of some village built on the slopes of a volcano long quiescent may look, when from the bowels of the sleeping mountain a stream of lava shoots into the sky. His brothers in the Muses missed him from his accustomed haunts for two or three days, and then a countryman reported he had seen in the backwater of a stream an object which he had thought was a dead bullock or a cow. Wishing to secure the hide, he had lassoed it, and to his great astonishment he found it was the body of a negro, dressed in black clothes, as he said, just as good as those worn by the President. Being of a thrifty turn of mind, he had stripped them off and sold them at a pulperia, when he had dried them in the sun.

It seemed to him fortuitous that a black rascal who in all his life had never done a stroke of work, but walked about just like a gentleman, making a lot of silly rhymes, at last should be of use to a white Christian such as he was himself, white, as the proverb says, on all four sides.

He added, as he stood beside his half-wild

colt, keeping a watchful eye upon its eye, and a firm hand upon his raw-hide halter, that as a negro's skin was of no value, he pushed the body back into the stream, and had no doubt that it would soon be eaten up by the caimáns. ]



## THE CAPTIVE

SOMEHOW or other none of the camp could sleep that night. It may have been that they were hungry, for they were just returning from a bootless attempt to overtake a band of Indians who had carried off the horses from an *estancia* on the Napostá. Night had fallen on them just by the crossing of a river, where a small grove of willows had given them sufficient wood to make a fire, for nothing is more cheerless than the fierce transient flame ("like a nun's love") that cow-dung and dry thistle-stems afford. Although they had not eaten since the morning, when they had finished their last strips of *charqui*, they had a little *yerba*, and so sat by the fire passing the *maté* round and smoking black Brazilian cigarettes.

The stream, either a fork of the Mostazas or the head waters of the Napostá itself, ran sluggishly between its banks of rich alluvial soil. Just at the crossing it was poached into

thick mud by half-wild cattle and by herds of mares, for no one rode where they were camped in those days but the Indians, and only they when they came in to burn the settlements. A cow or two which had gone in to drink and remained in the mud to die, their eyes picked out by the *caranchos*, lay swelled to an enormous size, and with their legs sticking out grotesquely, just as a soldier's dead legs stick out upon a battlefield.

From the still, starry night the mysterious noises of the desert rose, cattle coughed dryly as they stood on rising ground, and now and then a stallion whinnied as he rounded up his mares. Vizcachas uttered their sharp bark and tuco-tucos sounded their metallic chirp deep underneath the ground. The flowers of the chañar gave out their spicy scent in the night air, and out beyond the clumps of piquillin and molle, the pampa grass upon the river-bank looked like a troop of ostriches in the moon's dazzling rays.

The Southern Cross was hung above their heads, Capella was just rising, and from a planet a yellow beam of light seemed to fall into the rolling waves of grass, which the light wind just stirred, sending a ghostly murmur

through it, as if the sound of surf upon some sea which had evaporated thousands of years ago was echoing in the breeze.

A line of sand-hills ran beside the stream. Below their white and silvery sides the horses, herded by a man who now and then rode slowly to the fire to light a cigarette, grazed on the wiry grass. The tinkling bells of the *madrinas* had been muffled, as there was still a chance the Indians might have cut the trail, and now and then the horse guard cautiously crawled up the yielding bank and gazed out on the plain, which in the moonlight looked like a frozen lake.

Grouped round the fire were most of the chief settlers on the *Sauce Grande*, *Mostazas*, and the *Napostá*.

The brothers *Milburn*, who had been merchant sailors, dressed in cord breeches and brown riding-boots, but keeping, as it were, a link with ships in their serge coats, were there, sitting up squarely, smoking and spitting in the fire.

Next to them sat *Martin Villalba*, a wealthy cattle-farmer and major in the militia of *Bahia Blanca*. No one had ever seen him in his uniform, although he always wore a sword

stuck underneath the girth of his *recao*. The light shone on his Indian features and was reflected back from his long hair, which hung upon his shoulders as black and glossy as the feathers of a crow. As he sat glaring at the blaze he now and then put up his hand and listened, and as he did so, all the rest of those assembled listened as well, the man who had the *maté* in his hand holding it in suspense until Villalba silently shook his head, or, murmuring, "It is nothing," began to talk again. Spaniards and Frenchmen sat side by side with an Italian, one Enrique Clerici, who had served with Garibaldi in his youth, but now was owner of a *pulperia* that he had named "The Rose of the South," and in it hung a picture of his quondam leader, which he referred to as "my saint."

Claraz, the tall, black-bearded Swiss, was there. He had lost one finger by a tiger's bite in Paraguay, and was a quiet, meditative man who had roamed all the continent, from Acapulco down to Punta Arenas, and hoped some day to publish an exhaustive work upon the flora of the Pampa, when, as he said, he found a philanthropic publisher to undertake the loss.

The German, Friedrich Vögel, was book-keeper at an *estancia* called La Casa de Fierro, but being young and a good horseman had joined the others, making a contrast to them as he sat beside the fire in his town clothes, which, though they were all dusty and his trouser-legs coated thick with mud, yet gave him the appearance of being on a picnic, which a small telescope that dangled from a strap greatly accentuated. Since he had started on the trail eight or nine days ago, he had Hispaniolised his name to Pancho Pajaro, which form, as fortune willed it, stuck to him for the remainder of his life in South America. Two cattle-farmers, English by nationality, known as El Facon Grande and El Facon Chico from the respective size of the knives they carried, talked quietly, just as they would have talked in the bow-window of a club, whilst a tall, grey-haired Belgian, handsome and taciturn, was drawing horses' brands with a charred mutton-bone as he sat gazing in the fire. Of all the company he alone kept himself apart, speaking but seldom, and though he had passed a lifetime on the plains, he never ventured his opinion except men asked for it, when it was taken usually as final, for everybody knew that he



had served upon the frontier under old General Mancilla in the Indian wars.

A tall, fair, English boy, whose hair, as curly as the wool of a merino sheep, hung round his face and on his neck after the fashion of a Charles II wig, was nodding sleepily.

Exaltacion Medina, tall, thin, and wiry, tapped with his whip upon his boot-leg, on which an eagle was embroidered in red silk.

He and his friend, Florencio Freites, who sat and picked his teeth abstractedly with his long silver-handled knife, were gauchos of the kind who always rode good horses and wore good clothes, though no one ever saw them work, except occasionally at cattle-markings. They both were Badilleros, that is, men from Bahia Blanca, and both spoke Araucano, having been prisoners amongst the Infidel, for their misfortunes as they said, although there were not wanting people who averred that their connection with the Indians had been in the capacity of renegades by reason of their crimes.

Some squatted cross-legged like a Turk, and some lay resting on their elbows, whilst others, propped against their saddles, sat with their eyes closed, but opened them if the wind stirred



the trees, just as a sleeping cat peers through its eyelids at an unusual noise.

When the last *maté* had been drunk and the last cigarette end flung into the blazing brands and yet a universal sleeplessness seemed to hang in the air, which came in fierce, hot gusts out of the north, carrying with it a thousand cottony filaments which clung upon the hair and beards of the assembled band, Claraz suggested that it might be as well if someone would tell a story, for it was plain that, situated as they were, no one could sing a song. Silence fell on the group, for most of those assembled there had stories that they did not care to tell. Then the mysterious impulse that invariably directs men's gaze towards the object of their thoughts turned every eye upon the Belgian, who still was drawing brands on the white ashes of the fire with the burnt mutton-bone. Raising his head he said: "I see I am the man you wish to tell the story, and as I cannot sleep an atom better than the rest, and as the story I will tell you lies on my heart like lead, but in the telling may perhaps grow lighter, I will begin at once."

He paused, and taking off his hat, ran his hands through his thick, dark hair, flecked here

and there with grey, hitched round his pistol so that it should not stick into his side as he leaned on his elbow, and turning to the fire, which shone upon his face, set in a close-cut, dark-brown beard, slowly began to speak.

“Fifteen—no, wasn’t it almost sixteen years ago—just at the time of the great Indian, Malon—invasion, eh? the time they got as far as Tapalquén and burned the *chacras* just outside Tandil, I was living on the Sauce Chico, quite on the frontier. . . . I used to drive my horses into the corral at night and sleep with a Winchester on either side of me. My nearest neighbour was a countryman of mine, young . . . yes, I think you would have called him a young man then. An educated man, quiet and well-mannered, yes, I think that was so . . . his manners were not bad.

“It is his story I shall tell you, not mine, you know. Somehow or other I think it was upon an expedition after the Indians, such as ours to-day, he came upon an Indian woman driving some horses. She had got separated from her husband after some fight or other, and was returning to the tents. She might have got away, as she was riding a good horse . . . piebald it was, with both its ears slit, and

the cartilage between the nose divided to give it better wind. Curious the superstitions that they have." Florencio Freites looked at the speaker, nodded and interjected, "If you had lived with them as long as I have you would say so, my friend. I would give something to slit the cartilage of some of their Indian snouts. . . ." No one taking up what he had said, he settled down to listen, and the narrator once again began.

"Yes, a fine horse that piebald, I knew him well, a little quick to mount, but then that woman rode like a gaucho—as well as any man. As I was saying, she might have got away—so said my friend—only the mare of her *tropilla* had not long foaled, and either she was hard to drive or the maternal instinct in the woman was too strong for her to leave the foal behind . . . or she had lost her head or something—you can never tell. When my friend took her prisoner, she did not fight or try to get away, but looked at him and said in halting Spanish, 'Bueno, I am take prisoner, do what you like.' My friend looked at her and saw that she was young and pretty, and that her hair was brown and curly, and fell down to her waist. Perhaps he thought—God knows what

he did think. For one thing, he had no woman in his house, for the last, an Italian girl from Buenos Aires had run off with a countryman of her own, who came round selling saints—a *santero*, eh? As he looked at her, her eyes fell, and he could have sworn he saw the colour rise under the paint daubed on her face, but he said nothing as they rode back towards his rancho, apart from all the rest. They camped upon the head waters of the Quequén Salado, and to my friend's astonishment, when he had staked out his horse and hers and put the hobbles on her mare, so that her *tropilla* might not stray, she had lit the fire and put a little kettle on to boil. When they had eaten some tough *charqui*, moistened in warm water, she handed him a *maté* and stood submissively filling it for him till he had had enough. Two or three times he looked at her, but mastered his desire to ask her how it was that she spoke Spanish and why her hair was brown.

“As they sat looking at the fire, it seemed somehow as if he had known her all his life, and when a voice came from another fire, ‘You had better put the hobbles on that Indian mare, or she’ll be back to the *querencia* before the

moon is down,' it jarred on him, for somehow he vaguely knew his captive would not try to run away.

"So with a shout of 'All right, I'll look out,' to the other fires, he took his saddle and his ponchos, and saying to the Indian woman, 'Sleep well, we start at daybreak,' left her wrapped up in saddle-cloths, with her feet towards the fire. An hour before the dawn the camp was all astir, but my friend, though an early riser, found his captive ready, and waiting with a *maté* for him, as soon as he got up and shook the dew out of his hair, and buckled on his spurs.

"All that day they rode homewards, companions leaving them at intervals, as when they struck the Saucecito, crossed the Mostazas, just as it rises at the foot of the Sierra de la Ventana, or at the ruined rancho at the head waters of the Napostá. Generally, as the various neighbours drove their *tropillas* off, they turned and shouted farewell to the Indian woman and my friend, wishing them a happy honeymoon or something of the kind. He answered shortly, and she never appeared to hear, although he saw that she had understood. Before they reached his rancho he had learned a



little of the history of the woman riding by his side. She told him, as Spanish slowly seemed to make its way back to her brain, that she was eight-and-twenty, and her father had been an *estanciero* in the province of San Luis; who with her mother and her brothers had been killed in an invasion of the Indians eight years ago, and from that time she had lived with them, and had been taken by a chief whose name was Huinchan, by whom she had three sons. All this she told my friend mechanically, as if she had been speaking of another, adding, 'The Christian women pass through hell amongst the *Infidel*.'" The narrator paused to take a *maté*, and Anastasio sententiously remarked, "Hell, yes, double-heated hell: do you remember Ché, that Chilian girl you bought from that Araucan whose eye one of the Indian girls gouged out?" His friend Florencio showed his teeth like a wolf and answered, "Caspita, yes; do you remember how I got even with her? Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, as I once heard a priest say was God's law!" The *maté* finished, the Belgian once again took up his tale.

"When my friend reached his home he helped his captive off her horse, hobbled her



mare, and taking her hand led her into the house and told her it was hers.

“She was the least embarrassed of the two, and from the first took up her duties as if she had never known another life.

“Little by little she laid aside her Indian dress and ways, although she folded carefully and laid by her *chamál*, with the great silver pin shaped like a sun that holds it tight across the breast. Her ear-rings, shaped like an inverted pyramid, she put aside with the scarlet *vichu* that had bound her hair, which when she was first taken hung down her back in a thick mass of curls that had resisted all the efforts of the Indian women, aided by copious dressings of melted ostrich fat, to make straight like their own. Timidly she had asked for Christian clothes, and by degrees became again a Spanish woman, careful about her hair, which she wore high upon her head, careful about her shoes, and by degrees her walk became again the walk she had practised in her youth, when with her mother she had sauntered in the evening through the plaza of her native town, with a light swinging of her hips.

“Her Indian name of Lincomilla gave place once more to Nievés, and in a week or

two some of the sunburn vanished from her cheeks.

“All the time of her transformation my friend watched the process as a man may watch the hour-hand on a clock, knowing it moves, but yet unable to discern the movement with his eyes.

“Just as it seems a miracle when on a fine spring morning one wakes and sees a tree which overnight was bare, now crowned with green, so did it seem a miracle to him that the half-naked Indian whom he had captured, swinging her whip about her head and shouting to her horses, had turned into the Señorita Nievés, whilst he had barely seen the change. Something intangible seemed to have grown up between them, invisible, but quite impossible to pass, and now and then he caught himself regretting vaguely that he had let his captive slip out of his hands. Little by little their positions were reversed, and he who had been waited on by Lincomilla found himself treating the Señorita Nievés with all the . . . how you say . . . ‘*egards*’ that a man uses to a lady in ordinary life.

“When his hand accidentally touched hers he shivered, and then cursed himself for a fool

for not having taken advantage of the right of conquest the first day that he led the Indian girl into his home. All would have then seemed natural, and he would have only had another girl to serve his *maté*, a link in the long line of women who had succeeded one another since he first drove his cattle into the south camps and built his rancho on the creek. Then came a time when something seemed to blot out all the world, and nothing mattered but the Señorita Nievés, whom he desired so fiercely that his heart stood still when she brushed past him in her household duties; yet he refrained from speaking, kept back by pride, for he knew that, after all, she was in his power in that lone rancho on the plains. Sleeping and waking she was always there. If he rode out upon the *boleada* she seemed to go with him; on his return there she was standing, waiting for him with her enigmatic smile when he came home at night.

“She on her side was quite aware of all he suffered, suffering herself just as acutely, but being able better to conceal her feelings he never noticed it, or saw the shadowy look that long-suppressed desire brings in a woman’s eyes. Their neighbours, ordinary men and

women, had no idea things were on such an exalted footing, and openly congratulated him on his good luck in having caught an Indian who had turned to a white girl. When he had heard these rough congratulations on his luck, he used to answer shortly, and catching his horse by the head, would gallop out upon the plain and come home tired, but with the same pain gnawing at his heart. How long they might have gone on in that way is hard to say, had not the woman—for it is generally they who take the first step in such things—suddenly put an end to it. Seeing him sitting by the fire one evening, and having watched him follow her with his eyes as she came in and out, she walked up to him and laid her hand upon his shoulder, and as he started and a thrill ran through his veins, bent down her face and pressing her dry lips to his, said, 'Take me,' and slid into his arms.

"That was their courtship. From that time, all up and down the Sauce Chico, the settlers, who looked on love as a thing men wrote about in books, or as the accomplishment of a necessary function without which no society could possibly endure, took a proprietary interest in the lovers, whom they called 'Los de

Teruel,' after the lovers in the old Spanish play, who loved so constantly.

"Most certainly they loved as if they had invented love and meant to keep it to themselves. Foolish, of course they were, and primitive, he liking to rush off into Bahia Blanca to buy up all the jewellery that he could find to give her, and she, forgetting all the horrors of her life amongst the Indians, gave herself up to happiness as unrestrained as that of our first mother, when the whole world contained no other man but the one she adored.

"As in a day out on the southern plains, when all is still and the wild horses play, and from the lakes long lines of pink flamingoes rise into the air and seem translucent in the sun, when the whole sky becomes intensest purple, throwing a shadow on the grass that looks as if the very essence of the clouds was falling like a dew, the Indians say that a Pampero must be brewing, and will soon burst with devastating force upon the happy world, so did their love presage misfortune by its intensity."

"A strong north wind is sure to bring a Pampero," interpolated one of the listeners round the fire.



“Yes, that is so, and the Pampero came accordingly,” rejoined the story-teller.

“Months passed and still the neighbours talked of them with amazement, being used to see the force of passion burn itself out, just as a fire burns out in straw, and never having heard of any other kind of love except the sort they and their animals enjoyed.

“Then by degrees Nievés became a little melancholy, and used to sit for hours looking out on the Pampa, and then come in and hide her head beneath her black Manila shawl, that shawl my friend had galloped to Bahia Blanca to procure, and had returned within two days, doing the forty leagues at a round gallop all the way.

“Little by little he became alarmed, and feared, having been a man whose own affections in the past had often strayed, that she was tired of him. To all his questions she invariably replied that she had been supremely happy, and for the first time had known love, which she had always thought was but a myth invented by the poets to pass the time away. Then she would cry and say that he was idiotic to doubt her for a moment, then catching him to her, crush him against her heart.



For days together she was cheerful, but he, after the fashion of a man who thinks he has detected a slight lameness in his horse, but is not certain where, was always on the watch to try and find out what it was that ailed her, till gradually a sort of armed neutrality took the place of their love. Neither would speak, although both suffered almost as much as they had loved, until one evening as they stood looking out upon the Pampa yearning for one another, but kept apart by something that they felt, rather than knew was there, the woman with a cry threw herself into her lover's arms. Then with an effort she withdrew herself, and choking down her tears, said, 'I have been happy, dearest, happier by far than you can understand, happier than I think it is ever possible to be for any man. Think of my life, my father and my mother killed before my eyes, myself thrown to an Indian whom my soul loathed, then made by force the mother of his children—his and mine. Think what my life has been there in the Tolderias, exposed to the jealousy of all the Indian women, always in danger till my sons were born, and even then obliged to live for years amongst those savages and become as themselves.

“ ‘Then you came, and it seemed to me as if God had tired of persecuting me ; but now I find that He or nature has something worse in store. I am happy here, but then there is no happiness on earth, I think. My children—his and mine—never cease calling me. I must return to them—and see, my horses all are fat, the foal can travel, and . . . you must think it has been all a dream, and let me go back to my master—husband—bear him more children, and at last be left to die when I am old, beside some river, like other Indian wives.’ She dried her eyes, and gently touching him upon the shoulder, looked at him sadly, saying, ‘Now you know, dearest, why it is I have been so sad and made you suffer, though you have loaded me with love. Now that you know I love you more a hundred times than the first day, when, as you used to say, I took you for my own, you can let me go back to my duties and my misery, and perhaps understand.’

“ Her lover saw her mind was fixed, and with an effort stammered, ‘Bueno, you were my prisoner, but ever since I took you captive I have been your slave. . . . When will you go?’

“ Let it be to-morrow, *sangre mia*, and at

daybreak, for you must take me to the place where you first saw me ; it has become to me as it were a birthplace, seeing that there I first began to live.' Once more he answered, ' Bueno,' like a man in a dream, and led her sadly back into their house.

"Just as the first red streaks of the false dawn had tinged the sky they saddled up without a word.

"Weary and miserable, with great black circles round their eyes, they stood a moment, holding their horses by their *cabrestos*, till the rising sun just fell upon the doorway of the poor rancho where they had been so happy in their love.

"Without a word they mounted, the captive once more turned to Lincomilla, dressed in her Indian clothes, swinging herself as lightly to the saddle as a man. Then gathering the horses all together, with the foal, now strong and fat, running behind its mother, they struck into the plains.

"Three or four hours of steady galloping brought them close to the place where Lincomilla had been taken captive by him who now rode silently beside her, with his eyes fixed on the horizon, like a man in a dream.

“ ‘It should be here,’ she said, ‘close to that tuft of sarandis . . . yes, there it is, for I remember it was there you took my horse by the bridle, as if you thought that I was sure to run away, back to the Indians.’

“Dismounting, they talked long and sadly, till Lincomilla tore herself from her lover’s arms and once more swung herself upon her horse. The piebald Pingo with the split ears neighed shrilly to the other horses feeding a little distance off upon the plain, then, just as she raised her hand to touch his mouth, the man she was about to leave for ever stooped down and kissed her foot, which rested naked on the stirrup, after the Indian style. ‘May the God of the Araucans, to whom you go, bless and encompass you;’ he cried; ‘my God has failed me,’ and as he spoke she touched her horse lightly with the long Indian reins. The piebald plunged and wheeled round, and then struck into a measured gallop, as his rider, gathering her horses up before her, set her face westward, without once looking back.

“I . . . that is my friend, stood gazing at her, watching the driven horses first sink below the horizon into the waves of grass, the foal last disappearing as it brought up the rear, and

then the horse that Lincomilla rode, inch by inch fade from sight, just as a ship slips down the round edge of the world. Her feet went first, then the *caronas* of her saddle, and by degrees her body, wrapped in the brown *chamál*.

“Lastly, the glory of her floating hair hung for a moment in his sight upon the sky, then vanished, just as a piece of seaweed is sucked into the tide by a receding wave.

“That’s all,” the story-teller said, and once again began to paint his horses’ brands in the wood ashes with his mutton-bone, as he sat gazing at the fire.

Silence fell on the camp, and in the still, clear night the sound of the staked-out horses cropping the grass was almost a relief. None spoke, for nearly all had lost some kind of captive, in some way or other, till Claraz, rising, walked round and laid his hand upon the story-teller’s shoulder. “I fear,” he said, “the telling of the tale has not done anything to make the weight upon the heart any the lighter.

“All down the coast, as I remember, from Mazatlán to Acapulco, pearl-fishers used to say, unless a man made up his mind to stay below

the water till his ears burst, that he would never be a first-rate pearl-diver.

“Some men could never summon up the courage, and remained indifferent pearl-divers, suffering great pain, and able to remain only a short time down in the depths, as their ears never burst. It seems to me that you are one of those . . . but, I know I am a fool, I like you better as you are.”

He ceased, and the grey light of dawn fell on the sleepless camp on the north fork of the Mostazas (or perhaps the Napostá); it fell upon the smouldering fire, with Lincomilla's lover still drawing horses' marks in the damp ashes, and on the group of men wrapped in their ponchos shivering and restless with the first breath of day.

Out on the plain, some of the horses were lying down beside their bell-mares. Others stood hanging their heads low between their feet, with their coats ruffled by the dew.



## THE FOURTH MAGUS

SOME ancient writer or another—the Arabs frequently begin a tale “Says somebody”—relates the story of his life and miracles. Balthasar, Gaspar, and Melchior were, as he tells us, kings in Babylon. How Babylon came to be supplied with such a superfluity of kings he does not say, even if he knew why. Still, it was so, for all of them had crowns; rich mantles trimmed with ermine; fine Arab horses with legs as slim as a gazelle’s, tails floating in the air, heads like a peacock’s, eyes that shot fire, and with a general air as of a hippogriff. In fact these kings had myrrh frankincense, jewels, furs, scimitars, vessels of richest plate, and everything befitting to their state.

All this I know, for I have seen it all in pictures, and have rejoiced to learn their horses were of a pale sea-green or else of a rich cinnamon, colours quite natural in royal steeds, and blending well into the faint blue landscape of the Umbrian School of painters, who alone

had the true vision of these kings. The circumstance that one of them was black was not the least bit disconcerting to the painters (no colour line exists in art), but on the contrary it helped them in their work, by furnishing a contrast to the pale, yellow faces of the other two. As they sat in their palaces, following the usual avocations of their kind, either being occupied in administering injustice or else in watching dancing-girls gyrate, strange news was brought into the town.

Shepherds, all seated on the ground, watching their sheep folded inside a net of ropes, their dogs beside them, and their thoughts fixed on the heavens—as often happens with people of their kind, which in itself accounts why they so often lose their sheep—had seen a wondrous star.

Lustrous and bright as Sirius, redder than Aldebáran, and far more luminous than Zuben-el-Chamali or Altair, it lighted all the sky. Around it was a space as if the other stars had all agreed they were not worthy even to feel its radiance fall upon them, and it appeared to beckon, as the shepherds thought, and move a little towards the West, as if inviting them to follow in its wake.

Night after night the star appeared in the same place, just up above their heads. At last, seeing, as shepherds will, something miraculous in the affair, they left their flocks—for, after all, what is a sheep or two beside so bright a star—and sought out a Wise Man. After consideration and due examination of the case, he solved the mystery, telling them that a mighty prophet would be born, who should raise up the lowly, redress injustices, cast down the powerful, make rough places smooth, and be the champion of the weak the whole world over; and all they had to do was but to follow in the way the star directed them, and it would take them to the place.

Such things not being for the kind of men they were, they went to Babylon, and, walking up and down about the streets, began to tell what they had seen and heard to everyone they met. Little by little the fame of what they said filled all men's minds, and in bazaars and markets, in fondaks, stores, and caravan-serais, the wondrous rumour grew.

Lastly, as happens in such cases, now, as in Babylon, it passed the palace gates. The kings were fired with it at once, either being filled with faith and hatred of injustice, things natural

to men of their estate, or else impelled by that desire of movement which in kings plays the part imagination plays in poets and sets their blood astir.

So taking horse, and followed by a fitting retinue carrying the presents which the painters of the Umbrian School have seen so well, and have depicted for us in the middle distance of their canvases, they set out on their quest. All the world knows the story of their ride, and how, following the star over the plains, through the defiles of mountains, and across rivers, at last it stopped above the stable in which the ox and ass were feeding, making a nimbus with their warm clover-scented breath round the child's head as it lay sleeping in the crib. Their reward was instant, for they beheld their faith made patent by their work, a thing that few attain, however firmly they believe, and whilst men read the simple story of their brief passage through the scene of history, they still will love them, as long as faith and stars continue and shepherds watch their sheep upon the plains. They saw the birth of God made man, and, after having seen it and adored, became immortal; but the fourth Magus, he who lingered on the road, saw man made God,

and is forgotten and unknown to anyone except to those who, like some diving negro, seek their pearls in the unnavigated creeks of ancient chroniclers.

That Nicanor hangs out of fashion on his rusty nail, and Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior still are household words, is perhaps natural, for they by faith were justified, and faith is the true royal road to fame. King Nicanor followed the path along which man from the beginning of the world has worn out countless million pairs of shoes, blistered infinities of feet, and quite as naturally has been forgotten by his kind.

This, then, is how the thing fell out.

When the three kings had ridden off upon their quest, King Nicanor was left behind, owing to his horse having cast a shoe. When the Chaldean smith had shod the horse, after considerable delay—for then as now in blacksmiths' shops, nothing was ready, and not a single shoe in the whole place would fit—Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar had vanished on the plain, and it was almost night. Determining to make at least a start, for being a Wise Man and from the East, where people know the benefit of camping even a league outside



the city walls upon the first day of a journey, Nicanor got on his horse and sallied forth, passing the horseshoe arch of the great gate in the town wall towards the west, about an hour before the sun had set.

The camp was pitched just by the side of a wide crossing of a river edged by palm trees and broken into several channels by beds of sand and stones. Right at the crossing the feet of camels and of mules, passing for centuries, had made a well-defined deep track, in which the riders' feet were almost on the ground as they rode through to reach the stream, their horses stumbling occasionally as they struck their feet against the sides. Young date palms springing from the sand struggled against the nibbling of the camels and the mules that snatched a mouthful as they passed. A haze of orange fading into pink outlined the palms upon the farther bank, showing each knot upon their trunks. In the light air the leaves just stirred and made a creaking sound, unlike the whispering of the oaks and beeches of the north. White bones, and here and there a skull, showed where a baggage animal had been released from toil, and round them the sparse grass grew just a little greener, and



myriads of the minutest flies crawled in and out between the vertebræ of the dry backbone that would never more bend underneath a pack.

Sitting upon his horse, with one leg crossed upon its neck, the long reins dangling almost to the ground as it hung down its head a little to snatch a mouthful of the grass, the Magus gave directions to his men to pitch his tents.

Quickly the packs were lifted off the mules' and camels' backs, and the tents rose as if by magic from the sandy grass, flecked here and there with tiny jonquils: a sky of flowery stars spread or reflected on the ground.

The evening call to prayer, which Mahomet must have perpetuated, for it could not have sprung into his brain unaided, being in itself a necessary action after the daily battle with the sun, rang out, and for a moment all the camp was prostrate, thanking some god or other for the evening breeze.

Slowly King Nicanor got off his horse, and a black slave tied it up to the rope of camel's hair which, stretched between two stakes, was set before his tent. Its lofty saddle stood up like an island outlined against the deep blue clouds, for nothing broke the horizon to the

south but the tents and the feeding animals. As Nicanor sat on a saddle-cloth before his tent thinking upon the wondrous star of which the shepherds had brought tidings, and inwardly determining to push on at the first light of day to catch up his companions, three or four figures came out of the palm grove, and dragging themselves slowly across the sand and grass, stood in a row before him and pointed upwards to the sky with a mute gesture of despair. Famine had wasted them almost beyond the semblance of mankind. Their sunken stomachs and protruding ribs made them look something like a fossil fish embedded in the coal-measures, whilst their thin arms and legs hardly sustained their feet and hands, which looked enormous in comparison to their shrunk, wasted limbs. Save for a wisp of dirty cotton rags about their loins they were as naked as a skeleton, and their parched tongues were rough and horny, like a parrot's, within their parchment-looking mouths.

The Magus gazed at them fascinated, and in a moment the wondrous star and the new prophet to be born into the world were both forgotten in the horror of the scene. As he stood petrified, from every side, from hollows

scooped out of the sand, from tufts of thorny shrubs, thin tottering figures rose and staggered to his tent. Women held children by the hand, and miserable boys supported aged men, whilst an old crone crawled on her hands and knees close to his feet, and then, raising herself a little, pointed a skinny finger to the sky. None of them spoke, but the mute glance of their beseeching eyes struck horror to his soul. When he could speak he called for bread, and with his men cut it in slices, then moistening it in water passed it along the ranks. It vanished as by magic, but still the line grew longer, and in the moonlight the famine-stricken people looked like a troop of wolves that had surrounded some belated traveller on the plain. Some of the people snatched the barley from the horses and the mules as they stood feeding, whilst others struggled for the crumbs, fighting like starving dogs. King Nicanor called to his men and sent back two of them to bring a mule laden with bread from town, as the throng seemed to grow as if the people sprang up from the sand. The mule-load disappeared almost as quickly as if it had been thrown into the sea. Night waned and the first flush of dawn still found the Magus and his camp besieged

with famine-stricken folk. Several days passed, and then the starvelings, having eaten, vanished as speedily as they had come, leaving no trace of their appearance except upon the Wise Man's soul. Then, after resting for a day, he once more set out on his way. The sun was rising as he struck his camp, and as he started once again towards the west his thoughts reverted to the birth of the great prophet, the wondrous star, and to his friends, whom he supposed would now be almost at their journey's end.

He caught himself at times almost regretting the delay the starving folk had brought about, and then again thought that if the prophet to be born had come to heal the sorrows of the world, to clothe the naked, heal the sick, and feed the hungry, that at least he had tried humbly to do likewise, though not himself inspired; and that there still was left good work to do on earth during the childhood of the great one, whose birth he hoped to see.

So he rode on, finding upon his path here a blind man and there some wayfarer sitting dejectedly beside his dying horse. Each case delayed him, and when he reached a town his fame had gone before him, and halt and sick,

those who had had their eyes burned out for theft, and others who had lost a hand or foot, lopped off to show that justice was as deaf to pity as she is blind to facts, swarmed round him and implored his alms.

Sometimes when passing a lone duar on the plains, just at the saint's house, with its tuft of feathery palms, some wretch would sally forth and, rushing to his side, clutch fast his stirrup, exclaiming, "I take refuge with you," and he would stop and look into his case.

Still, though he knew the prophet must by this time be a youth and growing to a man, when he escaped from the accumulating cares his pilgrimage had brought upon him he pressed on towards the west. Across the heated plains at times he toiled, mocked by the mirage, and with the heat reflected from some stony tract burning his face, and sometimes through some mountain pass where the frost froze his stirrups to his boots, he kept upon his way, just as men labour towards a goal they know it is impossible to reach, unconscious that they carry it within themselves from the first day on which they had set out.

Years passed, and not an animal which he had brought from Babylon remained alive,



some having died upon the road, and others, of old age, in the long halts he made in cities where some injustice or another had detained him on his way. Still, as he lingered, endeavouring to do good, news reached him now and then about the doings of the prophet whose birth he once had hoped to see, and when he got the news a sort of fever would come over him, making him long to see him ere he died.

The flight of time had not left Nicanor unaltered, and from the sleek and prosperous king who had left Babylon so many years ago, young, careless, and with hope springing in his heart, he had become a weather-beaten man, grizzled and careworn, and in his eyes had come that look of watchfulness that comes to those who pass their lives upon the road.

The horse he rode, a darkish bay of the Keheilan breed, he had received from an old Bedouin chief near Baalbec, whose son he nursed when stricken with the plague. No other horse throughout Irak could be compared with it, either for shape or blood. His full round eyes, and ears lean as a lynx's, his round and flinty feet, broad forehead, silky mane, and tail he carried like a flag, with the sunk channel running down his spine, which, as the



Arabs say, could carry off the dew, showed him an archetype of the breed which alone amongst all the horses of the world is truly noble and fit for kings to ride. Years had fallen lightly on King Nicanor himself, leaving him upright, though they had flecked his hair with grey upon the temples, and given him that gravity which many Orientals seem to acquire in middle life, as it were, by an effort of the mind. Most of his followers had returned home or died, except a man or two who, by long converse with their master, had imbibed some of his ideas, or else found life upon the road too pleasant to desert and dwell again in the dull round of cities, seeing the sun rise from behind the selfsame mountain range and sink into the plain, at evening, leaving no sign to mark its passage through the sky, just as a stone sinks out of sight into a pond.

Now and again strange rumours reached the wandering Mage of what was going on in the far country he had left home to visit, and how the prophet who had come had gathered to himself a rout of fishermen, of outcasts, publicans, and women, who, it appeared, all followed him about, striving to found no kingdom, but listening to his words in desert places and on

the tops of hills. Much did he ponder on the tidings, thinking at first the prophet must be mad, and then, as he thought more upon the case, seeing a half-resemblance to his own way of life, that is, of course, with that due difference of their respective standings in the world, taken into account.

At last, for even in the East all things draw to an end, he found himself close to Jerusalem. Halting upon a hill which overlooked the town, he pitched his camp near to a well, close to which grew a grove of olive trees. As he sat, after so many years, gazing down on the city where he had heard the prophet lived, whose wondrous birth, heralded by the bright star, had induced him in his early manhood to set forth from Babylon, he looked back on his life. The city lay beneath him, bathed in the golden haze that in the East hides mouldering palaces and tottering weed-grown walls into whose chinks dart lizards in their play, blots out the dirt and squalor and gilds the broken potsherds on the great dunghills by the gates, setting all floating in a sea of glory, above whose waters float the feathery palms.

After the custom, which in his case was now well sanctified by time, the camp of the Wise

Man—for now at last, being in Jerusalem, he was a Wise Man of the East—was overrun by beggars, halt and blind. From them he learned that on the morrow the Romans, who had become the masters of the place since he set out upon his travels from the East, were going to execute two thieves, and one who, as they said, was to be put to death for having called himself a king.

After the beggars had been supplied with bread, a wandering fakir came to the camp, and sitting down before the tent entered into one of those long conversations which in the East supply the place of newspapers, filling exactly the same use even to the extent of tinging all the news with the narrator's sympathies, just as a newspaper is but the mirror of the mind of those who write in it.

Long did the dervish talk about the state of Palestine, the price of bread and barley, the raids the tribes had made on one another's herds, and lastly, of the execution which was going to be held.

The thieves he touched on lightly, saying they both were sons of mothers who had never yet said no. He thought the name of one of them was Dimas, the other Gestas, but was

not sure of their identity. Of the third sufferer, the one who had been called a king, he had more details, and remarked, by the sun's light, he is a man.

Little by little he unfolded all he knew about the man who was to pay the penalty of being called a king. It seemed that prodigies had happened at his birth. A star had heralded it, and three Wise Men had come out of the East . . . wisdom is in the East, the stranger said, with the air of one who enunciates a fact that none can controvert. King Nicanor, who all the time had listened patiently, broke in upon the tale, exclaiming: "These Wise Men, I know them well, their names are Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. They are my kinsmen; are they still in the town?"

The dervish looked at him, as people look upon a man who, without rhyme or reason, suddenly has a lapse of memory, and answered: "In the town! . . . Why, they were here, as I heard tell, some three-and-thirty years ago, and only stayed a night."

Drawing his hand across his eyes the Magus muttered: "Three-and-thirty years ago—it seems but yesterday when I set out. This prophet then of whom you speak, who dies

to-morrow, is the wondrous babe of whom the shepherds told of yesterday—that is, three-and-thirty years ago ; but he was to redress men's wrongs, lift up the down-trodden, to heal the halt, make the blind see, fight the oppressor, and be a shield unto the weak. Can it be then that in Jerusalem they execute a man for striving for such ends ?”

If the fakir had thought the speaker mad at first, he now looked on him as a lunatic.

“ Where have you lived,” he said, “ and do not know that such a man since the beginning of the world can have but such a fate ?”

King Nicanor, after a pause, said : “ I have lived, as I now see, upon the road, never remaining very long in any place ; but I remember now and then it has amazed me, that when I fed the hungry, as you say this man who is to die has done, that many hated me, saying I did it, all for the love of praise.”

Hours came and hours passed as they sat talking, and by degrees King Nicanor heard all the prophet's life, his love of liberty, his truth, his justice, charity, and how the people loved him, especially the lowly and the meek, and of the special charm he had for women, the sweetness of his nature, and how no



one who ever heard him but fell beneath his spell.

At last, as dawn began to creep into the sky with a pale milky whiteness that gradually extended through the deep, blue eastern night, just as a drop or two of mastic tinges the water in a glass, King Nicanor rose to his feet and said: "It is now time to rest. Fate has deprived me of the joy of being present at the birth of him the star announced; I can at least be present at his death . . . and birth and death are not so very different, after all."

Fate, though, that mocks our resolutions, making us but the creatures of itself, had almost made him miss the chance, for in the morning he found his camp besieged with a great horde of beggars and of folk who had heard that one who, some said, was a fool and others a Wise Man, but who in any case gave bread away to all who asked for it, had come into the town.

All day he sat and gave his alms and listened to their plaints, until the seventh hour or the eighth, and then mounting his horse, rode up to Golgotha. Darkness was spread upon the land as he toiled up the rocky path, making his way with difficulty through the press.



Right at the top, in the half-light he saw three figures set on high. Two of them hung inert ; the third just stirred and asked for drink, and Nicanor observed that his long hair hung down upon one side and half obscured his face.

Just at that moment a young man came running with a sponge of vinegar upon a reed, and, holding it up to the middle figure, pushed it into his mouth. He drank, and after a long shiver had run through his body, he gave a cry so wild and terrible that the dark bay Kehlani that the king rode reared up and snorted, pawing the air with his fore feet, and as he struck the ground King Nicanor saw that the middle figure hung limp upon the cross.

## UN MONSIEUR

IT may be the desire for sympathy that makes us yearn to pour our troubles into another's ear—how wise was the first Pope who hit upon auricular confession and made it sacred—that impelled Elise to tell the tale.

“He was,” she said, “un Monsieur, about fifty years of age, rich, dull, and only wanting wings to fly, so much he was puffed up with his position in the world and with his wealth.

“No, he did not treat me badly for some time, that is to say, after the visits that he used to pay me, he generally put a ten-pound note upon the mantelpiece and got into his motor with an air as of a Jupiter who had just parted from a Danae. After he went I usually took a bath, and then sat down to read *Hérédia* or *Verlaine*, some author or another of a kind that took me off into a world shut to such men as was my wealthy friend.

“He did not talk much ; you see he was an Englishman, and seemed as if he was ashamed

of speaking much to me, although of course that did not stop his visits to my house. I fancy that he regulated them on hygienic grounds, and rather thought he was a virtuous man in not allowing a full rein to what I feel assured he called the baser appetites . . . baser, eh? . . . the only ones he knew. He looked upon me, I am well aware, but as an instrument of pleasure, a sort of musical-box which he could set in motion with a ten-pound note.

“Upon my side I thought of him but as un Monsieur, a man, that is, who, neither good nor bad, yet pushed by sensuality came to me at his stated intervals and went away appeased. His kisses bothered me, and all his efforts of what he perhaps called love were of a *maladroit*, that used to make me laugh . . . but then, in my profession, one gets to know what to expect of men.

“Of course he was quite unintellectual. The arts of every nature . . . love is an art”—and here she smiled and fluffed her hair out at the sides with conscious pride—“were but so many pastimes served up to him by men who lived by them. They all appeared to him a sort of intellectual *saltimbanques*, I verily believe, and he must surely have referred to them as

painters, poets, fiddlers, and all that kind of thing."

She paused, and the light falling on her fair wavy hair and on her well-kept hands gave her an air of such refinement that it was hard to think of her as the wage-slave of such a man as she had just described. Tall, slight, and well proportioned, blessed with the taste that seems the birthright of the women of her race, the little jewellery she wore appeared as much a portion of herself as the faint, half-professional smile that played about her lips, from the teeth outward, when she was talking to a man.

"You must not think," she said, "that I have laid the colour on too thickly; that would be inartistic. No, he was simply, as I said, un Monsieur . . . not to use a vulgar word, which perhaps would have been better in his case.

"Ridiculous, of course—*cocasse*; I am not sure if there is any word in English that quite is the equivalent of that.

"Ludicrous, preposterous, no. . . . I mean he was absurd and had what we call *une vraie tête de mari* . . . need I say more than that?"

"All fat, rich men of fifty, when they make visits to such girls as me must of necessity be

. . . *ah yes*, odd. To me the fact of being rich has something in it of itself that seems preposterous. Fancy how I must feel, who look on love as one of the fine arts, to have to *singer* it with a dull, fat, old man, simply because he has a big account at some bank or another! Apart from morals, to which I make no claim, it is an insult to the God who, I suppose, created both of us."

As she said this she drew herself up to her full height, hollowed her back a little like a gymnast on the horizontal bar, and then went on again.

"I had not seen my Monsieur for a week or two and wondered what had happened to him, when a brougham with a pair of chestnut horses drew up at the door. Out of it got a lady, tall, dark, and with a sable cloak that must have cost an eye out of her head, elegant, *svelte*, well dressed and . . . beautiful. She did not give her name, but sent a message saying that she would like to see me, and when my maid had showed her up into the room she came forward and addressed me by my name . . . but charmingly, not stiffly in the least, and without any air of patronage. I asked her to be seated, and she sat down as naturally as if

she had been on a visit to a woman of her own world, and after looking at me for a moment curiously, said in good French, 'I have come about a business matter.' I did not ask her how she knew my name, but merely smiled at her, with a slight inclination of the head, wondering internally what kind of business could have brought her, and as she paused a little as if she were debating what to say, I ran my eye over her, trying to recollect if I had seen her anywhere, but all to no avail. As we say, I undressed her, mentally, divining, as it were, she wore good stays and linen underneath. Her feet, of course, I saw, and her well-made French shoes and open-work silk stockings, and from her person generally there floated a faint odour of discreet perfume such as a woman of her world, who does not have to make men turn and look at her, can afford to wear.

"She certainly was beautiful and of my type, that is, the type that I admire, with dark and glossy hair in which you might have seen your face as in a looking-glass. All she had on I inwardly commended, her clothes and jewellery, though there was nothing in especial in the latter except a string of pearls, not large, like



those in which a banker's wife or rich American, so to speak, hangs in chains, but finely shaped and dazzlingly white. All this review, of course, took but a minute, and as she did not speak a strange suspicion crossed my mind why she had come to see me, but as if she herself had read what thought was passing in my mind she blushed a little, making her look divine, and saying, 'It was on business that I came,' took from her muff a photograph, and holding it towards me asked me if I had ever seen the man.

"To my amazement, on looking at it I saw the man I have been telling you about, in all in his commonness. His ears, just like an elephant's, his mottled face, and above all that air of thinking he was somebody only because he happened to be rich, all shouted at me.

"Still, every *métier* has its etiquette, and mine, just like a lawyer's or a priest's, is, or should be, discreet. I did not like the man, and on the other hand the lady was quite charming; but I stood firm, and, after looking at the thing indifferently, answered, 'I never saw the man,' and sat expectantly. A shadow of annoyance crossed the lady's face, and once again she came back to the charge.

“ ‘Are you quite sure?’ she said, ‘for I am told he is a friend of yours, and let me tell you I am rich.’

“This got my back up just a little, for it appeared as if I never should get clear of riches, and it amazed me, as it annoys me now, to see rich people go about trampling on honour and on everything by the mere weight of gold. Still, she was far too nice to quarrel with, so I sat quietly and smiled, and happening to catch her eye, we both stopped a half-laugh, and I, divining that she was my Monsieur’s wife, wondered what her next move would be to try and make me tell. After a word or two she got up from her chair, and going to the door paused for a minute as she held it in her hand, then, turning to me smiling, said :

“I respect your honesty ; but, after all, what does it matter whose money that it is you take? I will pay you anything up to a thousand pounds if you but choose to recollect.

“Once more I thanked her, knowing, of course, that I was acting like a fool, but pleased to show her that I held honour above money—in spite of what I was. As she was going out she turned, and said again, ‘Name your conditions’ ; and when I smiled and shook

my head, she looked at me just for a moment, half with regret, half with approval, so that when finally she closed the door I felt, although she had not got her way, that she respected me for having made a stand against my interest.

“Three or four days had passed and the impression of the lady’s visit had almost worn away, when who should come to see me but my friend.

“He looked so prosperous, and had so great an air as if the world might have belonged to him had he not been too lazy to write out a cheque . . . an oversight which, no doubt, when he had time enough, he still would rectify . . . I hardly found it in my heart at first to tell him what had passed. As soon, however, as he began what he perhaps called love-making and tried to draw me on to his knee, I, of course, seeing that he looked on the whole thing but as a hygienic visit, determined not to lose the chance.

“Therefore instead of letting, as I generally did, my head fall on his shoulder, closing my eyes, and thinking I was in the Calais steamer on a rough day, I pushed him off, and standing up, looked at him steadily between the eyes.

“He, for his part, knowing that he was

going to pay for my complaisance, and having not an inkling of what was passing in my head, looked at me, half amazed, half puzzled, and exclaimed: 'Elise, old girl, what's up that you behave in this way to a pal?'

"Whether it was his confidence, a confidence that neither God nor Nature had given him the right to exercise with any woman upon earth, or whether I was revolted at my '*sale métier . . . car c'est un vrai métier de chien, tu sais,*' I do not understand. When I had my hand free, for he tried to pull me to him and treat my attitude as a good joke, I said without a prelude: 'Your wife was here the other day.'

"He did not think I was in earnest and answered me in French, which he spoke fluently: '*Elle est bonne, celle-là.*'

"However, when I had told him how his wife was dressed and named a bracelet that she wore he got more serious. I rather liked to tease him, and for a moment thought of saying something that would throw doubt upon his wife, but being also curious to find out what had been the real reason of her call, I merely said: 'She took your photograph out of her muff and showed it to me.'

“You never saw a man change quicker than my friend.

“‘What did you say, Elise?’ he muttered; and when I told him that I had quite disclaimed all knowledge of him, he took my hand in his and kissed it, exclaiming: ‘Elise, you are a splendid girl. . . . My wife wants to divorce me, but we have a child, a girl of ten, old enough to appreciate the disgrace of the Divorce Court, and I would give the world to spare her.’

“For the first time I rather liked him, for he spoke feelingly, and really seemed a man and not a money-bag. He drew me to him, and for the first time in my life I let him do so without repulsion, and holding both my hands he swore I had saved him, that he would do anything in the world for me, and if I wished to lead a different life and go back home to France that he would settle money on me to help me either to learn painting, which had always been my dream, or to get married to a decent man. When I had thanked him and he had kissed me several times, but quite as a man kisses a real woman and not as he had done before upon his visits, he went away, assuring me of his eternal gratitude, and



turning at the door, just as his wife had done a day or two ago, to thank me once again. This time I was *bouleversée* and sat down and cried, thinking what I would do, and came to the conclusion to go to Paris and begin work in some *atelier* under some painter of repute. I thought of all that I should do and—for the life of art cannot, of course, be quite devoid of love—determined to choose some young painter or another, whom I should live with . . . quite *en bourgeois*, and darn his socks and be as good to, for I am *très bonne fille*, as I have told you, as was possible.

“That was a happy afternoon, and my task, when in the evening business sent me out to the Alhambra or some other music-hall, comparatively light. Days passed and weeks, then months, and still my grateful friend was silent, until one day, walking beside the Serpentine, I met him with his wife. He paled, and she looked at me quickly, and clutching at his arm, said: ‘*Tiens ! C’est elle.*’

“I made no sign, but fixed my eyes upon a child sailing his boat and passed on my way. That’s all,” said Elise; “and for the man, at first, I thought he was a *lâche* and then a scoundrel; but now I know he was but a rich



man—'un Monsieur'—and probably to-day, if he thinks of the matter now and then, promptly dismisses it, and says as he lights up a big cigar : ' She was a prostitute.' ”

## A RETAINER

“LAIRD, ye ken ane o’ my forbears gaed to Bannockburn wi’ the Graemes.” Though my retainer always insisted that this forbear was “nigh upon seven feet high,” and used to add, “men nowadays run awfie small,” he would himself with his inadequate six feet and four or five inches have wielded a good spear.

Indeed, no man could possibly have had a better spearsman at his back in the old days.

Tall, dark, and with a fell of hair that grew down low upon his forehead and met his curling beard, which grew so thick upon his face, if you had dropped a pin upon it, it would have never touched the skin, his twinkling grey eyes looked out suspiciously and yet with humour on the world. His upper lip was always shaved, that is to say, upon the “Sabbath morn,” and bore throughout the week a crop of stubble on it, so that, had it not been an article of faith with him to shave it on

the Sunday, he might as well have thrown away his razor, though I can never fancy him with a moustache. He had, I think, a vague idea that to have grown it would have been a sort of poaching on the customs of the "gentry," though if a long descent can make a gentleman, surely the fact of the grim forbear who had gone to Bannockburn should have entitled him to be so styled, even although the warrior ancestor may have been legendary. Most ancestors do not bear looking at too closely, not only for their moral worth, but for their authenticity, and my retainer's had done as much for him, as if he had, after the manner of most Scottish worthies, hall-marked his passage through the world by witnessing a charter, for he lived up to him, according to his lights.

Born just before the railway penetrated the remoter districts, he had, although he never knew it, preserved a flavour of an older world.

His speech was harsh and dialectic, but yet not vulgar, and in his voice you heard that cadence, as of a Gaelic song, natural to those born near the Highland line. Whether he ever knew it I know not, but he appeared to me a little wasted in a world which had no

special function for such men as he was, to perform. Walking beside a cart, towering above the horse, or sitting on the cramped iron seat of some new reaper, cutting the corn upon his boggy fields, he seemed a little out of place, too fine a figure for the work, not that he was especially intelligent, beyond a certain "pawky" humour, the inheritance of nearly everyone who tills the soil in our bleak, kindly North, but because a manhood such as his imparts a dignity to its possessor quite as impossible to explain as humour, but seen at the first glance.

Huge and athletic as he seemed to me in later life, in childhood he loomed gigantic, and illness, death, or age appeared in his case as impossible as they would have been to a mountain or to the world itself.

Seated beside his father, his very counterpart, but bent and grey, he used to keep my eyes focussed upon him, half against my will, during long hours in church. It seemed a miracle how his great hands, in which the soil had entered, as it were, below the skin and dyed them dark as peat, could "whummle o'er" the pages in the "Book," and as I sat desperately waiting for "saxteenthly and seven-

teenthly," and often cheated by the preacher, who always seemed to have a "few words in conclusion," extending over twenty minutes, in reserve, I used to envy his composure as he sat as little moved as is a rock upon a moor during a shower of rain. As I look back through the long vista of the years, it does not strike me that he was religious to a great degree, though such a constant worshipper in church. In fact, I think he was one of the class of commentators who would not give "five minutes of the clash of the kirkyard for all the sermons in the world." It may be that in this I am unjust, for in things spiritual he did not venture an opinion, although on politics he thought he was a Radical, that is, with reservations, as are most of us, for I remember that on one occasion he remarked he "was na sure ould Wully Gladstane had done richt when he gave votes to the farm labourers" . . . for, as he said, "yon class o' cattle is not eddicated up to it." It would have been a work of supererogation to have told him, that what he had just said was what was urged against his own class once upon a time, for he would certainly have answered: "Aye ou aye, prejudice juist dies hard," or

something of the sort, with the assurance of a man who knows that he is right.

His house, just on the edge of a wild moss, was suited to him, for certainly it had no outward sign of any inward grace, as it stood gaunt and square, its grey stone walls and green-grey slates gave it that air of self-assertion which I suppose it had to have to face the climate, just as a Scotchman who is lacking in it is a Scotchman lost.

Needless to say, no flowers climbed up the porch, no garden broke the look of sternness of the place.

The only sacrifice, that is, if sacrifice it could be called, upon the altar of æstheticism were two small rowan trees which grew on each side of the iron gate which opened on the gravel path that led up to the house, and had been made to form an arch. I think that in his heart of hearts my retainer looked upon this as foolishness and waste of time, for once when I directed his attention to it, he muttered "havers of the wife's," and turned the conversation with a remark that sheep "were back at the October Tryst," or something of the sort.

Though not a grumbler, or a man who ever asked for a reduction of his rent, my retainer



never would allow that any season could be a good one for the crops. Markets were always "back," during the many years I knew him; potatoes always either were diseased or just were sickening for it; the "neeps" had tae-and-finger, and the hogs wintering upon his farm either had foot-rot or the fluke.

None of these statements did he advance with an ulterior object, but simply threw them out for what they might be worth, either as pleasant subjects to discourse upon, or as a sort of formula with which to enter into conversation in an agreeable way.

This habit, and his enormous hands, and feet encased in boots like barges, heavily soled and tacketed, his homespun clothes and soft black hat (he lived before the age of caps), were but one side of him, the side that he turned outward to the world.

Not having Gaelic, he had lost the gift of picturesque expression, the birthright, as it seems, of every Highlander, even the dullest of his race. Deep in his mind, however, there seemed to seethe a mixture of hard Lowland Scotch ideas and a half Celtic spirit of revolt, not 'against powers that be, but against life as we all know it, striving for mastery.

This made him ever in hot water with his fellows, but, on the other hand, took him off into a fantastic world, not that of elves and fairies, of wraiths and second sight, but to a sphere in which all the occurrences of daily life were magnified till they became as interesting as they might well be, or perhaps really are, if we could see them in his way.

During the whole course of his life he was, as he said, "sair ta'en up wi' horse," and yet had the worst horses in the district on his farm.

Floods, frosts, and snows were deeper, fiercer, and more intense when he recounted them, than anyone had ever known them, and yet in all his dealings with his fellows he was honest to a fault, so that it may have been he either was a poet without the gift of words, or that the spirit of the strange, wild district where he lived worked in his soul, whilst the affairs of life, sordid and commonplace, but yet compelling, influenced his mind.

The village, close to where he lived, was rent asunder by feuds between the churches, which, as the difference between them was infinitesimal, rendered their quarrels almost as bitter as those between the Spaniards and the Moors.

Often the battle raged on little matters, such as the appointment of a school-teacher, or the like, and my retainer, having taken as it were the shilling of the Free Kirk, duly embroiled himself with almost everybody, offending just as much his co-religionists by too great violence as he outraged his enemies by his attacks.

At last he found himself left all alone, the one sincere and honest man in the whole district branded as an intriguer and a liar.

So he retired to his marshy fields, and passed his time between the plough-stilts and his own ingle-neuk, but never missing kirk on Sundays, where he sat silently, his hair a little greyer, and his hands a little more like roots of trees, turning the criticising gaze of the old-fashioned members of his race upon the preacher, and ostentatiously looking up all the texts he quoted, with a loud rustle of pages, reminding one of dry leaves falling in a wood.

All the strange waifs and strays, goin'-about bodies and the like, who forty years ago travelled the upland districts in the North, drifted up to his farm in the same way steel filings jump to a magnet, and he, although he bitterly complained about their presence and

the small depredations that they made, was always ready to throw open barns and out-houses for them to pass the night.

Perhaps the district, with its wide mosses and enshrouding mists, its mouldering ruins of the past, mysterious-looking tarns lost in the hills, and its slow-flowing black-streamed river, upon whose bosom bubbles that seemed to rise up from the centre of the earth were ever bursting, was his chief friend, for no one could have pictured him in any other place. The great iron gin he dug out of the moss, and which he called a wolf-trap, and the claymore he found when casting peats, and which by a quite natural process soon became Rob Roy's, were his chief treasures. The one I have inherited, and the other, which he sold to a travelling antiquary, was perhaps the sole occasion in which he got the best of a bargain in his life. His all-embracing feuds, extending from his nearest neighbours, with every one of whom he had some question either of "marches" or of "trespass," did not exclude the humblest from his wrath.

The parish gravedigger, he declared, should never bury him, for as he had not been consulted over his appointment, he used to say

“Yon Ramsey canna howk a grave; he mak’s them mair like tattie pits, no like a Christian’s grave.”

Happening to meet him on the road one day long years ago, I asked him whether he had made it up with Ramsey, and received the answer, “Aye ou aye, time is a sort o’ healer. Aye ou aye . . . when I dee, Ramsey will just hae to sort me . . . though he is sure to mak’ a bummle o’ the job!”

Fate, as it happened, was not willing that his grave should be bungled in the way he feared, for, dying in the North, a snowstorm caught the mourners and he was shoughed, as he himself would certainly have said, in a churchyard by a lake, where to this day his rough-hewn headstone moulders in the mist. All round him lie McFarlanes and McGregors, most of whose tombstones simply bear a sword upon them, thus setting forth the manner of their lives.

What he will think when he “spangs up” amongst them at the day of judgment I cannot say, for in the days gone by they were sworn foes . . . but, as he said himself, “time is a healer” . . . and in the meanwhile the little wavelets of the lake break up against the wall

of the wild graveyard where he lies, with a faint gurgling sound.

No one, I know, is left in the whole world the least resembling him, so strange a mixture of the present and the past ; on the one side a representative of the rough-footed Scots who harried and who reived, and, on the other, of the laborious race of ploughmen (loved of the sea-gulls) who have made Scotland what she is.

Roughness and kindness so struggled for the mastery in him that they seemed after the fashion of the spirit and the flesh to fight an everlasting battle for the predominance, leaving the struggle fortunately undetermined, so that he still appeared a man, weak and uncertain in his strength, an infant grafted on a giant, such as, no doubt, was his fell ancestor, who gaed to Bannockburn.



## BUTA

WE waded through the shallow tidal river in the moonlight, and getting off our horses sat down on a sandbank on which grew sea-pinks, a little woody ragweed, and some dwarf sea-hollies, and began to smoke.

The river in the moonlight seemed a sheet of quicksilver, the little wavelets of the rising tide scarce breaking its calm surface, and in the still night air was heard the occasional flight of sea-birds, of passing cranes, and now and then from the low scrub which fringed the river-banks a jackal yelped.

The tortuous valley flanked by rocky hills seemed to lead into infinite space, so lovely it appeared, twisting and lengthening out in the mysterious light. The ruined Roman town, massive, and built apparently to show, even in its ruin, that the builders built for all time, half filled the lower end. The docks for the galleys, now long crumbled to shapeless mounds of bricks, and used for saltpans, served to

remind one that a power great as is our own had once possessed the land. Silent and beautiful the moon shone out on stunted palm tree and on lentiscus scrub; on the deserted gardens, fenced about with cactus, in which grew pomegranate, orange, and fig trees; and in the distance the white walls of the old Arab town gleamed bright along the sea. No human being was stirring, and as we smoked the horses now and then lifted their heads, pricked up their ears, and looked as horses will at night, as if they saw something invisible to human eyes.

We sat and smoked, and Nazim then broke silence, and took up the conversation which we had left unfinished an hour ago in town. "How strange you English are!" he said. "We never know whether it is you that deceive the world and God, or if it is yourselves that you deceive. When I was manager down at Cape Juby I knew an Arab girl. Her name I think, was Rahma, but that matters little to my theory or my tale. So if you like I'll tell you what I know of her, and why her name was changed from Rahma, which means 'merciful,' to Buta, which, as you know, is how the Arabs pronounce a certain Spanish word."

The horses settled down to wait, hanging their heads with the resigned, self-sacrificing air which horses as well as men adopt when they are constrained to do something that pleases them. We, after a protest as to Anglo-Saxon *bona fides* both towards God and man, settled ourselves to listen, whilst from the river came the murmur of the flowing tide lapping against the banks, and carrying little promontories of sand into the stream. Then Nazim, with the look round at his audience which bespeaks the story-teller, launched into his tale.

“Sometimes I think that the four years I spent at Juby in the factory (where we sold nothing) were the best of all my life. The desert and the sea, the one flat and broken, but by the ‘suddra,’ what you call camel-thorn bushes, eh? the other shipless and stretching to nowhere, or perhaps to somewhere; but somewhere is all the same as nowhere if you know not where it is. Hot? no, not too hot; rather too cold sometimes, with the perpetual trade wind. Dull? no, not too dull either, for the affairs of the tribes are just as interesting, if you speak their tongue and know their ways, as are the matters of the larger tribes, French, German, and the *bona fides*, what is it you call

it, Englishmen. In the morning I used to mount my horse and ride about, my rifle in my hand, sometimes alone and sometimes with the Arabs, cantering along the shore or through the bushes, hunting gazelles, and now and then firing at wandering Arabs and being fired upon by them. Scarcely a day passes in the desert without some powder, as the Arabs say. Rahma? ah yes, I'm coming to her. Well, inside the fort and factory there were packed fifteen or twenty clerks, almost all Scotchmen, chosen for their good morals and their book-keeping. Now I shall tell you why it is that we say all you English try to deceive both God, man, and the whole world; why I think sometimes that you deceive yourselves, but seldom one another. You know that God (Allah, I mean) made man pretty much all the same, no matter if he be Turk or Jew, Frenchman or German, Spaniard, and all of him. All these men, now, when they see pretty woman, look at her and say she pretty; they smack their lips and they look at her as if they like to take her for themselves. Englishman he just like the rest, but he act differently; when he see pretty woman he pretend not see her, he look right through her as if she made of air.

He say, 'Yaas, I think I see, but I'm not so sure,' but at the night he send a little boy to ask her come and speak with him. That why I say Englishman is a man different to all the rest, quite *bona fides*, as I hear you say."

"But Rahma, Nazim, when is she coming on the scene?" we said, as the tide was flowing, and we did not want to ride two or three miles upstream to find another ford. Not that anything in particular stopped us from mounting and crossing then, but that the moon was bright, and the melancholy of the night was on us, and we knew Nazim was a good story-teller, and having been brought up speaking English and with Englishmen, though liking us, knew all our weaknesses.

So he began again, "Ah, Rahma! yes, I see her now, sitting at the black tent door facing the sea; not many hundred yards from the factory; handy, you know, for your *bona-fide* clerks to talk to her, as they took their walk after what they called the labours of the day were done. Hers was a little, low, black camel's-hair tent running up to a peak, and pegged in the summer about a foot above the ground, so that you saw all that was going on inside. Her husband had been killed by

the bursting of his own gun whilst fighting with another tribe, and she lived all alone with her two children. One was her husband's and the other sent from God, but she loved both of them (especially God's child), and dyed their hair with henna, and hung necklaces of beads around their necks. Her property was a few goats, a sheep or two, and an old loom like those they use in the Hauran—not that she worked at it too frequently, or worked at all, except to carry water in the evening from the well back to the tent. The people of the tribe were kind to her, and gave her what they did not want themselves, after the fashion of all kindly souls who have enough to eat.

“How paint a palm tree or describe an ostrich running on the sand, a serpent on the rocks, or a fair woman as she walks taking men's eyes into her net? The pen, eh; what, mightier than the sword? You say so, but then no one believes it; it is a saying made for serious fools, whose brains are in their bellies; but wise men shake their heads; so I will try, you must not laugh, eh?”

“A palm tree with its head in fire, its roots in water, rustling with every breeze, turning its leaves towards the sun that looks at it, or



looking at the sun, as you best like ; just as a woman turns her head towards the eyes of those who look at her.

“ Tall, brown, with velvet eyes, long fingers, slender feet, her nails stained orange-coloured with the henna, and when she walked a lengthening of the joints as when a desert mare canters along the sand. No, no, nothing of that sort. I never cared for her but as a picture, but as a type of the race that says so much to me, for its traditions, its literature, and above all the carriage of its sons.”

And daughters, someone said.

“ Yes, daughters too, but again only as pictures, for the infection of your civilisation has spoiled me for simple things, and what should I say, even in my own tongue, to a daughter of the tents? Yes, thrice accursed is your civilisation in its effect on men of other races, not born within its smoke. What has it done for me? What has it done for the young Syrians on whom your missionaries impose their hands, and teach them English, French, book-keeping, and Scripture history? as if an Englishman or an American could teach a Syrian the history of Christ, who was born amongst ourselves.

“ True, true, you civilise us, and we drift into your proletariat, and perhaps may prove as dangerous to you as did our ancestors to Rome ; but I will not philosophise after your fashion, but go on with my tale.

“ ‘ Not too fat, not too thin,’ the poet says, and adds, ‘ look not upon a woman or a fine horse, for looking leads to lust ; and lust ’— but you, as Englishmen, know well that subjects of that sort are not discussed. That which you cannot see does not exist, that which you do not hear has never been. The ostrich is the wisest of all birds, not that he has more sense than all the rest, but that he knows when he conceals his head beneath the sand that he is hidden from himself.

“ Rahma, the merciful ; it is an attribute of God (Allah, I mean) ; we call him merciful ; and in a man it is good to follow God, to be like him as far as man may be, but for a woman, mercy is not so safe. Accursed be all men and women born from mothers who never yet said no. How it first happened I am not quite sure, but by degrees Rahma became acquainted with several of the clerks. They said they took an interest in her ; some hinted that she would become a Christian if she were

handled well, but none of them talked with her openly, but went by night to show their interest and their zeal for her soul's welfare—after the English way. Welfare of the soul, that is the trade-mark of you English. No, no, I do not mean to offend; but then, you see, you are, above all things, a commercial nation, and the soul is cheap, whereas the body is a costly thing to help. Buy in the cheapest, and sell, eh—well to anyone who wants to buy, that's how you look at it, I think?" He ceased a moment, and one Anglo-Saxon (there were three of us, two Britons and a Yankee) looked aghast, being convinced of the superiority of our race, our faith, our principles, and everything that appertained to us. A cormorant skimmed up the river, its neck outstretched, its wings just dipping in the stream; it saw us motionless, our horses standing listlessly, resting a hind leg and swinging their tails sleepily, and swerved across the water, uttering its hoarse cry. Then once again the story-teller took up his reminiscence of the Arab girl.

"The end of the swimmer is to be taken by the sea, we say; and so it was with Rahma; not that she ever swam. You know the Arabs on the coast look on the sea, the black, the

mysterious, the unfathomable, with horror ; but she was taken sure enough.

“Why taken though? I should not say taken, perhaps, for she lives yet ; and when a stranger, coming to the place, inquires, they tell him, ‘Yes, Rahma (that is, “El Buta,” as we call her) lives in that tent close to the tamarisk bushes by the well. There, friend, you have your house ; and she has drink, too, drink of the Christians. Accursed be the sons and daughters of the mothers who never yet said no.’”

He ceased, and we, having listened to his story, did not protest, but sat a little, silently watching the rising of the three Maries just behind the hill. Mounting, we crossed the river, which now was almost full, and struggling through the stream, our knees bent backwards, and our feet tucked up upon the horses' backs, emerged on to the hard, sandy beach ; then, having caught our stirrups, shouted in the moonlight to our horses and galloped back into the town.

## MY UNCLE

THE folly of a fond mother had warped his life. No career was good enough for him, so he, like a good son, remained without one to the last day of his existence. Report had it that when young he was a personable man, though whether from modesty or from the difficulty of finding a painter skilled enough to depict him, no record came down to my time of his appearance in the heyday of his youth. When first I recollect him personal beauty was not what suggested itself to the impartial observer of his countenance. "A lang-backit, sort o' bandy-leggit, duck-footed body, wi' a' his duds in rags, and wi' his waistcoat hangin' a' in threads, I thocht he had been ane o' they burglars frae up aboot England," was the way in which a servant-girl described him to her mistress, upon whom my relative had called. She added: "He was aya keekin' at the window, and when I turned awa' he took me round the waist and ettled to kiss me, a dirty,

snuffy loon. Ca' ye yon man a gentleman? I just ca' him naething better than a tink."

Certainly few were the sacrifices he made to outward grace. A pair of hunting-breeches, loose at the knees, grey worsted socks and high-lows, a tartan waistcoat (hangin' a' in threads), and round his neck, summer and winter, he wore a worsted comforter. An ancient Scottish chronicler relates that the spearmen of Upper Annandale wore round their necks a similar adornment, and adds mysteriously that they thus wore it "not so much for cold as cutting." This latter reason could have weighed but little with my uncle, for history does not relate he ever engaged in any wars, or ran much risk of cutting, but from the finger-nails of some west-country servant-lass whose cap he had pulled off as she was carrying coals or water up a stair.

Summer and winter, year in and out, he wore a tall silk hat, brushed the wrong way, so that by accident or by design it looked like beaver. He kept it in its place by a piece of common twine, and seemed contented with the effect it produced on all and sundry who beheld and marvelled at it. Most commonly his shirt was scarlet flannel (which he called flannin'),



and sometimes when the rare northern sun peeped out for a week or two in August or July he wore a smock-frock over all, and walked about, a cross between an old-time southern counties hedger and a scarecrow, but still a gentleman. Both in and out of season he took snuff, daubing it on his face and clothes, carrying a supply of it loose in his pocket as well as in a well-filled silver box, dropping it into tea and coffee, or in the soup, mixing it with the yolk of eggs, and turning tender stomachs by its omnipresence whilst he was in the house. Man doth not live by snuff alone, but yet my uncle would, I believe, have given up his food rather than stint himself in this ingredient to his happiness.

Sent by his loving parents to a university, he certainly learned Greek, which to the astonishment of those who did not know him well he quoted freely, especially when drunk. A horseman from his youth, although he looked more like a sack of coals upon his horse than like a man, he yet had hands of silk. Leaning well back upon the saddle, his broken high-lows jammed into the stirrups as he had been in irons, he rode in the first flight, sticking at nothing, or on a four-year-old would

ride him through the streets, laughing and talking to himself as the unmade colt stumbled and slithered on the stones.

If his exterior was strange and wonderful, his inward spiritual graces were no less whimsical. Most people at first sight would have set down my uncle as stark mad. Often in Scotland, where personal originality is pushed to the verge of lunacy, where people cherish and cultivate those tricks of manner, gesture, and deportment which in most other countries men fight against, and though knowing they possess them deny them with an oath, it is not always safe to judge. Certain it is my uncle, for the possessor of a shrewd brain and mordant wit, went as near to madness as was possible. A calculated madness though, and near allied to that of those malevolent fools of history who, when the world laughed at them, returned the compliment by mocking at humanity. It seemed as if humanity itself was what my relative had set up as his target; not that he was a misanthrope, still less a woman-hater, for he liked company and sitting drinking at the dinner-table after the antique Scottish fashion; and as for women, any created thing that wore a petticoat he turned the light of

his snuffy countenance upon with satyr-like content.

Few ever knew him guilty either of a kind or cruel action, but yet his humour was to offend, disgust, and above all revolt. So in his sister's house, where he would pay long visits, he used to come dressed as I have described, or for a change, in what we call in Scotland "a stan o' black," with frilled white shirt and collar, the ends of which stuck up like gills, the whole surmounted by a hideous soft hat of the species known as a wideawake, thirty or forty years ago, and made of tweed, sewn into many ridges, and lined with green or scarlet silk. In the poor maiden lady's drawing-room he sat, reading *Bell's Life*, his feet stuck into slippers of a kind which in those days, I think, were made in Paisley, and in Paisley only, and called "bauchles," all down at heel, and the cheap leather cracked. All round him was a rampart made of snuff, which befouled everything, and so he sat talking and singing to himself, retailing Rabelaisian anecdotes, or singing songs half jocular and half indecent, for his own edification, and to pass the time. No one seemed to him half so good an audience as he was himself; at times

he had long conversations *sotto voce*, in which he held his best friends up to ridicule, or sometimes passed remarks on all and sundry before their faces, being half conscious, half unconscious of what he said, and if remonstrated with, chuckling and laughing, and saying, "Eh, did I though? Well, well, where's the snuff-box? Have any of ye seen my box?" His *sotto voce* psalmody was not much varied, and consisted chiefly of "Joseph Muggins' Party" (all his friends he did invite), and an old Scottish lyric, "Jack and his Master," quite democratic in its sympathy with Jack, which he gave in a crooning minor key, like that adopted by old Highland women spinning, or by a seaman keeping the anchor watch aboard a tramp.

Mysterious business used to take him into Glasgow now and then, when he would lunch at a good club, and then sink out of sight no one knew where or why. His relations and his friends, after the manner of their kind, attributed all kinds of vices to him, though, if the truth were known, I fancy there was nothing more awful than a left-handed wife, perhaps some country girl, and a knock-kneed, "short-backit" family, in the dim regions of his private life. In spring, about the month of April, he

regularly appeared in Leamington to drink the waters of that ineffable stucco resort of Irish colonels and Scotch generals, partly because his sisters lived there, and partly on account of the fame the waters had enjoyed in Dr. Jephson's time. Although he spoke the English language with nothing of his native country in the accent but that faint intonation which reminds one of the air escaping from the chanter of a bagpipe, yet generally at Leamington, and with all those he looked on as stuck up, he discoursed in broadest Scotch. An English lady being displeased with the genial showers of our northern summer, remarked to him, "It always seems to rain whenever I come to Scotland"; to which he answered, "Yes, but it whiles rains when you do not come, mem." It was his humour usually to address a man as "mem," a lady by the style of "sir," and end his sentences no matter what the sex of anyone with whom he talked, "No, sir; yes, mem"; thus showing his contempt or his respect for both the sexes quite impartially. At breakfast-time he sat with his teacup making a ring upon the newspaper, silent but comminative, upon the extracts which he read, raising his snuff-smear'd face at times to say, "I'll take aw

egg. Yes, sir, no, mem, I think I will take aw."

And so he passed his life in alternation between Leamington and the West of Scotland, growing each day more snuffy, more untidy, and more cynical. Then came a period of nomadism, and to his friends' amazement, they heard he had attached himself to a travelling circus; whether from love of some young lady who in short petticoats and tights danced on a barebacked horse, from pleasure in the society of horses or the clown, or simply from the amusement he derived from scandalising everyone he knew, no one could tell. But with the circus for a year or two he roamed about, appearing now and then, when it chanced, either in Yorkshire or in Scotland, to perform near to a country house where he was known, and dropping in to lunch. On such occasions his sharp wit and knowledge of the world atoned for his strange dress, his dirty habits, and the trail of snuff which, as a snail leaves slime upon a window-pane, he left where'er he went.

This phase, after the fashion of the others, had its turn, and tired of his nomadic life he settled down at Largs. There in the semi-fishing-village semi-watering-place he passed



his time, sauntering about artistically draped in his white smock-frock or pinafore, worn over white duck trousers, muttering to himself, and cracking jests alone upon the beach.

A terror to the unprotected nursery-maids, a frequent visitor in church, where he sat critically scanning the preacher with disfavour, putting a halfpenny into the plate, which in old-fashioned Scottish churches used to stand at the church door upon a pine or maple pillar simulating a stick of barley-sugar, he focussed every eye upon himself by his loud criticisms.

But as the most of us have in our heart of hearts some person or another before whom our cynicism melts, our knowledge of the world becomes of no avail, and kindness, love, or custom makes us regard them as perhaps a wayward dog regards its master whom it runs off from but returns to when it is hungry, so had my relative, hidden below the crust of snuff and whimsicality, with which he was well pitched inside and out, a feeling of regard, respect, or something for the elder of his sisters, with whom he sometimes lived. No sentimental feeling seemed to unite them; in fact, his sister criticised with frank outspokenness, reproved him for his sloth, for dirtiness,

and for other matters about which modern ladies do not often reprehend their brothers, in good set Scottish terms. He seldom ventured to indulge in any of his coarse sallies in her presence, whether restrained by fear or by affection no one knew. Towards his other sister he had no such scruples, and when she talked of hunting, being like himself a rider from her youth up, he used to say, "To hear my sister talk you would think there never was a woman who could ride, and hardly any men."

Death in its foolish, blundering, inexorable way first took the hunting sister, who with her last breath enjoined upon her heirs not to allow a spavined horse to take her to the grave. Her brother bore her loss quite philosophically, and as the hearse came to the door, exclaimed that the near leader had a thoroughpin, and that his sister could never bear to see a hearse horse decked in petticoats.

After a year or two, which my uncle mostly spent between his snuff and newspapers, the other sister went. He gave no sign of grief, unless by taking a double dose of snuff, and at the funeral behaved himself more decently than was his wont. All through the lines of stucco

villas, semi-detached, each with its garden plot and araucaria, its air of desolate respectability, and with its tent in summer on its little lawn, the cortège took its way. My uncle was more subdued than usual, but took his snuff at proper intervals, and talked a little with himself of horses he had known, and dogs which in their day had drawn more badgers than the degenerate dogs of modern times.

Under the elm trees in the corner of the quiet English churchyard, the rooks' nests swinging in the March east wind, the tardy buds of the late spring forming themselves like drops of amber on the twigs, the hard, old, upright, kindly Scottish lady's grave was dug. On the one side a cheap Carrara monument, commemorating all the virtues of some prosperous citizen, reared its head. Upon the other, a mouldering elm board with "affliction sore" marked out the grave of some poor cottager. In his canonicals the clergyman mumbled his prayer, and on the coffin fell the Warwickshire red loam. To say my uncle was affected outwardly would be untrue, for he took snuff with regularity. Just as I turned to go he drew from the recesses of his "stan o' black" a rose all smeared with snuff, holding it in his hand

as a man holds a bird caught in a window, half cautiously as though he feared it might escape. Then stooping forward he laid it on the grass, and turning round said, "Did you spot the gurl with the pink flowers in her hat?"

Fortune did not arrange I was to see his funeral, therefore I cannot say if in his coffin his relations had sense enough to place his snuff-box by his side. If they omitted so to do, or if a spavined horse was in his hearse, their sin was great. For me he is a memory of childhood, so quaint, at times I think that I evolved him from my own brain, could I not swear I saw him in the flesh, and testify to his strange mutterings, his singing to himself, his quips, his cranks, his quiddities, and to his snuffy rose.

## THE COLONEL

THE railway, that sworn enemy of old-world types, has done more in the last fifty years to make the whole world common than all the international pilgrimages of all past times. So that search England, Scotland, and Ireland all through, to-day you scarce shall find a man differing in any aspect of his mind or body from the next. But, as a wounded bird or animal sometimes seeks concealment in some place made difficult to find by obviousness, so chiefly is the eccentric to be sought in London and its purlieus. Still fifty years ago in wind-swept, ragged Scotch country houses not a few remnants of prerailroad days still lingered on.

Scotland alone could have produced, and perhaps only Scotch people could have appreciated, such a survival of the youth of the nineteenth century, as was the veteran. He bore his eighty years as lightly as an oak tree bears its centuries, and used to tell with a twinkle in his fierce, brown, bloodshot eye

that an old gamekeeper had said "the Colonel was born in the same year in which the saughs were planted in the West Park, and that they were maistly a' deid at the tap." Tall and broad-shouldered, he seemed as if his fell of thick white hair had bowed his shoulders, as the snow bends down the topmost branches of an aged fir. Otherwise time had but little touched him. Years had not blunted the intensity of his hatred for a Free Churchman, a Tory, or a Highlander. Experience had not taught him to tone down his restrictions on all who disagreed with him. The snows of eighty winters had not dimmed the fire of his glance. The very country people said the "ould Colonel had an eye intil him like a hawk."

No eccentricity of dress betrayed the man born in the eighteenth century. Either the tailors of his youth had mildewed off or become bankrupt, as their patrons one by one preceded them to that land in which their craft will presumably not be required, or the Colonel's own good sense had impelled him to conform, ostensibly at least, to the degeneracy of the times in which he lingered. His collars may perhaps have been a trifle higher than those of the time in which he lived; the skirts of his heather-



mixture shooting-coat a trifle fuller than those worn in the sixties. So that except the fact of his large silver snuff-box, snuff-stained shirt, and red silk handkerchief, usually drying at the fire when not in active service, these were his only outward protests against the flight of time.

Lost in a corrie of the hills, miles from a railway, surrounded on all sides by moors and still more moors, looking out upon a little loch, on which grew yellow and white water-lilies and in which fed tench, stood his ancestral tower. Hills towered at the back of it, and the tall firs of the "pinetum" kept out such little light as the small deep-set windows, all built in a recess, might have admitted. Its thick "harled" walls, its "corby steps," the low hall door, opening without a porch upon the ground, the high-pitched roof, and air of gauntness over all, impressed the stranger sadly at first sight, as the house loomed greyly through the constant rain. Inside, three or four large and curly, but cross-tempered, dogs greeted the visitor, showing their teeth at him, and walking up the stairs beside him, holding their tails out stiffly, as the Arab says a lion does when in a forest in South Algeria he comes upon a

man. The Kingwood furniture, the jars of rose-leaves in china basins on the stairs, the apples in a cupboard by the hall, mixed with the snuff, which lay like a brown dew on all the furniture, produced an atmosphere which only practice rendered tolerable. An old grey parrot in a bright, brass cage which bit at everyone as fiercely as an otter, and two green parroquets which flew about the rooms, rendered life livelier than was the wont of other country houses in the days of which I write. Few houses of the kind are left in these degenerate days, and men like the old Colonel have long since disappeared.

The long campaign of the Peninsula had softened off his angles towards both French and Spaniards, but the longer warfare of his life had left him still militant towards an Irishman or Kelt of any kind. Episcopalians were his detestation; on Catholics he looked with toleration, knowing that at the time he lived their power beyond the Tweed was small; but all the shades and little differences of Presbyterian dissent he lumped and damned in one fell swoop as hypocritical, giving no reason for his faith, but holding it and acting on it, after the fashion of his kind. Born when the echoes

of the '45 were ringing (though faintly) through the land, he held the Stuarts in abhorrence, but yet hated the Hanoverians, whom he termed German Boors, and would, I fancy, have stood by Fletcher of Saltoun (he who let fools make laws so long as he made rhymes), had that illustrious Scoto-Roman flourished in his time. Nobody nowadays descants as he did on the divine right of monarchs to be hanged, dwells upon Robespierre's virtues, worships the Iron Duke, or swears by Ebenezer Elliott as did my ancient friend.

These incongruities of faith, these whimsicalities of creed, the penny logic of the daily press has quite obliterated, whether to the greater glory of the Lord 'tis hard to say. But, no such speculation came into the Colonel's mind, bothered his brain, or lost him for a single evening his after-dinner nap. Wine put upon the board, the great arm-chair wheeled to the fire, the red silk handkerchief duly set out to dry, his nostrils both well charged with snuff, the Colonel commonly embarked upon the tale of the French wars. The siege of Badajoz, the marches and the counter-marches in the Castilian and La Mancha plains, the bivouac in the wild mountains

of Leon, the tales of straying Frenchmen dipped in oil and set on fire, his meeting with the guerrilla chief called the "Empecinado," the lines of Torres Vedras, all were brought out, together with some Val de Peñas, which, though he always said it was sour stuff, he never was without, since his campaigning days. Strange facts in natural history and in botany, lore about horses, odd reminiscences about the *Capra Hispanica* which he had seen in the Estrella Mountains, curious remarks about the bustard which he remembered in the Norfolk broads—the hotch-potch of a fertile brain, helped by his eyes, sharp as a lynx's, and trained by eighty years of practice to pick up the trail of anything unusual, as an Indian's eyes pick up the footprints of a strange horse, he would unpack with some prolixity.

Fortune, which smiles but seldom upon interesting folk, had treated him but scurvily. Some speculator had induced him to set up a mill. Right in the middle of his rushy ragweed and thistle ornamented park the monster stood. Failure, which waits upon all excursions of gentlemen into the serious affairs of life, had from the outset marked it as its own. Now long deserted by its crowd of

blear-eyed operatives, it stood a skeleton, the marauding boy having shattered all its windows, and the fierce winter gales removed the slates. Still the walls stood four square, a monument of folly and of ugliness, and in his walks abroad the Colonel, stopping and leaning on his thistle spud, would curse it from the bottom of his heart, with so much unction as to show that our forces in the Peninsula must have maintained all the traditions of the Flemish wars. Radical member for Paisley in his youth, convener of his county in his riper years, he lived a stirring, stormy life, endeavouring without success to pay off debts incurred by his luckless venture in the mill.

Friends he had many, but his relations, as a rule, were as anathema to him, especially his heirs. Tradition, that useful entity upon whose shoulders (as upon those of Providence) the humorist can throw so many of his griefs, some of his quiddities, and all his cranks, avers that for ten years before the Colonel's death he never mended fence, repaired a building, or laid out anything to benefit those who by inheritance should occupy his place. Sometimes (again tradition) he was heard to say, if God would only tell him the precise

hour of his death, he would burn down the house the night before he died.

Up to the end he rode his chestnut hack at a slow canter up and down his avenue, attended county meetings, and preserved his senses to the last hour of his life. Death took him with his snuff-box in his hand, grim and prepared, although not pleased to go. He left the world the poorer by a type, and when I pass the lonely tower in the glen, and skirt the policies, in which no longer either ragweed, docks, or thistles bloom, I look at the tall saughs in the West Park, and remark sadly that nowadays not only are they all "deid at the tap," but most of them are rotten, and not a few lie bald and sere, their bark all peeling off in ribbons upon the upland grass.



## THE ADMIRAL

THERE is a personality about some men which, even if they never get the chance to excel, still makes them in themselves superior to their fellows. Sometimes a man who neither writes, nor speaks, nor has excelled in his profession, yet in himself excels. Such sort of men amongst their fellows are recognised, and seldom create jealousy, that is, of course, amongst those able to appreciate them, for the mere herd of clever men see no superiority but when hall-marked by success.

The man whose personality has haunted me from my youth up did not succeed, nor did he fail, for everywhere he went his great abilities were recognised, and man can want no more. His picture, as he sat in the Reform Parliament, dressed in a high-necked coat, a black silk stock enveloping his throat, his curly, snow-white hair, in his youth so like a wig that a fopling of the day went into Truefit's and asked for a wig "of the same kind as

those you make for Captain Elphinstone," hung in my bedroom. Born in 1773, he just remembered swords in general wear, and lived to finish *Pickwick*. His wife, a Spanish lady, whom he married when she was just fourteen and he was forty, long after he was dead, in speaking of him, said: "He lived an active life, and to the last was young." Of such men is the kingdom of the earth. A midshipman between eleven and twelve, at four-and-twenty a post-captain, a general in the Spanish army, friend of Bolivar and of Paez, and yet a welcome guest of Ferdinand the Seventh, he wanted but a Boswell to preserve his name. But it is best, perhaps, that a man who differed from the ordinary successful herd remains without a memoir; for soon a memoir and a knighthood will be entailed on everyone who rises to be a county councillor, and the few really distinguished men an age produces will die unwritten of, as they have lived misunderstood. Sometimes the lives of men whom one has never seen, but heard much talked of, seem more real than the lives we see around us, which, semi-vegetable and semi-human, appear unreal in their actual but unconvincing course.

So step by step from his tenth birthday in a ten-gun brig to Waterloo, where, after having danced at the famous ball the night before the fight, he saw the battle as a spectator, till I find him on the Peruvian coast in command of a two-decker which would neither sail nor stay, I follow the footsteps of the man I never saw. Becoming bored with the frequency with which his old two-decker missed stays, or perhaps wishing to make the Admiralty stare, he took her into Talcahuano and cut her down to a frigate, and being called upon to pay for his experiment, retorted by writing for his pay, which, since he entered as a midshipman, he had never drawn, serving for nothing, either through carelessness, or some punctilio, or from not having called to mind the scriptural commercial apothegm that the labourer is worthy of his hire. Tradition says that "My Lords" were glad to compromise the matter, which, if it was the case, shows them more reasonable than usual, for compromise is the soul of all administration, naval and military alike.

Besides his feats in naval construction whilst on the western coast of South America, he had, as it appears, a pretty taste in equipage,

leaving a curricle in Lima, which long afterwards I heard a Peruvian talk of as "the strange carriage with a silver bar upon the horses' necks left by the Milord-Captain who altered all the ships." From Lima, too, he first brought dahlias, giving them to his friend Lord Holland, who of course figures as their introducer, as befits a peer. But, I forgive him, and may the glory still be his, as this same worthy peer repented, so to say, of all his errors, and with his friend who brought the dahlias drove in Hyde Park with Spanish mules and muleteers, with, let us hope, their sashes filled with stones to throw at the leaders, after the fashion of their prototypes in Spain.

Back again, married (his peace made with "My Lords"), having arrived in London the day before the Derby, and finding not a horse to be had for love or money, he hired an undertaker's team and drove them down in state, to the delight of all the road, and to the admiration of his wife, who, coming straight from Spain, was taken with the team of long-tailed blacks, and thought their stately steps and waving manes fit for the carriage of a prince. In fact they were so, for when a dead man passes down the street, stretched out so

quiet in his hearse, he is a prince, having attained to the last pitch to which a man can come. Ideas of death and hearses did not, I think, much trouble him of whom I write, for as I take it, he must have looked on life as everlasting, after the fashion of the strong and occupied, who pass their time so quickly that when Death comes they think his presence an intrusion, almost an error, but, still smiling, take their way.

Married at forty (the ideal age), his hair quite white, not having turned so in a night or in some deadly climate, but as he told a lady, "here in this town of London"; after an adventurous youth, during the course of which he carried off a Spanish nun, who died on board his ship during an action with a Sallee rover, he started for a second lease of life and fresh adventures. Appointed admiral on the West Indian station, he sailed, taking a favourite horse or two and thirteen midshipmen on board his ship. Those were the days before the telegraph made admirals and generals the mere slaves of newspapers, of admiralties and war offices, and of the heterogeneous unintelligent expressions of the folly of mankind that we call public opinion and pretend to

reverence, though each one in his heart reviles and laughs at it, not thinking that his individual folly is but a fraction of the universal folly of mankind.

In the West Indies, in those days, diplomacy seems to have been as much a part of an admiral's duty as manœuvring a fleet. Perhaps it is so still; but if it is, most probably the admiral has to pass some sort of humiliating fifth or sixth standard examination, and report himself by telegraph, before he makes a move. None of these things existed at the time of which I write; so I find the Admiral travelling quite unconcernedly in Venezuela, accompanied by his wife and child, his flag-lieutenant, and a midshipman. At that time Paez and Bolivar, having expelled the Spaniards, after the fashion of true patriots, had come to loggerheads as to which of them should rule. In some mysterious way I find him established at Caracas as adviser and general mediator between the two. Then, friendship made, hands shaken, and Bolivar back at Bogata, he is hailed by Paez at a banquet as "el nuevo Nelson," a title to which he had no claim and would in fact have repudiated with an oath, as he held Lord Cochrane as a much greater man than Nelson, with his



common saying of "hate a Frenchman as the devil," his beautiful and vulgar mistress, and his perpetual good luck. A local poet at the banquet was ready with a complimentary song, which after heralding the advent of the "new Nelson" to this "sententrion," soared into the empyrean with a chorus, "Viva, viva, viva Bolivar, viva el nuevo Nelson, recibiendo de Paez esta demostracion."

Who would not like to have received from Paez or Bolivar a "demostracion," and to have seen the siege of Maracaibo, the last place that the Spaniards held on terra firma in America, and to have been a British admiral *in partibus* before the days of steam?

After the banquet, which took place at ten o'clock a.m., there came a bull-fight, and the flag-lieutenant, either fired with emulation or with wine, after endeavouring in the "llanero" way to throw a bull down by the tail, fell from his horse himself, and remained prostrate in the middle of the ring. The bull advanced, smelt at him, and turned him over with his horn, he lying motionless in agony; then, like a bovine good Samaritan, passed by quite unconcernedly upon the other side. The people in their simple faith espied a Lutheran, and

shouted, "Heretic! Even the animals perceive his heresy." On such occasions the worst heresy may be preferred even to faith capable of removing mountains. Things being in solution at the time, it is extraordinary that the people of Caracas did not lay hands upon the Admiral suddenly and make a king of him, but the opportunity seems to have been lost. Either disgusted at their lack of apprehension, or being tardily recalled home, he sailed, taking a veritable menagerie with him aboard his ship. As passengers he had two pacing ponies, a tapir, parrots and peccaries, some boa-constrictors, and a small marvel of the animal creation locally known as a "chirhuiri," which used to eat off ladies' petticoats as they sat at meals, making them subjects for the sport of fools as they rose with their raiment shorn to the knees behind, like David's messengers. After an interregnum in his history, I find him at Gibraltar, where in the intervals of duty he became the founder of the Calpe Hunt, chasing a wolf through Almoraima with his hounds, and being first in at the death himself, by the veracious testimony of the *Gibraltar Guide*.

At Malaga, upon a visit to the Governor of

the town, the season Easter, and the times not being so much out of joint with ancient customs as in these modern days, the Governor took him to the port to free a criminal. As in its most relenting moods justice must needs be at the best capricious, working its wonders after the fashion of the wind, just where it listeth, and according to no rules which reasonable men can claim to understand, the choice was made at random, so that the miserable men who in those days rowed in the galleys of the king must have passed agonies of expectation and suspense.

Turning towards the Admiral, the Governor invited him to choose a man, and he, quite in the manner of the man who at a venture drew a bow and had the luck to make a bull's-eye of a king, said, "This is the man I choose." The man, no doubt, made his acknowledgments as best he could, and when despair had settled down again upon the nine-and-ninety poor "bezonians" left in their fetters and their misery, as the papers say in reports of parliamentary debates, the incident was closed. Neither the Admiral nor the Governor most probably thought of the affair again.

"Long live the King! Give me your cloak!"

was a true saying in those days throughout the realms to which the King Ferdinand VII, of blessed memory, had been called to reign.

“Los siete Niños,” they of Ecija, José Maria, and other rascals, whose pictures figure in startling, coloured prints in many a faded Spanish almanac, done in the days when Spain was fashionable, made all the roads unsafe. Humorists in their way, as were these merry men, stripping recalcitrant travellers to the skin, but always leaving them at least a newspaper with which to make their entry into the next town, they yet were perilous to meet, for not infrequently they fired a blunderbuss, well charged with slugs, without a word, taking their chance whether the traveller was in a state to answer to their call to stop, after the shot was fired.

Journeying towards Madrid, passing from “tierra baja,” through the Sierra to Castile, the Admiral, with his wife and servants, all duly armed with blunderbusses, was one day upon the road. Between la Carolina and Almuradiel, Vilches left well behind, La Venta de Cardenas not quite in sight, whilst the party toiled up the rocky road which, edged with ferns and thicketed with smilax, leads to Los

Organos, a troop of seven mounted men appeared upon the road. Terror assailed the travellers, their servants trembling till their blunderbusses almost fell from their hands, the Admiral no doubt cursing the day on which he started, and his wife, being young and lively, looking at the robbers half amused. The chief advanced, and greeting the Admiral with his hat in hand, said, "Admiral, these roads are dangerous. I and my followers have come to be your escort through the hills." Making perhaps what Spaniards call "*la risa del conejo*," the Admiral thanked him, feared to trespass on this kindness, said that no escort was required, and generally made that soft answer which those who are not strong enough to speak their mind, resort to at a pinch. The day wore on, and still the chief rode chatting by their side, talking of many things: of those strange ships which the mad English were reported to have made, which run upon the water without sails; of the great London, dark all the year, but light on Christmas Day; of the mysterious crimes of Luther, who like an evil spirit in those days haunted uneducated Spaniards' minds; and generally giving his views upon the world and things at large, con-



firming what he said with proverbs, which he enunciated gravely, as if they were personal experiences of his own. Evening began to fall, and the red, mud walls of Almuradiel appeared a league away; the storks' nests on the housetops of the town looking like clumps of bushes growing from the roofs, the "norias" cracking as the donkeys slowly walked round the elevated track, and the cracked pots revolving one by one, pouring their water down the irrigation rills, giving an Eastern air of peace and quietness, save for the jangling bells. Then suddenly the chief called to his men, who wheeled their horses round and cantered along the road. Riding up close to the Admiral he said, "I am the man you took out of the galleys upon that Easter Day. I knew you at first sight, though you no doubt had long forgotten me. The road across the sierras is beset by petty thieves, mere peddling scoundrels, who had they met you might have been troublesome. Whilst I was with you, and my men, you were safer than had the king's own guards escorted you. We are the seven of Ecija, and so . . . with God." He turned his horse and galloped down the road after his fellows, and the Admiral saw him no more; but



his wife used to relate the story to the last day of her life.

Even the lives of interesting men are not all spent in crossing the Despeñaperros, in meeting with the "Siete Niños," and in releasing criminals; so home commands and the honours of a dockyard town at length descended on my personality. Needless to say, "My Lords" at the Admiralty distrusted my admiral ambulant, as it is befitting that the men who wear out acres of cloth on office stools should look askance at men of genius. In the same way the selfsame Lords distrusted and thwarted Lord Dundonald, perhaps the greatest sailor whom Britain ever has produced. They who have wit, and soon no microscope will have a lens sufficiently achromatic to detect their whereabouts, seem to be able to call forth wit in others, as steel strikes fire from flint, or as a witless person seems to render others dull. The solitary recorded witticism of a king is precious and in no wise should be lost, and so it may be fitting that I, unworthy, record the single instance in which our "Sailor King," William IV, was known to fall from the paths of regal seriousness and condescend to nod. At a breakfast at the dockyard on the occasion of

the launching of some ship, His Majesty having taken his poor disjune, seeing the Admiral, and remarking that his hair was white, was pleased to say, "Ha, Admiral, white at the main, I see," those being days when admirals were of the red, the white, or blue, according to their rank. His Majesty did not, as he might well have done, on learning that the white hair was not surmounted by a white pennant, exclaim, "Gad Zookers, this will never do, we hereupon promote thee," but no doubt the courtiers, if there were any on the spot, went into "visibilio" at the royal wit.

Portsmouth by nice degrees led up to Greenwich, and there again the Admiral and the King came into contact, but this time without wit. In those days, which now seem almost coeval with Sir Walter Raleigh, so changed they are from ours, on the occasion of a royal visit to the Nore, the midshipman who steered the barge which conveyed the King from the royal yacht to land was always promoted, for having had the fortune to be there. Most admirals naturally took some scion of nobility, some friend of their wife's mother, or in fact some youth who stood in not the smallest need of patronage. But, in the flagship there was,

as fortune willed it, an old mate, stricken in years, grey-headed, nurtured in misfortunes, a seaman, if there were such, who had seen, for five-and-twenty years, boy after boy pass over him whilst he remained a mate. Seated abaft the backboard of the Admiral's barge the mate must have appeared ridiculous enough; but the end sanctifies the means, so when the royal eye fell on the curious figure seated in the stern, it twinkled, and the royal voice exclaimed, "Eh what, eh, Admiral, one of your damned jokes! Well, well, he looks a little old still to remain a mate."

The end of men like him whom I describe generally comes without much preparation. Death takes them as a mower cuts ripe hay, leaving their friends almost astounded by their sudden absence from their place.

After a life of happiness and work, grief fell upon him unprepared for it in his old age, and he, not thinking it worth while to struggle, put out to sea at once, after a few days of a feverish cold, which was the name that people gave the influenza, in those quite unsophisticated days.

## APPRECIATION

THE supper-room was full of Jews, of Rastas, of demi-mondaines, of company promoters and adventurers from the five quarters of the globe. The clash of tongues rose high, forcing the most unscientific to admit man's near descent from monkeys, and his relationship to parrots, and macaws. Obsequious and yet half-insolent Swiss and German waiters poured out champagne, the only wine the goodly company of internationalists thought good enough to drink. Palm trees, bred, as it were, to stand tobacco smoke and to resist the artificial light, were stuck about at intervals in great gilt tubs, and their leaves when the draught stirred them were reflected in the enormous looking-glasses with which the walls were lined. Here sat an elderly financier, in his vast, white waistcoat, escorting a slight chorus-girl; a little further on a lady *sur le retour*, her gown cut open almost to her waist, her eyes touched up with kohl, and her hair dyed

with henna, was seated with the lover of her pocket, a young man with his dark hair brushed back and plastered to his head. Americans sang like the bagpipes, i' the nose, and Germans grunted; and over all the heady, false, and artificial tones of the imperial race struck one as being used for fun.

Riches and vulgarity kissed one another, each recognising the other's worth, and understanding that the whole world was theirs by right of conquest as long as they combined.

It seemed, as one looked round, that the green fields, the sky, the trees, the songs of birds, the joy of horses, the dawn, the tides, the rhythmical and murmurous motion of the spheres, night, day, the twilight, and all the rest of the mere natural miracles, which nobody can imitate, so few appreciate, and none of us can alter, stay, quicken, or retard, were but mere common things which the assembled company either had never seen or comprehended, or, if they had, imagined they could buy, or set on some inventive, but unpractical poor man to counterfeit. None ate to gratify their hunger or drank because they thirsted, but merely for the sake of spending money, except perhaps one or two of the

younger demi-mondaines, whose palates were not surfeited with gold. The guests looked meaner than the men who served them in appearance, and those who served them meaner still than they, for serving any man, when there were stones to break, waste lands to plough, or even a good drain or two to cleanse and purify.

An air of self-contentment, specious and quite impenetrable to pity or to sentiment, exuded from the pores of everyone. Their world was the best world their God could make, and on their seventh day, if they had thought about the matter, they would have called on him complacently, to rest, for it was clear that he could do no more to satisfy their minds. Men slouched into the hall, their hands plunged in their trousers-pockets, with the shamefaced and shambling gait that modern life seems to impart, and women swaggered or sailed in, conscious that wealth and luxury had done as much for them as it had failed to do for the male sex. Nothing in the whole place was human, but the Hungarian band, which, though disguised like monkeys on an organ, in red tail-coats and tight plush shorts, still played as carefully amongst the hum of talk—for music sets off people talking, just as talk starts



canaries in a cage to sing—as they had played in rags in their own villages at home.

Their pale, thin faces, peering through glasses at the music, their concentrated air, and the quick glances which they shot at the first violin, who now and then ceased playing for a bar or two and beat the time with his bow hand, placed them in quite another world from the guests seated round the tables, one and all of whom were Semites, either by adoption or by race. In fact, the real Semites were superior in type to those of other races, whose noses had grown high, cheeks reddened, and stomachs swollen in the pursuit of wealth. Few listened to the music, till food and drink had done their work. Then they sat dulled like vultures after a meal of carrion, and their tongues ceased to clatter for a while. Some of them deigned to listen and applaud, but in a patronising way, as if not only the mere music wage-slaves, but the composers, had been called into being by some subconscious action of their own.

Czardas succeeded czardas, the violinist playing like a man inspired, his face illuminated, his black, turned-up moustache twitching and separating like the whiskers of a cat, his agile fingers sliding up the diapason of his fiddle just

as a skipjack slips about the surface of a pool, in darts the eye can see, but never follow in their speed. Then, tapping on his music-stand, the leader with a gesture of his bow launched his musicians into the barcarole of "Les Contes d'Hoffmann," with its dreamy rhythm and its air of holding in its notes, suspended betwixt earth and heaven, the soul of him who sacrificed fifteen whole years of life to the work which was to show that he had something better in him than the mere jingling melodies that linked his name to those of Schneider, Elise Tautin, and the rest of their compeers.

It floated through the hall, rising and falling just as a gondola sways at the mouth of a canal, then faded by degrees till it ceased imperceptibly, as does the whirring of the wings of some great insect passing overhead as it flies on beneath the trees. A qualified applause, such as the rich bestow on a mere fiddler, broke out fitfully. Heads nodded, and fat, common hands that never in their lives had handled pick, spade, brush, or pencil, or anything but gold, tapped on the tables with a fleshy sound.

"Beautiful thing, 'Le Comte der Hoffmann,'" an Englishman exclaimed. "The fellow was a count. Offenbach had it all from Hortense

Schneider, . . . you know, the gurl who used to dance the kanne-kanne when Louey Napoleon was emperor. Paree was never really Paree since those days. Louey was just the fellow for the French. He understood them. If he had lived, my boy, we never should have had the republic, and all that kind of thing." The women at his table admired his knowledge, and hummed the refrain a little out of tune, one of them who attended concerts remarking it was a little like, what she called "Singe d'Amour," to which a friend rejoined: "How strange! Why, Offenbach died years ago, and yet his music is quite modern." Music of course began to be an art about the time electric light came into use.

A Frenchman drew his wit to the finest thread to make a point about the writer having been a little German *dans le fond*, and then, when a stout German looked at him coldly and insolently, flushed up a little, pretending he had not quite understood what he had wished to say. For nearly half a minute the matter occupied the people in the supper-room, and then, after someone or other had delivered himself to the effect that "music had a soothing sort of effect on the digestive organs,"

they all forgot about it, and turned to discuss the important things of life—adultery, divorce, the stock exchange, and the last “aviator” dashed to pieces in his fall.

The writer, who in the coulisses of his theatre for years had kept a bright spot in his soul, working and polishing at his ewe lamb, that he was fated never to see born, at last had been appreciated. All had been done that man can do to wipe away a stain, and all the years of struggle and neglect to-day were as they never had been ; for, after all, applause is what men work for, and not gold, and so that the applause be given, it does not matter in the least from whence it comes. The public crowns the artist, and if occasionally it puts the crown on just a little bit awry, no one need hold himself offended, for its great heart is sound.

Replete with food at last, the suppers slowly began to leave their seats, and as the function of a band is to add noise to noise, the leader tapped sharply on his music-stand, and as by inspiration recommenced just where he had left off. Once more the cadence of the barcarole quavered and floated through the hall, rose, fell, and finally melted away like the faint threnody of a dragon-fly heard in imagination

by a mad musician in a dream. Then the good company definitely rose, exhaling fumes of scent and perspiration, whilst through the windows came the first flush of dawn, but smoke-ridden and grey, with the air sullied by the exhalations of a million pairs of lungs.

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