

AS YOU SEE IT

"V"

(MRS. J. L. GARVIN)

W. News.

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AS YOU SEE IT



# AS YOU SEE IT

BY

“V”

(MRS. J. L. GARVIN)

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**THERE**



## Le Petit Manoir    ∩    ∩    ∩    ∩

“ Avoir une maison. . . . ”

**T**O have a house, clean, comfortable and  
sweet,

Where France's shoulder, if it so might be,  
Naked and snowy woos the Channel sea,  
Fringed with sea pinks where chalk and clover  
meet—

To have a house, clean, comfortable and sweet.

To cultivate our garden, with a prayer :

To say, when autumn mellows the red wall,

“ This is September ; this is best of all :

Spring brought a fever, summer many a tear ”—

To cultivate our garden, with a prayer.

To have good wine, ripe fruit, a table spread—

To hook the shutter back at noon and say,

“ I can see England—I smell rain to-day,

And coffee freshly ground, and baking bread ”—

To have good wine, ripe fruit, a table spread.

## As You See It

To have a temperance of goods and gold :  
To pass the window, and look in and see  
The other waiting where one used to be  
Alone ; and asking if the tale were told—  
To have a temperance of goods and gold.

To live with justice, vision, and no hate :  
See without looking : see—but not without  
Giving slow judgement clemency's last doubt,  
Knowing too well the tyranny of fate—  
To live with justice, vision, and no hate.

To wait for death with patience and content.  
To sleep eternally ; nor yet to shirk  
A re-awakening once again to work  
If for such hidden purpose we are meant—  
To wait for death with patience and content.

## Auprès de la Fontaine    ∩    ∩    ∩

SPA : I stepped out on to the rickety wooden balcony. All round, large hills and small mountains, thickly fringed with sweet-smelling trees. The seven fountains, *Les Sept Fontaines* (fairy name), must be hidden in those hills—seven mystical wells—and later I visited them one by one.

In the early morning I companioned my mother to the cool temple in the heart of the hot town, and sometimes, through a glass tube, I drank rusty spring water out of a gay glass. How hot it was. Never shall I forget my thirst, or the solitary theft of my life. It was when I stole soda-water from the sideboard. For I was strictly forbidden to drink without leave and experienced the pang of Villon,—

“ Je meurs de soif auprès de la fontaine.”

But now and again, in the *Promenade de Sept Heures*—an hour for each fountain—I was given

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that red drink so like paint and water, a *grenadine*.

\* \* \*

Above the Promenade of the Seven Hours was the mountain of Annette and Lubin. At the foot of the mountain path were two wooden posts, one thick and one thin. They were the pastoral lovers, the thick one Lubin, the thin one Annette pining in divorce perpetual. Often I had breakfast at the café at the top of the mountain, where there were rows of swings.

One morning I strayed from my father. Two charming ladies, to whom the early air had lent the rosiest of cheeks, played with me and swung me in the swing. My father found them tossing me in the air. I was most anxious he should know my new friends, but, to my great sorrow, the introduction proved *sans lendemain*.

\* \* \*

Our apartment was over a shop where they sold bird-cages, slop-pails, and funeral wreaths.

On wet days, as a great treat, my sister and I were allowed to unpack the funeral wreaths. They were stowed away in an empty bedroom covered with sheets. We used to peel off the tissue paper from the bead flowers and crape bows.



## Auprès de la Fontaine

We were opposite the church where a dwarf, like Quasimodo, used to ring the bell. Funerals used to pass to the church and I would shiver.

But our landlady, to console and reassure me that my hour had not come, used to say : “ Que voulez-vous, ma mignonne,—une vielle dame de quatre-vingt-dix ! ” Or “ Qu’attendez-vous—un vieux monsieur de ‘septante-cinq.’ ”

\* \* \*

My nurse damped my hair and rolled it up in fine old kid gloves over night. It was like sleeping on five golf balls. We went to the *Bal d'Enfants* in the great glass Pavillon. The son of the English minister at Brussels had a passion for my younger sister and refused to dance with me.

His lovely mother said, “ Why will you not dance with her ? I think she is the prettier,” and he replied, “ I know, but the youngest has a something ” ; and went off with the Something on his nautical arm.

Life was packed with humiliations, and I had an Empire dress to the ground that tripped me with every step. There was a little girl of my own age called Angèle, the daughter of a *corsetière*. She had a tightly-laced golden bodice, a green tulle ballet skirt, and pink silk stockings.

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She caught butterflies in the Pavillon, but she was not a butterfly herself—a golden wasp with a sting. “Robe de chambre!” she shouted after me, and every nerve in my body tingled. Her dress filled me with nostalgia and romance; she was the Esmeralda of the gargoyle bell-ringer in the town. I was sick with longing. Why had this disguise been left out of the elaborate trousseau over which my nurse sewed her finger to the bone? Why was my mother not a *corsetière*?

\* \* \*

One day the sun was extinguished. Some one said “Spa is full of snakes.” Henceforth a dark obsession weighed on every fibre of my taut mind. Even at the Zoo, behind glass, I had never been able to face them. The smallest worm had been an uncomfortable hint of the ultimate terror. Now I walked rigidly in the middle of the road, no longer seeking rare lilies of the valley, the raspberries and small scarlet strawberries that grew on the mountains. To add to my torture, I wore socks; stockings at least would have been a sort of armour. Every bush hid a bright eye, a writhing tail: the faintest sylvan rustle paralysed me.

We used to go to tea with a young man called

## Auprès de la Fontaine

*le bel Alexandre*, who had a villa outside Spa with the most artificial of gardens. Toy cascades fussed under toy bridges into toy rivers and lakes. But this artifice inspired no confidence. I fled the rock garden. Had I not heard the creatures loved sun and the warm crevices of rocks?

Autumn was beginning to touch the summits of the hills. I was walking one afternoon outside Spa with my sister and my nurse along a broad road that ran parallel with the mountain. Physically and spiritually I was long-sighted, and suddenly I stopped short. My hour had come, and I saw ahead a dark tail, a spiral and cryptic sign in the dazzling white dust. I was at the bridge I had crossed a hundred feverish times in imagination, and I had no desire whatsoever to turn back. On the contrary, something compelled me to go forward to meet death, touch death close and have done. But the death-agony dropped from me like a shroud; I should not need Quasimodo or one of the beautiful bead wreaths out of the spare room. There was I in the midst of fear where no fear was. My arch enemy, the snake, was dead—his head crushed; and the white dust was sprinkled with blood.

\* \* \*

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After that Spa was once more the same. . . .  
Without a tremor I visited *le bel Alexandre*  
and his toy garden. I felt like Pascal, the richer  
for a talisman I might wear all my days.

## The Nearest Unknown    ∩    ∩    ∩

**I**T has become the half-way house of the *Entente* in peace as in war, but what do they know of Boulogne who only know it from Conferences, fugitive passages, casual visits? One must be steeped in memories. The first thing I remember about Boulogne is being lifted up in arms on the 15th of August to see the procession wind its white ribbony way down the Grande Rue. They were singing to an almost flippant tune the hymn of St. Casimir, "Daily, daily, sing to Mary," and I went cold and clammy from excitement.

"Puis c'était la Procession  
Que la bonne et moi nous suivions  
Et de belles fleurs en coton. . . .

Et l'on jetait encore des roses ;  
Les femmes pleuraient presque à cause  
De ces si belles choses."

I saw the sulky little brown boy dressed up as a Saint in a sheep-skin ; the sanctimonious

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little girl as the Virgin in a blue mantle sprinkled with stars, held up by the living rosary of pink-wreathed, tottering cherubs ; the fish-wives with jewelled crosses on their stiff bodices, with stolid faces framed in cobweb lace ; the little scarlet acolytes with white cotton gloves, staggering under the weight of their silver candlesticks or kissing flowers and throwing them on the stones to be trodden by the soft, square feet of the black nuns. I saw the children of Mary with their hair crimped like tow under their stiff veils, and I saw M. le Curé, with infinite and tender precaution, set the great golden sun on the *repositor* erected in the Place d'Alton.

After the procession, I was taken to Cavang's shop in the Rue Victor Hugo to eat *babas* soaked in rum that dripped stickily down my frock.

\* \* \*

Inside the church on the Place d'Alton the pavement was often wet ; the chairs squeaked when the fish-wives turned them round at the elevation. One of the finest organs in the world was played by a blind organist.

The organ spoke as one having authority, as one knowing everything. It rolled with an endless prophetic cadence ; it said : " You will wander, but will not disturb my serenity, for

## The Nearest Unknown

you will come back." Its voice was deep, salt, ultimate ; it spoke of industry and patience ; of content earned by labour ; of grace won by ministry. It spoke of beloved little orchards of cherry trees ; of boats heavy with miraculous draughts of fishes ; of a humble, dignified and comfortable people who sat down to a glass of red wine at the end of the day.

Every social and private problem was smoothed out and solved. Life has brought nothing wiser than the voice of the organ at St. Nicolas in the Place d'Alton.

\* \* \*

Memories swarm. A ragged boy ploughs up the sand with a round red tin like a miniature pillar box.

“ V'là les plaisirs, Mesdames,  
V'là les plaisirs.”

I beg for halfpennies and spin a wheel to gamble for a high ephemeral peak of frail conical wafers. They smell faintly and sweetly of vanilla, but alas, the wind from the sea tosses them away like dead leaves.

“ V'là les plaisirs, Mesdames,  
V'là les plaisirs.”

\* \* \*

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I am given a doll made of *terre cuite*, dressed as a Boulonaise with earrings, cap, and fishing-net. I am given *sucre de pomme* rolled up in beautiful gold paper ham-frills ; I dig in the hot sand with a ladle, not a spade.

I fall into a pool and am dressed up in my boy cousin's sailor suit. " Ô le gentil cousin qu'était la petite cousine."

I come up from the beach wearing nothing but a huge sunbonnet and a bathing-gown made out of two red pocket-handkerchiefs. A group of soldiers point at me and hold their sides with laughter. I sit down on the cobble stones and cry with rage because my parents have clothed me so inadequately ; because the soldiers laugh. And the soldiers laugh all the more.

\* \* \*

The years pass. A pigtail trickles between my shoulder blades ; it is turned up for the fifteenth of August, and I deal largely in what some person has brilliantly called that melancholy thing, joy.

I go to the Fair under *Les Petits Arbres*. Enchanting brass, blatant noise ; enchanting waving beacons of white light ; enchanting smell of gingerbread and fried potatoes powdered with rock salt. I am taken into booths and



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inexplicably hurried out again. I buy a blue china rosary and a picture of St. Joseph. I am hurried past stalls that sell other pictures than those of St. Joseph, where the Latin mind, destitute of restraint, ministers to a humour unembarrassed by delicacy.

The most corpulent lady in the world indulges us by lifting her petticoat and showing us her fattened calf, and in a low tent, by a doll's cradle, I see in domestic and intimate circumstances the smallest mother in Europe.

\* \* \*

What should they see, les anglais, when the *bateau anglais* turns into the harbour? St. Pierre, which, on feast days is draped with fishing-nets, standing back like an anchored ship in the fish town; the wide crucifix high on the green cliff, rooted in the *Chapelle des Marins*, embracing all arrivals with an indiscriminate charity; and behind the ramparts, the leaden dome of Notre Dame de Boulogne floating like a huge, grey balloon over the Haute Ville.

You meet her everywhere, Notre Dame de Boulogne, over gates, on cups, in glass paper weights. Over the gate she is a large image in a boat, in the middle between angels at bow and helm—an impossibly small boat and two pitifully

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cramped angels. It speaks a miracle of safe arrival.

\* \* \*

I was to go back again and again, and I shall go back till the earth is over me. And what better earth or richer company than that of the cemetery above Wimereux, looking with infinite and sunny faith towards the ancient port that for four years was the gateway to the greatest of historic adventures.

## Song of Boulogne Cemetery

“Voici le cimetière à la tristesse gaie  
Où un jour, si Dieu veut, je m'en irai dormir.”

*Francis Jammes.*

**U**NDERNEATH the leaden dome, how we  
just adored

Wand'ring in the bead-bedecked garden of the  
Lord ;

How you used to stray from me, run away and  
creep

Into little chapels where the people were asleep,  
And I used to read you in the shadow of the trees

“De profundis, s'il vous plaît”—notice “if  
you please.”

Sitting there below the Cross then I turned and  
said,

“How abrupt the living are, how polite the dead.”

Photographs of little girls fading in the grass,  
First Communion veils and wreaths, rotting  
under glass ;

With a mixed theology—“Here lies Gabrielle  
Waiting for the Judgment Day—Petite ange  
au ciel.”

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There beyond the *Petits Arbres* we could almost  
hear

Hawkers, trumpets, crashing bands, noises of  
the fair.

O, St. Martin's Summer Day! Heralded by  
bells,

Summer in November like a wreath of immor-  
telles

At a waiting patch of earth, stony, flat and  
red,

"Why are there no lovely cots here, child?" was  
what you said.

Down our darling town to-day, soldier men  
and brave,

Some are marching to the sea, others to the  
grave.

Though they live so close to death, don't you  
hope they buy

Gingerbread and eat it on the tombs, as you and  
I?

Don't you hope they find this place, know this  
place as we,

One of Heaven's citadels builded on the sea?

## Bon Secours



**L**AST week there was reason to seek a sick nurse late at night in Boulogne. It was an adventure mediæval as Victor Hugo's romance. I picked up the motor of a certain gentleman called Chocolat, named after the colour of his car, but as Chocolat did not know the way, an amiable and disreputable-looking person called Le Camarade was extracted from the entrails of a small café.

Le Camarade sat on the front seat like a footman, and we roared through the *Porte des Dunes* under the ramparts. The moon was over the belfry, the Cathedral and the *Mairie*, and all the houses were blind with fastened shutters : a place of the dead wakened unseemly by the rattling and scrunching of the ramshackle car. We could not discover our destination, and now and again Le Camarade leaped down, plunged into a café to consult, possibly refresh.

At length the car shot down a narrow cobbled street like a shuttle in a sewing-machine, and

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with a cry of triumph Le Camarade told me to get out.

A faint light flickered over a high gate, and I distinguished a white shrine, and under it, with immense relief—so much is there in suggestion—the comfortable words, “Notre Dame de Bon Secours.” I pulled a formidable bell that echoed through the Haute Ville. Above, a window grew softly light. A nun in a white coiffe, like the nun in Millais’ “St. Agnes’ Eve,” leaned out and spoke to me in serene words.

I returned with a Garde, who seemed to me old, and I was surprised when she told me she was thirty-two. But I discovered she meant thirty-two “in the Lord”—the period she had spent in the convent, not in the world.

Why cannot we all be thirty-two in the Lord? What wisdom, what taste, what discrimination. The crudities, the agonies of spring are over, decay has not set in. It is an admirable age.

But cease digression. The Good Help has come.

## St. Martin's Summer      ∩      ∩      ∩

IT is an elaborately-draped bed worthy of a dying cardinal or a languid lady accepting chocolate from a black page. From it I can see out of the open window that what *Made-moiselle* has promised me for the last week has come at last. St. Martin's summer is here. Morning after morning I have seen the green hands of the plane-trees on the Boulevard vainly flapping away the obstinate drizzle; morning after morning, coffee-pot in air, *Made-moiselle* has assured me that it would surely come, *l'été de St. Martin*, and how, when it came, it would be best of all.

\*           \*           \*

And here it is calm, tranquil, smiling, with little tiny mountains of crisp leaves on the *Place* reminding one how youth may be now and again disordinate, but maturity, to have any grace, must conform.

The whole town is washed in mellow sunshine,

## As You See It

and though Mademoiselle is extravagant in stating it is best of all, yet it is very good. Over the trees I can see the long warm red roofs of that part of the town which Mademoiselle tells me is very wicked. For an elderly *Enfant de Marie*, she gives lurid information. I can see St. Michel, the church she passionately favours, where she says the offices are not grand as they are at the Cathedral, but where one is "tout à fait en famille." I do not tell Mademoiselle that this is not an inducement that would urge every individual to swell the congregation.

As the day progresses, peace diminishes. A man with a horn advertises the evening paper; the Paris train roars across the bridge, the Angelus rings from four or five churches visible and invisible, and on the *Place*, a merry-go-round spins eternally to a desperate tune of ultimate despair.

No French heart conceived that tune, but some ragged and singing beggar without hope or fear striding along the rainy quays of the Liffey, profoundly indifferent whether he goes over the edge in the wet dark. Over and over again, with awful complications of brass and castanet, the gigantic musical-box comes round to this relentless number. But *l'été de St.*



## St. Martin's Summer

*Martin* is here, and there is no hour at which it is so beautiful as when, under the pale gold of a weakening sun, the Angelus mingles its many bells with the raffish tune on the *Place*.

\* \* \*

Hard by, there is a great house that has been devastated by a bomb. The once light wall-paper flakes sadly in the wind ; the rusty grates are like the leavings of a smithy, and the whole miserable skeleton of the thing is exposed to the indecent gaze of the curious.

Oddly enough, I once knew people who were together and happy in that house now destitute of all privacy ; people who warmed their hands at those hearths now incapable of any hospitality. But they are apart and widely scattered.

Life has not gone more completely through the wall of their happiness than the German bomb crashed into the bright security of the gay little room.

\* \* \*

Nothing is more monotonous, more futile than to dwell upon the antagonisms and prejudices of peoples. It would be far more valuable to penetrate into the psychology of the romantic enthusiasm the French cherish for the Irish than to detail their sentiments towards the

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Boche ; for every sympathy is a cunning right of way towards more unity in the world.

We have not always agreed, we shall not always agree, but this is an honourable people. There have been bonds in the past ; may they not weaken now that their soil laps our dead.

In the primary private sorrows, we are undivided. For in an uncertain, often uncomfortable world there is but one simple certainty irrespective of class, creed, or nation—the certainty that the human heart attaches itself to some creature with whom existence is anything from rapture to serenity, without whom life is anything from void to intolerable. In this intimate loss there is nothing to choose between us ; they have suffered it, we have suffered it, heroically.

But in all grief, there is a second stage more difficult if not so poignant as the first. After the first shock, it is the natural and sane law of progression to look round and see what remains.

Spring over, summer gone, there are mercifully few hearts so atrophied that they do not, sooner or later, ask if there is any kind of St. Martin's summer after the devastation. Is there a home ? Is the planted tree still standing ? Crippled, faint-spirited from loss, is there resource ?

## St. Martin's Summer

The pear-tree which September weighed to the ground with its yearly harvest is ripped and lifts naked branches to heaven ; the patient saints stand headless in their mutilated niches ; and the people themselves, like a race which has forgotten how to smile, living in huts and hovels near their shattered homes stand picking stones by the wayside with a heartless effort to reconstruct.

This is no place to expatiate on what we have done for them in the past. They have done a very great deal for us ; apart from public and important affairs, have they not helped us in all manner of humorous and civilizing little things that are part and parcel of life ? Have they not taught us how to cook, how to dress ? And have not our most distinguished and responsible flown to them for that most serious of necessities, recreation ? It is undeniable ; a little whimsically every kitchen might challenge us, " *Savez-vous planter des choux ?* "

Every evening, after dinner, I go for a walk round the ramparts. From the summit of this colossal wall one can see the town, the tomato-coloured sky reflected in the harbour, the lights coming out one by one like stars in Capicure over the Liane. These walks are punctuated by few events.

## As You See It

A peaceful soldier in a powder-blue uniform leans over to watch some tardy children playing tennis in the courts below. A large loose white dog attaches himself amiably for the evening. Down the long narrow avenue of tall trees a nun comes, sweeping up the rusty leaves with her black skirts. It is with a sense of escapade, of *rendez vous*, that she, who is forbidden to accept hospitality, clings to one like a burr with a torrent of verbose trivialities as to the doings of the day.

And one by one, for there is no wind, the leaves fall gently.

“Comme elles tombent bien !

. Dans ce trajet si court du ciel à la terre.

Comme elles savent mettre une beauté dernière.”

At the start, the sky is luminous; at the end the last twilight trembles into dusk. But I am not to get away from the tune in the square. Down below, by a café incredibly called *Le Dernier Sou*, a *bal champêtre* is going on in a little park dotted with lights.

They are not only an honourable but an inextinguishable people. The heaviest heel could not quench their vitality. Between the trees and the bright globes, they are waltzing to the insufferable tune in the shadow of *Le Dernier Sou*.

*September, 1920.*

## The Man Who Might Have Been a King

“**H**E might have been a king like the bonnie Earl of Moray,” said Joppa, the artist, knocking the ashes out of his pipe ; “ he might have been a king, but he just wasn’t.”

The man who might have been a king, who was reading Morley’s *Life of Gladstone* in the corner, lifted a face which every indulgence had not robbed of a severe austerity. He put his long, close fingers over his drink with a gesture loving, possessive, fearful, as if some one might take it away ; a gesture for a woman, not for a glass of whisky, and he narrowed his eyes, at once guileless and of exceeding cunning, until the singed eyelashes met. There was something of Napoleon, something of Frederick the Great, and not a little of a coster cheating one over a barrel of winkles on Saturday night in Harrow Road.

“ Kings have some one to shave them,” he

## As You See It

said, passing his free hand over his neglected chin: "that at least would have suited me." But he had not liked that remark; he was perfectly aware of the Earl of Moray's fate—how they "slew him and laid him on the green"—and three years of war had not cured him of a neurasthenic aversion from any allusion to death.

He was astoundingly, one could not say dressed, but covered in a soiled pair of khaki-coloured knickerbockers and an old sweater. A sweater that has experienced the wash has one of two destinies, both unfortunate; either it shrinks to the neck or dangles to the knees. This one had met the latter fate. Such as they were, his clothes very probably belonged to some one else, for he had an unconquerable passion for other people's clothes. Landladies always wept and said that he would die, but his friends, of whom so many had now preceded him in the last adventure, had known better.

Old Mackay, who received a small income from a respectable family living at Hampstead on the condition he never came nearer England than looking at Folkestone across the water on a clear day, completed the verse in his own tongue—*pianissimo*—

## The Man who Might have been a King

“ O, lang will his lady  
Look frae the castle doune,  
Ere she sees the Earl of Moray  
Come sounding through the toun.”

They were gathered together in a little inn called *Le Gai Savoir*, somewhere between Calais and Boulogne. The only passport necessary to that particular village was the assurance that you had broken at least one of the ten commandments—the more the merrier.

If you had miscalculated your capacity for refreshment ; if you could not pay your debts ; if you were indiscreetly fond of your neighbour's wife, St. Martin welcomed you with open arms. It was a long, low room with a red floor and wine-ringed tables, and just that touch of squalor without which the type who frequented it were never quite at ease.

The man who might have been a king put down Morley's *Life of Gladstone* on a splash of beer and glided noiselessly from the smoky room in his old sand-shoes—“Pussyfooting” he called it—out into the clear, clean, open North French country. He took the road to the left along the cliff, and shuddered again as he passed the rickety little cemetery with its crooked wooden crosses. Why should he be forced to sit upon the ground and tell sad stories

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of the death of kings? He of all people; yet there they lay, the earth was over them,—Travers, with whom he had buried half of his heart, who had written three books and laid down his pen for ever; Thompson, who had vied with Henry the Eighth in his partiality for Queens; Chadwick, who would always have found it more comfortable to be a Government official; but he himself, in spite of the prophecies of landladies, had not been defeated by the great dethroner—he had survived the long, adventurous track of hair-breadth escapades, the staggering decade of ceaseless “pussyfooting.” He had been spared. For what?

With his feet deep in sea pinks he looked over the water to where England gleamed in one wavy, shimmering white line, and the perennial smile of the optimist came out across the dark landscape of his face—

“Might have been a king,” he repeated—  
“might have been a king. And may be yet.”



## Savon

“ C’est la femme aux bijoux,  
C’est celle qui rend fou,  
C’est une enjôleuse.  
Tous ceux qui l’ont aimé  
Ont souffert, ont pleuré.  
Elle n’aime que l’argent,  
Se rit des serments,  
Malheur à la gueuse,  
Le cœur ne’est qu’un jou-jou  
Pour la femme aux bijoux ”

—**T**HIS is the song Savon sings as she stands on the threshold with naked feet and the brow of Clytie.

Savon was really “ Marie ” like everybody else, but three years ago a lady at the hotel gave her a cake of soap and the name of Savon stuck to her. I fancy Savon kept the gift as a souvenir.

She does not sing of God and the sea and the people who go down to the sea in ships to return no more—the songs of all fisher girls in novels and plays—any more than one’s cook wears

## As You See It

green and dances a jig in the kitchen because she happens to come from Ireland. But when the strolling singers come down from the cities Savon pays a sou for one of the broadsheets they carry with them. These papers are printed on both sides with *Chansons de Paris* and Savon follows the troubadour up and down the street learning the tune. Luckily the same air does for half a dozen songs, and Savon sings them in a rough throaty voice like mountain scenery, full of brakes and precipices and running water and sudden warm and sunny places.

This year "*La Femme aux Bijoux*" is the favourite.

Anything but holy, these songs, though some of them are sentimental histories of people who became angels after very chequered careers.

There was one I got a small boy to sing me about, "*La p'tite Lili*," who, after all manner of vicissitudes, was cruelly done to death at the corner of the street.

"*La Mort mit dans ses grands yeux bleus  
Un sourire comme en ont les anges dans les cieux  
Elle est montée dans sa patrie la p'tite Lili.*"

While I was still torpid in bed in the morning Savon used to arrive, bringing something for dinner.

Sometimes it would be a pair of quickly

## Savon

breathing pigeons, sometimes a rabbit with an appealing upper lip, sometimes a struggling chicken.

It is amazing how the sight of their vitality put one off one's food, and how expensive this habit of Savon's became, as I kept most of the *menu* in the back garden as pets. One day she brought me a dead cock over life size. His career had been so distinguished that I feel certain his end had not been hastened and that he had died no violent death. It seems he had been a notoriety for years and had entertained the village by hopping across the street on one leg. We knew it that evening when it came to dealing with his carcase, yet I had to give Savon six francs for it "parce qu'il était si beau."

Savon comes in now and again to give Louise, the cook, a hand ; and sometimes, when I come in very wet from the shore she helps to dry my clothes before the stove. It is then that she really talks, and I feel an hour's conversation with her to be more valuable than a journey round the world. I do not know if she ever had her phase of idealism ; but I trust that time, and a world which after all has some dreams to offer, may yet mellow Savon—for at present beauty, a battle with life, and a mercurial

## As You See It

intelligence have brought her to an attitude of cynicism it would be hard to match at the core of civilization.

As a rule she tells both me and herself the truth, though I now and again suspect her of what her happy race call *le mensonge joyeux*—the lie to amuse—also of flattery over the story of the Curé.

She hopes one or two of my garments will be damaged and she may reap profit of the disaster, and she has that rare gift of being personal with dignity.

“Madame has not bad feet for a tall woman,” she remarks as she puts my spadrilles to dry before the blaze. “They are precisely like the feet of Monsieur le Curé who was *chassé* last year. That was the time I dreamt of a dead cat. To dream of a live cat is not lucky, but to dream of a dead cat is unlucky. It is a miracle how Madame resembles Monsieur le Curé—the same hands, the same figure, the same hair, the same age. Now we have a man of no importance, but Monsieur le Curé he could do anything with us. And a man who might have done anything in the world too—the son of a butcher at Lille, but he preferred to give his heart to God and his fortune to the poor.”

“What became of him, Savon?”

## Savon

“*Voyez-vous, Madame*”—it was this way—*“on a fait des histoires.”* You see, he wanted a statue of Jeanne d’Arc for the church, and there was a collection. And we, the poor, gave a sou or two sous as it might be, but Mademoiselle Duval, she who had been four times millionaire (whatever Savon means by that) gave ten francs—*et on a fait des histoires—mais les histoires.* Then Mademoiselle Mallard, who gets her fortune by making little boots for dogs in Paris, she gave eight francs—*et on a fait des histoires.* Then Monsieur le Curé had an automobile, and he used to go to Lille to see his aunt and sometimes he got home very late—*On a fait des histoires.*

“And his housekeeper a woman of a hundred with a squint.

“And they wrote to the Pope about him six times and the Pope paid no attention ; but the seventh time the Pope had him sent away, and now the Pope is very sorry, for he was a man like no other man in the world, Monsieur le Curé.

“But the world is very wicked. And when he knew he would have to leave us his sorrow was so great that all the sighs in his heart stuck in his throat and every one in the village saw how his throat was twice its usual size and he went

## As You See It

about like a pigeon with a crop-full of grief. And they made a rag doll like his chief traitor the beadle, and the doll was burnt on the village green and all the children sang a song *Made-moiselle Dax* the dressmaker wrote about the enemies of Monsieur le Curé—the song was so good it was like a real poem and it was printed and sold in the streets for a sou.”

Savon has sung me the song about the enemies of Monsieur le Curé. She has also brought me his photograph—“*Après son chagrin.*”

I recognize the portrait I have noticed in most of the cottages, the face of a young man who will find no continuing city in this world.

Savon had one sister, the Angel of Passage, who fell asleep in April at the Castle of the Dawn before the turmoil of the day, the heat of high summer.

She was employed by some rich family who had a place not far from Boulogne, and when she died her masters were so devoted that they had her buried at their own expense within a stone's throw of their property. She sleeps in a cemetery on the warm slope of a hill. The poor grovel at the foot in neglected and down-trodden graves, but Angèle lies at the summit in the sun where the rich and distinguished pay extra to be a little nearer heaven. I know the place

## Savon

and I have been three times this summer for the luxury of reading the ingenuous lines on her white tomb.

“ Angèle du Passage  
Endormie dans le Seigneur  
Au Château Du Point Du jour  
le 13 Avril  
A l'age de 17 ans.”

Savon wishes she were beside her. “ If one thought,” she says, “ one could not live;” yet at times she seems to enjoy life.

She has a wonderful carriage, with square shoulders thrown back, hands on her hips and waist well in. I fear the admiration of visitors has given her rather a self-conscious walk. On feast days she swaggers up and down with an orange scarf and a row of sham pearls round her brown neck. She lingers round the cafés and is still enough of a child for people to give her coppers. Young as she is she tells me that she has had a love affair, that she was badly treated and that her man left her. I tell her it will come again but she always answers “ On n'aime qu'une fois,” and when she speaks one feels hers to be the ultimate word.

“ But maybe he will return ? ”

A curious hardening process tightens her classic mask, “ We have a saying in these parts

## As You See It

that he who goes too soon comes back too late,"  
and flinging her black shawl over her head,  
holding it to with brown hands crossed over her  
deep chest full of the sea, she departs singing  
the song of the unknown, perhaps desired, city.

“ C'est la femme aux bijoux,  
C'est celle qui rend fou,  
C'est une enjôleuse.  
Tous ceux qui l'ont aimé  
Ont souffert, ont pleuré.



## L'Heure Solennelle

OVER there last spring Roger and Guy, motherless twins of six, were cared for, and well cared for, by their aunt Mademoiselle Céline. She, dressmaker and landlady in one.

They were square, convict-shaven, unlovely boys, as faithfully native and bourgeois as the inimitable child in du Maurier's drawing, "Si je connais Paris!"

Guy does not count. He was pallid and the younger twin over whom nature had to economise, a mere echo and shadow of his vigorous brother, who used to sing in a suit made out of one of my old skirts, constellated with brass buttons—for it is a great advantage to have an aunt who is a dressmaker. Roger would come into the front room smelling strongly of garlic and eau-de-Cologne. With chocolate memories lingering round his mouth and his tight hands behind his back, he would sing the *Berceuse de Jocelyn*.

He sang it like a very great artist. Every

## As You See It

word distinct, utterly certain, with a voice true, pure, and frail as hoar-frost, he followed the complications of the melody. He sang with spirit and technique, thought and form, with an appalling intelligence of unchildlike experiences; of patience and deprivation, of the fraternity of pain; of the length of the days and the longer darkness of the night:—

“Uni par le malheur durant les longues nuits,  
Nous avons vu les jours passer après les jours.”

Till he paused to collect the whole of himself into there frain,

“Ô ne t'éveille pas encore.”

He would get fifty centimes until he and his *Berceuse* came so often that in spite of the last excellence of performance, I wearied. It was then Mademoiselle Céline said he must learn something new. He must learn

“Minuit, chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle.”

And in the room under the early lilac where Mademoiselle watched for the return of a legendary bird, I would hear them practising. The machine hummed, Mademoiselle Céline's list slipper thumped on the boards:—

“Allons, Roger, pour Madame,” and fifty centimes.

“Minuit, chrétiens, c'est l'heure solennelle ”

## L'Heure Solennelle

—and the frail voice, so unerring in the *Berccuse*, would hesitate, falter, break and tail off on the triple notes of the “so-len-nelle.” Over and over again the child renewed a courageous effort, but the grave word seemed too heavy for the crystalline vehicle.

“Never mind,” said Mademoiselle Céline, “he will know it for Creesmus.”

Which is here.

The trees are at their barest on the boulevard, and the wind from the sea that is so soon England can hardly find a stray leaf to tease on the *Place*.

With a roar and a streak of light the train carrying the first travellers south, pierces the northern artery of France, past the sandhills, past the sharp churches, the round lake sentinelled by close poplars like the court ladies who concealed the princess while she kissed the swineherd.

In the room where, indifferent to weather, the bronze lady in a bathing dress is taking a perpetual header from the mantel-piece into the coal scuttle, Roger is sitting up.

He is festal, smelling of garlic and eau-de-Cologne, eating a roll like a white coffin, washed down by thin chocolate.

He is looking at the beautiful Christmas

## As You See It

card from England, and holding it up to the light to see the coloured talc become a stained-glass window. Soon, at the psychological moment, Mademoiselle Céline will come and cover the suit made out of my old skirt with the *pardessus* made out of my old jacket, and when every bell in the town is clamouring for predominance they will go out into the cold to the dome which is so very near the stars. All this I know ; that we have seen—and not for nothing—the days pass after the days, and that it is midnight and Christmas has come in the beloved and historic country. But what I do not know is if Roger has grasped and mastered *L'Heure Solennelle*, or if he is going back to practise in the low room under the dishevelled branches where Mademoiselle Céline watches for the bird that returns every year.

## The Little Wind from the Sea

HE lived by the sea, and he was always writing a book. As he invariably left the windows open, the wind used to blow in and toss the manuscript away, so the book was never finished. It was the same with his countless cigarettes; he never smoked them more than half-way through, and his leavings would have been treasure trove for any tramp. Though he drank wine extravagantly, he wasted it in the glass, and now that I come to remember his face, it seems as if God had never quite finished that.

“Life,” he used to say, “is one continual feast.” He did not add, which he might have done, “at somebody else’s expense.” But the woman with the great loving heart of an angel and the sense of humour he did not altogether appreciate, added it for him, and that answered as well.

After all, most of us have at some time or

## As You See It

other to pay for our guests, and I do not think there were many hosts who grudged the dinner. When people start writing a book—poetry is the worst—it is no rare experience for them to find their friends receding.

Not so in this case : everybody was desperately expectant, and they used to drift in of evenings to hear the fresh chapters.

They were so wonderful, those chapters, so satisfactory ; as full of promise as a May morning. “ I sometimes feel I begin almost too well,” he complained, and across the face which God had neglected to finish flitted the ghost of a smile.

The first book he wrote was called *The Wootton Road*.

“ You see,” he put it to them, “ every one who matters—all the right people—go on the Wootton Road, but one cannot go on the Wootton Road with a very small maid-servant and a very large dog afraid of its own shadow. One has to go on the Wootton Road by oneself. There you will find them all, the people who matter—the people who have not feared to touch capital ; tinkers, vagabonds, gipsies, people who are here to-day, gone to-morrow, who leave behind them desolate patches on the moor where they lit their fire for an hour.”

But when a thin streak of yellow lay like a

## The Little Wind from the Sea

golden sword across the horizon a little wind blew in from the sea and caught the pages, and no one ever saw the end of the *Wootton Road*.

The next book he started was called the *Evening Star*.

“One doesn’t really want the sun or the moon,” he explained. “Why should one drag oneself into the too full light of either? What one wants is the evening star; kind, benevolent, merciful—a continual twilight that does not give you sunstroke or send you crazy.”

And again everybody listened, for this book reached its fourth chapter. But one day a little wind blew in across a troubled water and the *Evening Star* was extinguished.

It was then that he began the *Unfinished Symphony*. It was a book about all the women whom he had told he loved as he had never loved a woman before: and what safer statement can a man make than this, which has the added decoration of the truth, for when has one man ever loved two women in the same way?

“Like Cynara’s lover, I have been faithful in my fashion,” he declared. “Love has got to die somewhere, and personally I prefer to see him fall like a gladiator in the arena than to watch him sleep and die by the fire.” And his friends were more excited than ever, for the world has

## As You See It

a mistaken idea that a man will write least about what he knows most.

“This is going to be a book of short stories,” he told them. “Nothing would have pleased me better than to have been able to make it a long one. Fate has willed it otherwise. Somehow, all these stories have to be short, but though they have to be short they are going to be very, very beautiful. A *Song of Songs*.”

“No one has ever heard the *Song of Songs* more than once,” said the pale Russian, who knew all about music, “and most of us never hear it all.”

“I have never heard any other, and now I am going to make a book about it. And, above all, I want the funerals to be gorgeous. I am like the poor, I want to spend all my savings on the funeral. I cannot endure anything ugly. No death duties. There is a good deal to be said for burial at sea—only I rather love to go back now and again and put a flower on a grave.”

So the *Unfinished Symphony* was started.

There was the pale Russian in the conspirator's coat whom he called “Dearest” because she was dearest. She never burnt her fingers with anything more than her own cigarette-ends. “It was not so much that one noticed when he



## The Little Wind from the Sea

came, but it was so diabolical when he left," she had said.

It had been that way with her. It had hurt to part with what she knew she did not want to keep.

Then there was the woman with the great loving heart of an angel, and more sense of humour than was comfortable. Her he called "Darling," because she was darling. But he had not liked it when she called the funeral "Getting the boot."

"It's a last sunset," he corrected, "and sunsets are beautiful things," which is undeniable.

There was even the sweet, mild, virginal prospective wife and matron; the English maiden with the traditional mother, complexion and punt on the river; but he could not for the life of him remember what he had called her, and that is unfortunate when one is writing a memoir.

There were a good many tears at that funeral. "When shall I be happy again?" she had asked.

"When the May-trees flower once more," he answered.

And as it was June, and she was very young, she sighed. And the autumn followed, and with it a little wind, and the *Unfinished Symphony* floated out with a few dry leaves.

Then came the War. Drums were on the Wootton Road, and of course he went—no one

## As You See It

went sooner. He had often made life tortuous and whimsical, but over the national crisis he was perfectly virile, normal, uncomplicated. He who had loved to sleep in a majestic bed with steps up to it, lay in the mud with the rest. "It's all hideous, hideous, but somehow there is nowhere else where one could be."

He was extremely gallant; wearying and troublesome to his superiors beyond expression, and he received enormous mails. He got sundry decorations, but no promotion, and while others became majors, captains, and staff officials, for him a rainbow spread over the humble breast of a second-lieutenant. God, who had not finished his face, was very good to him, and just as life had given him no wounds, so battle miraculously spared him; for he was pitifully fearful of pain, intolerant of suffering, and once more he wrote. Through the blood and the noise and the fire he wrote. He started a book about the war. There was a chapter about the soldier poets who broke into song—the starved mind blossoming in the arid and unfavourable places. There was a chapter called *The Channel of Grace*, which told how the touch of brutal fact mysteriously woke rapture. There was a chapter called *Afterwards*,—but there was to be no afterwards.

A stray bullet had him in the end. As kind

## The Little Wind from the Sea

but hasty hands laid him out on the damp soil, his ears were full of sound, and a new music echoed through the undreamed mansions of his failing life. It was the *Song of Songs* at last. And the eternal arms went round him ; and his head, which had rested on so many hearts, rested on the deeper one of earth his mother.

High up on the green cliff the hasty cross stretched out towards the sunset, which is a beautiful thing, and a little wind from the sea blew on the only book that was ever finished.

## I Remember

I REMEMBER there used to be  
A procession by the sea :  
I ran at my father's knee.

I remember the little girls in white,  
And the crimped hair under the veils,  
And the brown of the flapping sails.

And the *enfant du chœur*, like Love,  
Holding a taper alight,  
With a clean cotton glove.

And the little boy with nothing on  
But a sheepskin, like St. John.

And the flowers in the street  
Crushed under heavy feet.

I remember the silver sound  
Of the censers in the air,  
And the women on the ground,  
Singing a prayer.

## I Remember

I remember, all the way,  
"Ave Maria! Ave, Ave,  
Ora pro nobis, ora pro me."

And my father lifted me to see  
The Curé walk towards the sea.

I wonder when we shall watch once more  
The winding ribbon steal,  
Singing, from the Haute Ville,

To gather on the shore,  
And say that peace has come, and we  
Are blessed, with the sea.

## Sainte Jeanne and Her Message

**O**N this very date nearly half a thousand years ago—it was May 30, 1431—Jeanne d'Arc was burnt in Rouen market-place, and now she has been canonized at last in Rome.

Catholics called her Sainte. Villon called her La Bonne Lorraine. Both would she have been called by Charles Péguy, the modern warrior with part of her spirit who sleeps amongst the wide corn of the Marne battlefield. Some have taken up unenviable pens to search the joints of her white armour. Even those must say of her as she said of her own standard: “ Elle avait été à la peine ; c'était bien raison qu'elle fût à l'honneur.”

What then was the real personality? It shines through the legend that wraps her like a robe. She was devoid totally of that most paralyzing and devastating of fears, the fear of responsibility. She carried France on her shoulders as she would have carried a sick lamb in her

## Sainte Jeanne and Her Message

father's orchard, as St. Christopher carried the mysterious child across the torrent. "Advi-  
enne que pourra !"

She has been called *bergerette*, but the name is more symbolic than actual. Her people were humble but well-to-do. She was reared in the most favourable circumstances, knowing neither the perils of superfluity nor the squalors of want. It is unlikely that at any time she was a shepherdess, but nothing is more probable that now and again she tended her father's flock under the apple-trees of Domrémy. Dogma bewildered her ; parties and factions were nothing to her ; she was clean of that excessive knowledge without insight which makes so many moderns ineffectual. She was out to heal, to reconcile, to correct disorder and inertia. Just as she brushed aside all superfluous questions at her trial by the two words "Passez outre," so during her brief existence she cut away all that did not nourish charity, that was of no value to the national soul. She had for France the spirit now so sorely needed for the world. She loved her banner forty times better than she loved the miraculous sword with which she had killed no one. Hostility was sterile ; revenge had no interest.

"Dieu hait-il les Anglais ?"

"De l'amour ou haine que Dieu a pour les

## As You See It

Anglais et ce qu'il fait de leurs âmes je n'en sais rien ! Mais je sais bien qu'ils seront mis hors de France."

Like all wide, swift people, her simplicity, her unparalleled spiritual energy, brought forth one idea ; there was to be one shepherd and one fold.

\* \* \*

She was the practical mystic. "Les hommes d'armes combatteront ; Dieu donnera la victoire." She was prompted by forces, informed by modes, which to define might only excite a controversy hateful to her conciliatory heart. "Interior revelations of that infinite personality which is within us and which now and again with the best and greatest is manifest by latent forces surpassing beyond measure our facilities in ordinary conditions." This is M. Henri Martin's manner of expressing that the kingdom of Heaven is within us. She covered this wise philosophy with one word : "Voices."

On the still evenings under *l'Arbre des fées* in the Bois Chenu she had voices.

She has had her prototypes ; she has had and shall have her successors. The histories are quite similar. These are called, they achieve, they are adulated, betrayed, done to death, and eventually canonized by the system that originally



## Sainte Jeanne and Her Message

condemned. And—touching and pathetic weakness—like all people who make anything, they make mistakes. The vehicle fails, the receiver is disorganized, the message cannot get through. They have not the experience, the learning, the caution of the mediocre, to fall back upon. So they make the mistakes. But the world, called cruel, is, in the long run, an idealist, and understands.

\* \* \*

Poor child ! With the imperfect vision of the visionary, she saw that she would be freed by a great deliverance. The nature of that victory was mercifully withheld. Her sanity found no spiritual luxury in pain. “J’aimerais mieux être décapitée sept fois que d’être brulée,” she cries when she hears the truth. Nimble-tongued as St. Teresa, she might with that saint have answered a Deity who told her that this was how He treated his friends :—“No wonder, Lord, that you have so few.”

\* \* \*

It was an age of darkness, of sinister necromancy, of vice the result of inertia, of inertia the result of vice. Gilles de Retz, the original Blue Beard, was yet young ; and characters of his

## As You See It

kind, though less flamboyant, were legion. Even Domrémy and the quiet villages were touched by "la grande pitié" and manifestations of warfare. The soldier, with his free tongue and freer habits, passed that way. Sown in corruption, she was raised in incorruption. She did not so much as know the purport of questions put to her unconscious innocence.

\* \* \*

It was not for nothing she rode into Rheims to the challenge, "*Veni Creator Spiritus.*" She was answered at the tribunal. And the staggering fact remains that a country child of eighteen, chained hand and foot, ill-fed, bullied and watched night and day by gaolers, after three and four hours of interrogations, would leave baffled, more weary than herself, the angry court of experts. She evaded their traps, she touched them on the raw, she lacerated their vanity and pomposity, not with venom, but with the laughing malice of the incorrigible child. With quick truth she quenched their long evasions and shattered the complexity of the constructed plot. "Il y a plus au livre de Dieu que dans le votre." She knew beforehand of the things in heaven and earth beyond Horatio's philosophy. She was not a stateswoman, she was a great

## Sainte Jeanne and Her Message

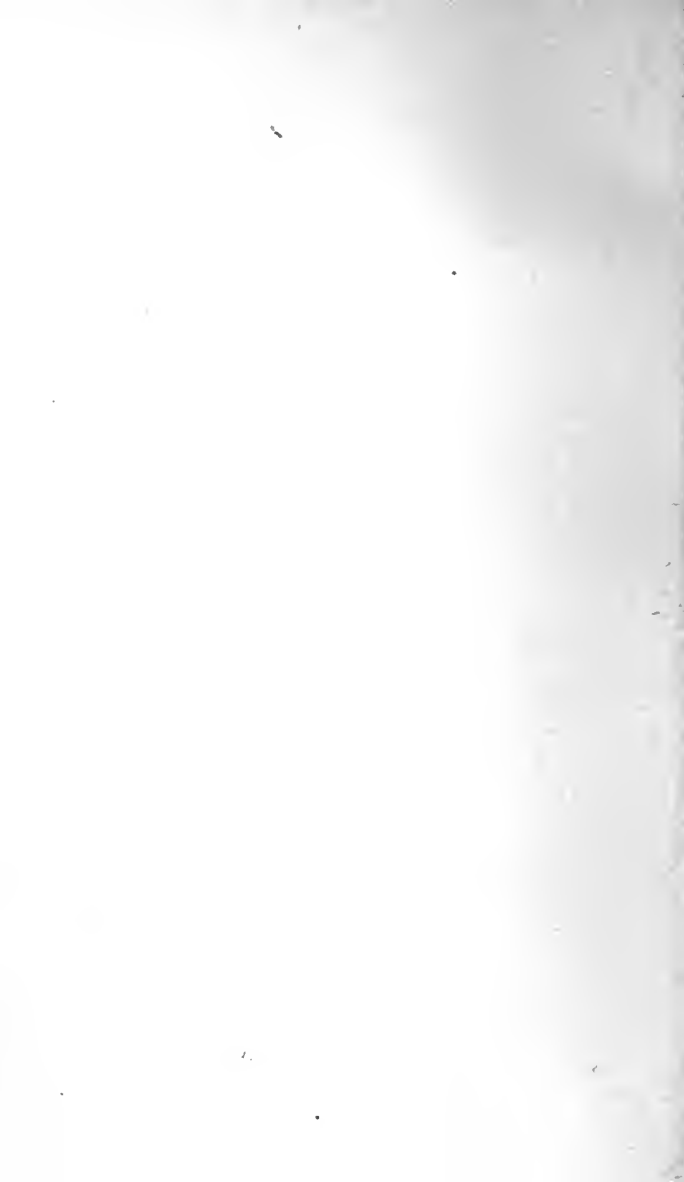
patriot. Great patriots are the saints of policy. They save. They do not save by talking in hot rooms and passing money. They save by light. Light cannot be bought by gold. There is a heavier price.

\* \* \*

She paid it. They bound the little peasant girl to one of her own trees. The people who were afraid of responsibility caused the death of the creature who had shouldered the burden. The oldest story in the world.



**HERE**



## The Hour Before Dinner



PICCADILLY to Chelsea.

Seven-thirty, the bright summit of the season; London flushed, expectant, a little discontented. It is the discontent of the un-nourished. We just begin to feel ready for dinner.

The sweep of Piccadilly, the chariot of the arch challenging St. George's Hospital, shimmering in an almost Italian light.

A young man like St. Michael overthrowing Lucifer leaps out of a taxi to take up a girl standing on the steps of one of the houses in Belgrave Square. She has a violet dress and a cloak like a last sunset; she is the colour of the fuchsias that grow in high hedges on the banks of the Shannon. She has cool, bare arms like arum lilies—ringless fingers like tuberoses. How many generations of idleness, how much fine ignorance has it taken to turn out this masterpiece? They are going to dine at the Ritz. They are

## As You See It

very young ; dinner will make very little difference to them.

A huge car is rolling south. Husband and wife sit as far apart as it is possible to sit on the same seat. It would be less marked and more decent were one of them to sit as far off as the chauffeur. They do not feel that way. She has a rampart of white curls and a black ribbon round a well-preserved neck ; his corpulence is triumphantly controlled by the three jewelled buttons of his white waistcoat. They are apparently going to dine in S—— Gardens. There will be an ice pudding like a fairy castle, and the joint will not be omitted from the menu. If possible, they will be a little more torpid after dinner than they were before.

A reedy young man in a Tyrolese hat and a butterfly tie is crossing Sloane Square. He has manuscripts and books under his arm. With him is a lady old enough to be his mother if she is one of those many women who married at seventeen. She has pink cheeks, not out of a box, but because honestly she feels gloriously well. Is her fair hair going white, or was her white hair fair? Vitality covers a multitude of shortcomings, like charity, of sins ; without it she might have run to flesh, but it has just saved the lines of her vigorous figure. They are



## The Hour Before Dinner

evidently going to dine at the Chanticleer. After dinner he will read his poems, and she will turn the listening expression to his face while she is really gleaning the very intimate conversation going on between the interesting couple at the next table.

Twenty years ago they read her their poems ; twenty years hence they will still be doing it. She has never heard one of them. Happy, happy young men.

Another car turns up Sloane Street. Inside, a big, furrowed man with a sheaf of papers and his hand on his stick. The plough of life has gone deep over his face—deeper on the right side than on the left. With him a very thin woman, in black and a tricorne hat. They are both extremely intelligent and as tired. They are going to the Café Royal ; and we hope that they will feel brighter after the soup.

In the King's Road, at the kerb outside Chelsea Town Hall, a slight girl stands in trodden white shoes and a lilac muslin dress. Her lovely painted, triangular face is lifted to Number 19 'bus. She dangles a black satin reticule, sprouting a magenta handkerchief, and jingling pence. God knows where or with whom she will dine or if she will dine at all.

## The End of the Season

IT is finished. The waters have closed over yet another season and the stream flows. In Eaton Square, autumn is premature and, like all premature things, unlovely. The big leaves fall from the dull, heavy trees to crackle against the railings and chase each other in the dust. That dear death-cry of *Sweet Lavender* echoes throughout Lowndes Place.

A trim member of Parliament fits his latch-key, and lets himself into the large, deserted house, where the "char" is preparing a sketchy meal in a room like a mausoleum. But the step of the master is light; the absence of the family does not appear to depress. On the contrary he is elate with liberty and escapade. All the rich babies have long since departed to the sea, all the poor-rich babies are rolling stationwards in 'buses, piled with chariots and tin-baths.

"Wherever I am there shall follow a pram,  
A portable bath and a nurse. . . ."

## The End of the Season

With pointed, triumphant cries, the infant democracy of London possess the faded parks.

\* \* \*

London in August is not a bad place. Only a week or two ago no one had time for any one. Now, mere acquaintances hail one as if they accosted the twin soul they had been seeking from the cradle. The middles of the restaurants are deserted and a few people cling like flies to the walls. What inherited *'phobia* is it that makes people shrink from the centres of restaurants?

\* \* \*

So the season is over ; that great engine that owes its motive power as much to private ambition and failure, to human recklessness and lack of resource, as to any natural impulse of hospitality. The mingled smell of wine, soup, and flowers seems to go down Piccadilly with the leaves. Ascot, Henley, Lord's, the opera, Goodwood,—they are like old Father William. They have done it and will do it again and again.

Gallantly the brave ladies flew the red flag at the last. Why is it rouge gives a woman as much confidence as a devout lover ? It steadies her tired nerves ; it rallies her wit. At the start she can discard its assistance, but as the season advances she leans more and more to the sunset

## As You See It

assurance. But it is over. They can slip away and let their weary faces drop in the twilight with all the abandon of the *débutante*. They can allow themselves to forget how very difficult it grows to find a really safe hat to suit them. Time was when every hat suited, but when there is an end to this facility, why not in the name of grace emulate the light-hearted ladies in *The Beggar's Opera* and fall back on the benevolence of a cap. The cap question goes deeper than millinery. Society is not perhaps the place where one would always choose to meet again the face one knew when all was young. Far from it. But there comes a wind for every sailor who is cunning with his sail; for every true reaper a harvest.

\* \* \*

Harley Street is full of heroic little boys walking dentistwards in grey flannel suits. Now and again one harrowing figure passes with a handkerchief to his mouth. They are getting it over before the holidays. They are being hurried away to ices and promised gifts.

In the waiting-room, one martyred little seraph wants a certain engine he has seen in a shop. He is reasoned with passionately. An engine is not a thing to take on a journey; it is an

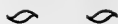
## The End of the Season

angular and uncomfortable travelling companion. He is offered all manner of other treasures—a wrist watch, an *attaché* case, stamps, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, and when the holidays are over another and a large engine.

But through desolation and not cowardice the slow tears gather and roll down.

“ You see, there will never be another engine quite like this engine again. This engine has a cow-catcher. How do you know you will ever be able to find an engine with a cow-catcher again ? ”

## The Child in the Temple



**A**NXIOUS and erudite persons offer officious advice on the instruction and illumination of the young. They speak at length of high things. They urge the need of intellectual honesty. They abound in original suggestions on how to break to our children those mysteries of life and death of which we ourselves know so very much. They inform us how to impress on the plastic mind why a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, but not the red motor 'bus. Now the ways of a child in these matters are unexpected and apt to disconcert.

\* \* \*

In *Les Amitiés Françaises* M. Maurice Barrès tells us how he had his own ideal for his boy ; and how, on the contrary, it was brilliantly shattered by filial instruction. He had resolved that his young son should not receive his first impressions of Italy through the window of a railway train,

## The Child in the Temple

so at great expense and risk of cold he arranges to drive over the Simplon.

They pass the pines, the walls of snow, the high kingdoms of the mountain, they make the descent into the warmer benevolence of Italy. "Philippe, you shall find flowers new and innumerable ; this is the land of figs ; music shall rejoice you, under the sun and under the stars. . . ." But during the historic journey in Napoleon's footsteps, the only things that arrested Philippe's delighted attention were the two gleaming buttons on the back of the driver's coat.

\* \* \*

Has it not ever been our own experience ? One makes some dutiful premeditated attempt to explain the mystery of life, and one is greeted by " Oh, mummy, do look at the darling little match-box," which interesting object—ininitely preferred to expensive chariots from the heaven of toys in Holborn—by the aid of a boot button and a piece of string, is incommoding the footsteps of the passers-by. Or, attempting to break the news of some violent change in the daily round of life, a pistol is snapped at one's head. Or a dreadful collection of old 'bus tickets is handed out, and one is asked, " Do you want to

## As You See It

go to Barnes or Piccadilly ? ” Another child, in France, contemplating a liner moving outside the harbour, remarked, “ I suppose when you first came here you crossed in a galleon.”

\* \* \*

And, left to themselves, their harrowing games. They live at a *Grand Guignol*. Is it pathetic or humorous that agonies of our real life are a Paradise in their minds ? They linger rapturously over what we fly from.

The other day I saw a small girl blow out a paper bag, clap it over the mouth of a prostrate companion, saying soothingly : “ There, there, take a deep breath ! ”—a memory of an operation for adenoids. Another speaks of visits to the dentist with ecstasy—“ That lovely red velvet chair that goes up and down,” and “ The beautiful bowl for goldfish.” For him, the seat of the inquisition is an imperial throne ; our humbling a glory.

In the nursery, an impromptu scaffold guillotines scores of teddy bears and monkeys. One game, that grew so realistic it had to be stopped, was soldiers and dolls extended on the floor, imagined to be a heaving deck, with cries of “ Steward, steward ! ”

\* \* \*



## The Child in the Temple

Their conceptions of religion are sometimes, as it were, insular—bewildering enough for those who cry instruction from the shore. The awe-stricken little girl, contemplating the stained-glass window and asking, “Is the man in the sailor hat God?” A little boy, hearing the story of Adam and Eve, exclaimed in dismay, “But they shouldn’t have left them in that garden alone.” Another knew the Comforter would keep the baby quiet. One child opened the Lord’s Prayer with a tremendous shout—inexplicable till one day it was made clear he believed the first words to be “Hullo, be Thy Name.”

How hospitable the little girl who had to recite nightly a hymn where in the last line the sinner “Home rejoicing came.” She was firmly convinced that Home Rejoicing was the name of a delightful person who might roll round any time. She used to ask: “Mother, do you think Home Rejoicing will come to tea to-day?”

\* \* \*

Profound amongst such anecdotes is that one about the earnest child of the astronomer, Hamilton. His father, on a night previous to a day when the visit of a distinguished guest was anticipated, said to the boy, “To-morrow Aubrey

## As You See It

de Vere will be here. Shall you not be glad to see him?" Musing, a little reluctantly, yet adhering strictly to the truth, the boy replied, "Thinking of Latin and thinking of trouble and thinking of God, I had forgotten Mr. de Vere."

## Drowned Bells



**M**AY is over East Anglia and its long coast-line fringed with shaggy young corn. A bee rises heavily from the gorse ; a bird drops like a stone into a hedge powdered with white blossom. The two scents, sickly and aromatic, mingle with the salt in the air. A flat, green country set with windmills and channelled by pale arteries of sluggish water. Across the levels, seven grey churches like miniature cathedrals are all visible at once, each rising from its own humble congregation of low red houses. Also it is a still country and has unseen meanings of things now under the sea. Suddenly, here and there, behind a rare clump of scraggy pine trees, you get the cold gleam of shallow water in broad streaks. At Dunwich, this hungry sea has slowly devoured bit by bit "fifty-two churches and as many windmills, together with a spacious harbour in which there were as many ships as windmills."

## As You See It

Ships and windmills, windmills and ships. The fate of a ship seems naturally uncertain; it may put into harbour, it may perish. For it is built—as we mortals are—to be a challenging thing, and goes out to adventure, and mishap. But one had not thought it of windmills. That stationary ship, a windmill, standing with open arms, answering to the faintest breeze, yet fundamentally steadfast, seems born saved. Before now, one has noted a town with a harbour and one windmill, and counted it rich enough, thankful for its solitary landmark. But under this sea lies a whole social civilization and an ecclesiastical system. Here, the King from Thule might have flung the memory cup to join buried chalices, sunken bells, quenched censers, all studded with mussels now.

Beyond some crooked tombstones at this edge of doom, only a tall needle of the last tower remains. Pell-mell down the sandy cliffs topple epitaphs, human bones, shattered coffins. In places the green is already shooting over the scars of last winter's devastation; while the murky sea of a sandy coast sucks and roars over what might be rocks, but are only the stone corners of the fallen tower. So in their way, they "suffer a sea-change into something rich and strange." Soon, soon they also shall be more completely

## Drowned Bells

drowned : the last traces of Dunwich and its lost glories shall slip down to join the rest of the legend.

In the hot yellow sand, children in blue and brown are busy digging and excavating. It is like the Hamlet scene cheerfully mimicked by the nursery. One cherubic sexton has found a rib, another a branch of white May. One, more ambitious, full of local rumour, drives in his wooden spade with his sand-shoe in gay hopes of a skull.

## The House of "Getting Better" ∞ ∞

THE red station—a mere cockle-shell set half-way in the green side of the Hill o' Doune—seems the outlier of a civilization that stopped somewhere between Aberdeen and Banff. So remote we feel that seeing people off to London on the primitive platform has something final about it like the melancholy romance of death. They are going such a very long journey, and most things are more probable than that they should ever return. They need a viaticum, and in this spirit, one clear February morning, I thrust an unfolded copy of a journal into the hand of a distinguished visitor.

\* \* \*

There is first a bridge. Soon one is not cheated, but met with extravagance, for there are even two bridges—the Bridge of Banff, with its seven arches, and the Bridge of Alvah, with its single one lofty as the chancel of a church. They remind. Some one said that there remains to be written one of the best books in the world

## The House of "Getting Better"

called *Bridges*. A bridge is always a constructive beatitude. In cheap iron, suburban brick, rustic wood, or as here, in grey stone, giving full justice to the vehicle of grace, every bridge is like healing a severance or making atonement.

And there is no monument so tragic as a broken bridge ; the most spiritual of ambitions has been in vain. There clings to it like lichen the glory of a defeat which is victory. The one at Avignon, incomparable under the vast papal palace, speaks legends of the mediæval church and sad rupture of Christendom. A confraternity of bridges convert a handful of islands into Venice. The Florentines' merchandise on the Ponte Vecchio is like the clink of coin during the singing of an anthem. The first bridge that stirred one child was at Bournemouth. It was of wood painted red, the product no doubt of the local plumber. It led, from the back of my grandfather's house to an uninteresting garden, and for some obscure reason its charm was enhanced by an oddity, for it spanned gravel and a dust-bin or two instead of water. There was a like childish adventure at Farringford in the Isle of Wight ; and why does it recall the Army and Navy stores where a maiden lady took me periodically to a luncheon of roast chicken and strawberry ice.

\* \* \*

## As You See It

As you stand on Banff Bridge, under the seven arches, the Deveron flows to a foamy and futile quarrel with the sea. The bay, clothed in blue and white, sleeps between the thin arms of Macduff and Knockshead ; slate-blue sea, slate-blue houses, white shingle, white birds, chalk-white lighthouse. Macduff, on the right, with its toy, foreign-looking harbour full of chocolate-coloured trawlers, and low red-tiled houses such as one sees in the Pas-de-Calais. Inland, the hills, some naked, others fir-fringed, once planted by some ancestral Duff, or by the Lord Seafield, who so loved trees that he planted millions hereabout. Always, on some happy slope or other, the slow plough closely pursued by an avid and angelic flight of gulls. Always, too, alarmingly deep in the water, some small boat heavily overladen with fishermen makes one think of Galilee.

\* \* \*

Above the station, the Hill o' Doune, crowned with its little Greek temple, from where, tradition says, the people hurled a statue of Aphrodite into the sea. It is likely she had no objection to returning home. So the temple is deserted, but who knows ? There is a cinema where I saw memorable dramas. That way one may see



## The House of "Getting Better"

them now even in Ultima Thule, where the old theatre never was. Yes, here there is everything—everything but a cathedral. But a cathedral is self-centred, a great egoist, and where there is a cathedral there is often little enough room for anything else.

\* \* \*

Between the bridges of Banff and of Alvah, set back in the shadows with a diffident distinction, stands Duff House, where, when life's robberies grow more manifest than life's compensations, people go for that most tremulous of enterprises, "to get better." If, after a night in the train, you turn out at Aberdeen rather more desirous than most to put your head in a sack, the porter knows your goal. He has been known to offer the tactless comfort that you will look better when you come back. Given so, it is possible you may hang up your crutches with mingled feelings. Through a little wood of slim trees, a nurse in a blue dress, an emerald sweater, and starched cap passes often from a low white cottage to her work in Duff House. I know nothing outside Italy so pure, so clean, so clear as this tempera fresco in the North.

The place is one huge aviary. The air is alive with the discontent of the gulls, the hoarse protest

## As You See It

of the rooks, the persistent courtship of doves, and, by night, the long hooting of the owls. Every morning at dawn a punctual white bird, between the spidery twigs, wings its way to the sea on some errand of its own. Scattered about the Duff House grounds, the product of that period, are meaningless and neglected little stone buildings. The French calls such follies *Pavillons* and, with Watteau, associate them with light, but poignant, gallantries. A heron, standing motionless on one leg, often sentinel the desolate entrance of one of these Arcadian shelters. Sometimes, with ominous solemnity, he rises into the air over the golf links. The white bird flies as though he were going to catch the 6.20 train to Aberdeen ; but the heron's flight is that of a celestial messenger bearing important, if not happy, tidings to an expectant people.

\* \* \*

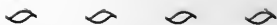
Down by the harbour there occurs an ugly patch of civilization, the receptacle namely of the offal of every sardine consumed in Banff. Out of the garbage rises one jagged, black, mythological rock where all the sea-gulls congregate—large, self-confident, well nourished. They push each other off favourite corners like social climbers, they walk up and down the wet stone,

## The House of " Getting Better "

stepping high like well-trained race-horses. Few symbols are more disconcerting than this shining community of shameless birds revelling in accumulated filth ; and I saw one big fellow of infinite technique alight on an old boot with the grace of a Villon, white as the snows of yester-year, beside the refuse of the town.

At a fisherman's cottage in Macduff there is a sea-gull with wings clipped. The glories of the harbour have been rather inadequately supplemented for him by a basin of water, a few potato parings and a mussel shell. He is an exile, but he lives in face of his kingdom.

## Sleeping Water



NOT fifty miles from London the deep, green heart of the country is pierced by an old canal. We called it *Sleeping Water*. A canal is generally a lean, mercantile affair, a sort of Stock Exchange threaded through Nature; but this one is different in its richness. It is rich, not with industry and labour, but with the warm laziness of untroubled weeds.

The water is almost quite hidden by these flat, broad, green leaves, like dessert-plates, where it is not powdered with gossamer patches of white blossoms. Tall golden stars stand up on thick stems, and nearer the banks dragon-flies, gay as ladies at restaurants, dart between the forests of reeds and tall yellow flags.

A thin, rough path scrambles along either bank under high hedges of frail roses, and all the sun gathers in this hot, slumberous channel of many scents. You may walk for miles with no other event but that of a rickety plank over this damp

## Sleeping Water

glut of vegetation, or mown hay seen through the hedge lying in tossed silver waves.

But this economy of mood saves on itself to make a dower for three enforcing episodes.

On a mound, a huge ruined castle stands roofless to the summer sky. The large, broken arches and windows rob it of all privacy. The summit breaks into a gay garden of snapdragon, bramble, and wild roses. A little further, a clear, running river flows right under the unstirred canal, and spreads wide arms over the fields on either hand. On grey days it is like a stone cross laid thus for some wide quiet memory that was already old in the valley when King John's castle was new.

Then at last, and suddenly, the water stretches past a timber-cutter's yard, which startles alike by its gipsy loneliness and its noise. For the first time the long silence is pitilessly ripped by saw-mill and axe. The great trunks are heaped and strewn. Now and again the brave earth shudders and a tree like a dead emperor is hurried away on a narrow truck drawn by two straining horses. Here, in a vast barn, the witch might await Hänsel and Gretel. The gipsy might emerge to touch Ib and little Christina on the shoulder, saying, "Are you the woodcutter's children? Here are two nuts for you. They contain what is best in the world for you both."

## As You See It

A legend runs in this part of the country that every seven years a mystical barge comes up the canal. They are vague about when it was last seen, or when it shall be seen again. But it will come. Everything is waiting ; hope is romance. Among the reeds, under the castle that is Arthurian of Malory, if not of history, children linger. Some spirit on the banks of life seems watching for the barge that shall or shall not come with what is best for both.

## Such as Do Stand

“That it may please Thee to strengthen such as do stand.”—*The Litany*.

FROM morning till night I hear Mary running up and down the back stairs. There are four other servants, but if a bell is rung it is invariably answered by that willing footstep. The parlourmaid is called Lily, the cook Caroline, the housemaid Florrie, and nurse is just called Nurse ; but if a voice sounds through the house it always seems to be calling Mary.

Du Maurier, I think, has said it is the most beautiful name in the whole world, and most dignified of all in our own ungracious tongue. This Mary wears it like a veil. To look at her is to wash one's hands among the innocent. She is thirteen, the mystical and visionary age of adolescence. Joan of Arc was thirteen when she first heard a voice telling her of the great pity there was in France ; Bernadette was thirteen when she saw the blue and white apparition in the dark grotto of the Pyrenean valley ;

## As You See It

St. Agnes was thirteen under the miraculous growth of golden hair ; and St. Teresa was not nearly so old when she set out to find martyrdom.

I remember them all when I look at Mary. Her thin fair hair is pushed away under a cap, as if to conceal a vanity ; her small eyes, which remind me somehow of moss, half-green, half-brown, are perpetually clouded by a dream ; and her nose and upper lip have an upward tilt, like an aspiration. Habitually she is pale, but at the slightest word she colours faintly from humility and gratitude. She should be kneeling with a shawl over her head and a lighted candle in her hand, or standing in some ploughed field in the North of France scaring the birds with wide arms.

Instead of this, she is carrying coal and scraping the mud off my boots at the end of the day.

Not for one minute is she the servant who wishes to reign ; no latent rebellion, no lurking insolence smoulders behind her candid forehead ; and it is perhaps as well for her physical well-being and mental peace that, unlike her prototypes in history, she has not discovered that her frail body might be the reedy vehicle of transcendental experiences, of great and enduring truths.

Her boots are like nothing on earth but the



## Such as Do Stand

wayside leavings of a tramp, and the other day, when I questioned her as to the manner in which she was shod, she remarked cheerfully, "Me father is out of work. I give me money to me mother."

Now I know from Mary that Caroline, Lily, and even Florrie, and particularly Nurse, represent Such as do stand.

In the afternoon Caroline, Lily, and even Florrie, whose rank is a little uncertain, sit like queens stirring their tea, letting it drip meditatively from the spoon to the cup, finding "strangers," with roars of laughter at amorous mysteries into which Mary has not yet been initiated.

Mary sits, slice in hand, her ear ever alert for the certain interruption of the bell that shall summon her to the nursery where Nurse sits enthroned, stiff with elegance, calling for more bread and butter.

But most of all is Mary impressed by the fact that Nurse has morning tea brought to her while she is yet in bed. To me it appears rather extravagant and ultra modern, but to Mary it is nothing short of imperial. It impresses her even more than the sight of Nurse putting coal on the fire with a black velvet gauntlet. No one but Such as do stand could have morning tea, and

## As You See It

put coal on the fire with a black velvet glove. These things in themselves spell safety, capital, respectability to Mary, just as, in the same way, I feel instinctively that Lily thinks I must belong to Such as do stand—God save the mark!—because I happen to prefer having breakfast in bed to facing a solitary meal downstairs. Strange that an act which might be interpreted as one of indolence should inspire respect. Strange that if I push my own pram or put coal on the fire with my own fingers I read in each vigilant domestic eye the sentence that I am no longer a real lady, I no longer belong to Such as do stand.

What would Mary say if I were to tell her that Cook, who sits so complacently reading the paper with her feet on the fender, is threatened with dismissal because she does not understand savouries ; that Lily, who lives up to her name and neither toils nor spins, was caught talking to the policeman at eleven last night ; and that Nurse, even Nurse, before many weeks have gone by, will be pushed out to make room for somebody else who can teach the children French ?

Ah ! Mary, when at the rumble of the drums you hurl yourself half out of the attic window, you little know what a blow has been struck to Such as do stand ; you little dream how the morning

## Such as Do Stand

tea has had to be abolished of late, and the velvet glove to be hung up.

Such as do stand have locked the car in the garage because of the price of petrol. Such as do stand are asking if their dividends are going to be paid next quarter. Such as do stand are having high tea instead of ten-course dinners. Such as do stand are remaining celibate because of the question of settlements. Such as do stand may go in the shade for the rest of their days because some who stand a little higher do not agree with them. Such as do stand are breaking the silence of years because they may be at the bottom of the sea to-morrow or pinned to the earth by a bullet to-night.

And, as far as I can see, the only person who has absolutely nothing to lose, whose position is quite unassailable, who has wholly experienced that freedom which Such as do stand are tremblingly beginning to taste, who is not woefully, pitifully in need of confirmation, is you, Mary, who know that the hard-earned half-a-crown on Saturday has to be yielded up to Home because "Father is out of work."

For you have no possessions. And when I see you tramping across the fields from the hovel where you sleep, I know that the great material ideal of the destruction of the weak is a false one ;

## As You See It

that one's swift sympathy for the purely wholesome animal is merely emotional. It is this poverty that veritably inherits the earth. An idea, to have any lasting constitution, any honest freedom, must be brought forth in a stable, and for Such as do stand there is no hope in the wide world but to cry eternally for strength.

*1916.*

## A Little Street      ~      ~      ~      ~

NOT far from where the sun goes down behind the domed, grandiose Church there is a narrow, packed street of merchandise. It is true there are dressmakers and milliners, beauty specialists, hairdressers, chiropodists who remove the corns for which the shoemakers are possibly responsible ; but the other little shops are given over almost entirely to all manner of bric-à-brac and antiques—one to oak and pewter, another to the wax fruit, woolwork, artificial flowers of early Victorianism, another to bead necklaces and coloured glass, another to the gilded wood and Venetian lamps of Italy.

There is a sweep who, when he is not sweeping chimneys, trots about bearing priceless antiquities to their destinations, and there is a public-house where sometimes, I suppose, the sweep has a drink.

So much for the street, which would be so Continental were it not for the British lack of the desperately needed restaurant.

## As You See It

The ladies who conduct their business in the Little Street could tell strange stories of their hours. Their experiences are rare and educative, for it must be remembered that they meet each fugitive visitor on the most critical of all footings, the financial basis.

That facet of human nature so often shrouded from the otherwise intimate eye, is disclosed immediately to the *Merceria*. As soon as ever a customer crosses the threshold one recognizes the type and decides if they have the buying face or not. Some come in just to pass the time of day; others for the destructive pleasure of making one feel as if one were living in a dust-bin; others, in winter, just to get warm. Some come in because they want things, and some, perhaps, in the delightful spirit of an American I once knew, because they "want to want." Scores of people come in to bless some union as economically as possible "with something for about a pound," and there are bewildered persons with prospects who come in "to find something for a very old gentleman."

There is the customer with an enthusiasm for putting things to their wrong uses. They seek out wine-bins in which they may practise amateur gardening; and cradles that they may, so to speak, put the baby in the fire and the

## A Little Street

log in the cradle. There are people who run in breathlessly, "who are dying for a little black boy," a sort of turbaned monstrosity brandishing a tray or electric light, and there is the visitor who, after turning over everything in the whole shop, slips out saying "she must go home and ask her husband." This is the hole she scuttles into; and this sentence spells despair. For the first time one learns the disadvantages of widowhood.

As a rule the wives never come back, but now and again they do return with Reggie or Percy, who is often in a sporting get-up. What he lacks in chin he makes up in feet, and stands looking blindly at the object in question. He is often dumb, but if he does happen to offer criticism it is invariably detrimental, or worse. While his wife says, "Reggie, wouldn't that darling little chest of drawers look sweet in the bedroom?" he goes round and round an Adam chest with his fingers, like a housemaid removing dust, repeating "Jacobean, Jacobean."

There are the people who come in, apparently to buy a £50 table, who in a few minutes draw out of their pocket "this queer little thing which belonged to a great aunt of mine," which they want you to sell on commission; and there are people who have forgotten their cheque-

## As You See It

book and draw a cheque on paper—to be dishonoured.

One afternoon a spare bit of a man blew in with a keen austere scholarly face—distinguished for its transparent honesty. Innocent as a shepherd who had lost his flock, he was panting a little but seemed extremely *affaire*; parcels and keys dangled from each refined finger.

“You will think me mad, ladies,” he said, smiling as if he found himself mad. “Mad! In fact I don’t know what you will think of me. I have to be in the city by three and I haven’t a penny of money to get there. Could you possibly let me have sevenpence halfpenny (oh! wonderful sum) just for an hour.”

Of course, no one had sevenpence halfpenny—who has?—and he reaped a shilling, not only from us, but from most of the other shops in the street. Needless to say, he was never seen again, and in a street rich in entertainment, nobody grudged a shilling for the extra item on that afternoon’s programme and the brilliant manner in which that particular cheque was disowned.



## Old Scholar Sinister



HIS rooms were so crowded that it would have been no surprise to go in one afternoon and find the lion lying down with the lamb before his fire. Gourds did not exactly dangle from his ceiling, nor did a skull grin by his ink-pot, or the sands of an hour-glass filter at his elbow; yet in his presence one visualized such a picture.

It was a medley indeed. On the chimney-piece, green jade dolphins sported round crystal globes. In the warm window, chemist-like, the sun poured through many coloured glasses. A pale *pietà* agonized beside a drunken god, a star-like monstrance gleamed next an Oriental idol, a Madonna nursed her babe near a silver lady sewing an eternal seam; and a goblet worthy of a dying king jostled a vase that might have come out of Brighton lodgings.

The Latin mind, even when unscrupulous, is often disturbed by a perverse mingling of the sacred and profane. This discomfort goes deep, and has its roots in an age when the use of sacred

## As You See It

things for sacrilegious purposes was a thought to make the hair stand on end. It is not impossible that other minds than the Latin may be sensitive to this disorder. It was what gave a slightly sinister atmosphere to that otherwise pleasant room.

He shuffled a little as he crossed the floor with his gait of a sea-lion, and as he turned the corner of a table laden with books, he invariably knocked a volume over and picked it up with the consideration one might give to a child.

His small eye, folded in flesh, looked out upon a world he had not found altogether good, with an immense tolerance towards ideals he could not share, an immense clemency towards an optimism that was not his.

His beard straggled freely over an academic shirt-front, not infrequently sprinkled with port ; not the gallant, pointed beard of the Parisian here, nor the fan-like affair traditionally affixed to St. Joseph, but the thin patriarchal beard with a parting down the middle that used to make me once wonder if it was twisted into two plaits at night.

His long face, which must have been so handsome, was the face of a man who sat up late. And how often, on summer nights, must he have talked to young men whom he had stamped for

## Old Scholar Sinister

distinction, throwing open the college window on dawn and the dewy garden with a tardy suggestion that it was time to go to bed.

What happened when the door was shut and he was left alone? Did he toss an adder's tongue with secret herbs into a cauldron and brew a potion for the golden goblet? He was something of a doctor and could diagnose disease by the odour of the sick-room as he crossed the threshold.

Did he study the stars and cast horoscopes for coming statesmen? He told me how, in his youth, he attended *séances* and went many spiritualistic excursions. He must have been *l'Apprenti-Sorcier*. And he gave me a rainbow-coloured globe to keep witches away, and a dark mirrow which I parted with as soon as possible.

He had also the lovable impulse of hospitality, the joy of seeing people eat and drink lavishly at his expense. As children, we practised a ritual called "pythoning," which was to crouch over the fire after meals and munch biscuits. Oxford observes this rite with added glories, and many a time, after the savoury, with little tables drawn up over the fire, we pythoned with wine and fruit.

He had known my grandfather; he had known my father; and, out of the past, from the

## As You See It

rich, unexpurgated library of his mind, took down story after story as the night wore on.

The academic may be the great materialist, far more so than the merely rich. Then, the soul is not his sphere, and he approaches it with all the slowness of the Wise Man.

But here were formidable gifts, psychic if not spiritual ones; terrible and prophetic have I known his premonitions to be. And though I should not have marked him as a channel of grace, if forgiveness is a fruit of the spirit he had grace; for I have known him to forgive.

The last time I saw him we crossed the garden together. The old premonitory factors must have been at work, for he asked me if we should ever meet again.

It is not a question a person who never takes a return ticket cares to answer. He held a large key in his hand, and to save me a tedious journey round to the conventional exit, he let me out into the world by a secret door in the wall.

In a long life, perhaps not wholly above criticism, I felt he must have done this service very often for the young: and earned their lasting benedictions.

## Going Home

GILLIAN leapt out of the branch line at Farrington—a station which seemed to exist solely for the convenience of the Rush family. A slip of a thing—this Gillian, six-and-twenty at most, so fleshless that the swift movements of her small bones showed through the skimpy coat and skirt like the restlessness of a bird beneath its feathers, and the hands thrust into chamois gloves, the feet in thin shoes, might have been owned by a child of fourteen. Her face ivory pale, the nose slightly aquiline, communicating with the smooth cheeks in a manner which was reminiscent of something Egyptian, and this suggestion was accentuated by gold rings like circus hoops that swung in her ears.

Under the black brows the eyes looked large, light, preoccupied, full of that little knowledge which is the most destructive factor on the face of the earth.

“It is a long time since we have seen you here, miss,” said the station-master, relieving her of

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a purple leather travelling case ; and he admired the carnations in her belt.

“ Take them—do,” she said, thrusting them into his hands ; and braving the keen air with a throat which appeared as evening dress to the solitary porter, she scuttled along the platform like a rabbit and flung herself into the arms of a woman who, in spite of a shabby flannel coat and skirt and a boat-shaped hat secured by an elastic, was unmistakably a lady. Mrs. Rush was aware of a whiff of scent, but she decided to speak about it later.

“ Well, Gillian,” she said with a stanch effort to conceal that she was moved, “ I cannot say you look up to much.”

They went home to Farrington—up the lavender drive into the lavender hall full of marble virgins pacifying doves. For a moment Gillian stood still and looked at the copy of the Murillo her parents had brought home from their wedding tour in Italy, and she sniffed that smell, half fusty half sweet, of damp stone, crumbling cement and hot-house plants. Nora, the younger and engaged sister, came out of the dining-room. She was pure Saxon, with light eyelashes and pink cheeks and hair rolled over a bolster—and she wore a delaine blouse with a dab of lace at the neck.

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“Nora darling,” cried Gillian, “I am so glad about everything—where is your ring?” And she took the hand of a good wife and mother with her nervy fingers and admired the gold band stamped Mizpah. They went in to lunch.

Gillian removed a hat like a sloe, with a sprig of fir in it, uncovering a sleek, black head.

“I cannot say I admire the way you do your hair, Gillian,” remarked her mother. “Why do you cover up your ears like that? Couldn’t you manage to puff it out a bit more like Nora?”

When the sisters had gone upstairs to unpack, Mrs. Rush said to Mr. Rush—the terror in the home at the head of the table :

“I don’t think the child looks well, Tom; do you?”

“Never did. Always was peaky. London doesn’t improve matters. Always said I was dead against the whole business.”

“Yet,” continued Mrs. Rush, “she seems happy. The shop is a great success, and it is wonderful the way she has made it pay. I have always heard how difficult it is to start a business without capital—and Gillian has only just the same as Nora—the thirty pounds you allow her and the twenty from poor mother. She always was clever—always—and now practically every one in London has been to her for hats at one time

## As You See It

or another. Of course I don't like it—but so many girls do things in these days."

Upstairs the bedroom was strewn with the contents of Gillian's trunk. A dressing-gown like a sweet pea in a storm trailed on the floor, and the dressing-table with its bulging muslin skirt was littered with silver. She had given thoughtful presents to every one—some lace to Nora for the trousseau, a workbox for Ivy, the useful maid, and a penknife with a gimlet for the boot-boy.

Under an engraving of a stag in a maple frame, she sat on the rosewood bed. Her hair hung in a little dark cape on her thin shoulders; she wore a black satin petticoat, black silk stockings on her slipperless feet, and she filed her nails with an emery board.

"And are you happy?" asked Gillian with great eyes.

"Yes—it all seems too good to be true. You will feel that when you are engaged."

"And what has he given you besides the Mizpah ring?"

A rather shy expression troubled Nora's transparent blue eyes.

"Not much. You know, Gill, one doesn't care about people one is very fond of giving one things, does one? It seems to spoil it somehow. But



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he did give me a little ruby steering wheel on a safety pin ; he is simply mad on yachting, and you see we got some boating in the Isle of Wight this summer."

"How does he talk to you ? What does he say to you when you are alone ? And when he writes to you, how does he begin and how does he end up ?"

Nora grew crimson.

"I don't know," she stammered ; "we are not very often alone. You see, now that you are away I am so much with mamma."

"Has he ever cared for any one else—any one before you ?" persisted Gillian with pitiless curiosity, and tears of positive anguish shone on Nora's lashes.

"Not like me, of course. But Jack is quite thirty—I suppose he must have been fond of other girls at some time—but not in the right way."

Gillian tripped her up in a minute.

"Did *he* tell you that ?" she inquired, and Nora's tortured face was an affirmative.

Gillian slipped to the ground. Her delicate throat suddenly thickened with mirth.

"Not in the right way," she repeated. "Good Lord, not in the right way ! They all say it."

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She found her father reading the *Morning Post* in the study.

Now, audacity, like faith, removes mountains, and sitting airily on the arm of a chair she hurled her thunderbolt.

“ I hope you won't mind, father, but I told a friend of mine I would put them up here to-morrow night ? ”

Mr. Rush dropped his paper as if his capital had been threatened.

“ Now, Gillian,” he said, “ none of your fine ladies about, please. No accommodation for your smart customers here.”

“ But it's not a woman at all ; it's a man,” said Gillian without a tremor. “ You see, he's motor-ing in this part of the world, and it seemed ungracious not to offer him a bed. It's Mr. Campbell, the K.C.—you know—the man who writes so much.”

Of course Mrs. Rush and Nora scented a romance, and Nora exhibited that soft silent sympathy, that awful indiscreet discretion, which drives one into a lunatic asylum.

On Saturday Mr. Campbell arrived in a huge motor. He was a tall, good-looking man of about forty-five, but he looked better with his hat on, as he was beginning to go bald.

Everything about this man seemed grey ; his

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clean-shaven chin was grey, his handsome self-sufficient mouth was grey, and his eyes were like <sup>w</sup>too pools in a sombre wood under a silver sky.

At dinner he made himself so pleasant that Mr. Rush allowed himself the imprudence of an extra glass of port. As for Mrs. Rush, he talked to her about gardening, and promised her some rare bulbs from Holland—and it turned out that he had met Nora's young man at a shooting party in Scotland.

Only to Gillian, who sat with her elbows on the table in a flame-coloured tea-gown bordered with skunk, he did not say much.

That night, as Mrs. Rush was making her head into that of the Medusa with spiral leather wavers, she talked to Mr. Rush as a woman of the world.

“One thing is certain,” she said, “he is not the least taken with Gill. Give me ten minutes with any couple, and I can always see at once how matters stand. She just doesn't appeal to him. He was far more taken with Nora, but what is the use of that? No—in a way I am sorry—for he's a nice man and a clever one, too—he would have suited Gill—but he's just not in love with her.” And perhaps Mrs. Rush was right.

Next morning after breakfast Mr. Campbell rose

## As You See It

to his feet and looked out of the window on to the Park.

“ I hope you will not think me very rude if I ask to be let off church this morning, Mrs. Rush,” he said. “ I have had a pretty stiff week of it—and perhaps you would let me take your daughter for a run in the car ? ”

Mrs. Rush's face fell. She had visualized a procession up the aisle which she had to postpone till the evening.

Nora, who was upstairs dressing for church, saw the car at the front door.

Just as Gillian was getting in Nora noticed that Mr. Campbell gave her the least little shove up—“ almost as if she had been his wife,” she said to herself—a trivial incident, but one she uncomfortably felt she had not been intended to witness.

In the evening they went to church. It was all Mrs. Rush had hoped, only she wished Mr. Campbell could have kept his hat on almost as much as she wished Gillian could have taken hers off.

“ Even though he is not engaged to Gillian,” she thought, “ every one will think she has refused him ”—and she looked at Jack sitting beside Nora, Mr. Campbell with his arms folded across his broad chest—these living proofs that

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in her family for once at least the men *had* gone round.

“The sun that bids us rest is waking  
Our brethren 'neath the western sky,”

sang the choir, and Jack grew muzzy in the head with love and hymn tune. Nora's face wore that look of sleep which is the happiness and beauty of placid women. But Gillian did not see the expression—she only saw her sister's Sunday hat, a black beaver which had experienced rain and lopped slightly to one side.

“Now that would put me off if I was a man,” she considered.

Mr. Campbell looked straight in front of him at a bas-relief of a female weeping over an urn :—

Sacred  
To The Memory Of  
GILLIAN RUSH  
Vale! sed non in æternum,

he read, and he scribbled on the back of his prayer-book, “Who was she, the woman with the football prize?” and Gillian scribbled back: “My great-grandmother—father's mother's mother—she died of consumption.”

Next morning Mr. Campbell left early.

Gillian accompanied him as far as the lodge, and at the gate she sprang to the ground.

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Mr. Campbell took off his fur motor glove. For a moment his large hand closed on the little claw.

“*Vale,*” he said, a humour lamentably untouched by tenderness gleaming in his grey eyes, “*Vale—sed non in æternum*”—and with a loud hoot he shot down the road to London.

Vale Carissima      ∩      ∩      ∩      ∩

ONE evening I called to see Aunt Barrymore, and, as it was a week-day, I was surprised to find she had gone to church.

Aunt Barrymore was not given that way, but since some of my friends had written to me from the Y.M.C.A., and I had discovered an anti-vivisectionist oiling a gun, and the founder of a peace society in the trenches, I begin to believe you may find almost anybody anywhere doing anything in these times.

As I never went into the house I waited in the garden. It was growing chill when the blistered gate in the hedge swung to and Aunt Barrymore laid a warm hand on my cold one. She seemed abstracted and she caught at me a little ; perhaps she felt that she might have been wasting her time.

“Tell me,” she said, conquering an inborn prejudice with the swift soft flattery she always managed to slip in, “tell me, you Catholics know

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so much about God—do you really think it is of any use asking God to stop the war ? ”

Spiritually I looked up to Aunt Barrymore, but physically—since I was the taller—I looked down upon her ! It was this sort of undecorated question that would now and again paralyse me. I do not know how I answered her, or if, indeed, I answered her at all, but she went on to say, “ If there had not been the Great War there might have been war in Ireland—and there might be yet.”

Aunt Barrymore and I always sat in the garden. True enough it was summer, but I used to wonder if when the autumn came the leaves would rain down upon us, and if when winter followed later it would find us sitting in the snow. For, as I have already said, I never went into the house. It was called Barrymore Lodge, and Aunt Barrymore was called Aunt Barrymore because she was inseparable from the house.

Like all people who matter, Aunt Barrymore was neither old nor young ; she was, and must always have been, ageless. Her mouth was tormented by the fugitive expression of a woman who could never quite trust herself not to laugh ; there were ruffles on the fine wrists, diamonds on her fingers, and either she or the heliotrope smelt of scent.



## Vale Carissima

Then there were the other days when she was different—when she would come out of the house as one emerging from a storm, her handkerchief rolled into a damp golf ball, a huge straw hat on a distraught head. With her beautiful hands, more beautiful for being ringless, outstretched between oneself and the house, and the most admirable control over what is hardest to control, the voice, her welcome un mutilated and genuine survived some tempest of her own.

Not that Aunt Barrymore ever told one not to go into the house, but one felt instinctively that had one migrated in the direction of the door she would have been discomfited, and as it would have been intolerable to make a creature who had obviously suffered suffer more, one clung to the security of the green bank.

She had the most original ambitions, never, I fear, to be wholly satisfied in this incomplete existence. One day she said in a manner which excited every anticipation, "And would you like to know what I have most wanted in all my life?" And then she told us. "What I have most wanted in all my life has been to go for a drive with a horse in a horse-box." Visions of "Our Dumb Friends' League" and horses at close quarters being conveyed to hospital rose before me. "But why?" I asked, "why in a horse-

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box ? ” “ Because,” answered Aunt Barrymore, “ because I should be so very near the horse.”

How many of us—with a difference—have been led astray with some form of Aunt Barrymore’s aspiration, the desire to be so very near the horse. And perhaps it is as well that her dream remained unfulfilled, as she might have found contact disappointing and the ambulatory stable disconcerting.

There were many birds on the lawn, and Aunt Barrymore stored crumbs in the pockets of her smartest coats. Robins, their red breasts thrown out, stood round like conceited men-servants in the first position, while she fed them with long indulgent fingers, a divine charity filtering through this humble act in which she made herself known in the breaking of bread.

As we sat and talked I could see the dim house on our right, all the windows flung open. Sometimes the Venetian shutters were drawn down, but more often I could see the tilted oval mahogany looking-glasses of the dressing-tables. It was certain that no modern influences had penetrated into that house, no black satin cushions or bacchanalian cretonnes, but I imagined half shut-up rooms scented from conservatory flowers in pots, sofas like biers draped with white sheets, and on the lavender wall a copy of

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a Correggio, inevitable trophy of some ancestral tour in Italy.

There was a servant who used to bring out tea. I used to wonder, since she lived there, if she knew the secret of the house, but youth and an ingenuous appearance did not suggest that Aunt Barrymore had any intention of domesticating a female Sherlock Holmes.

“And if people come to dinner how do you manage?” I asked once.

“They very seldom do come,” said Aunt Barrymore, who possessed humour on a very high plane indeed, “but when they do come ’Elp comes in. But every time ’Elp comes in her breakages nearly land me in gaol.”

Humour has many sources; the brain, the heart, and too often a well of bitterness. Aunt Barrymore’s sprang straight from the soul. In the midst of one of her most daring stories I would be perversely arrested, remembering that ancient and profound saying how, in spite of its rocky pilgrimage, the heritage of the soul is joy.

Into this inheritance, without any reservations in chancery, Aunt Barrymore had fully come. For the pains of the soul are so frequently its fears of its foes, envy, malice, avarice and uncertainty; and from the assault of such enemies

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Aunt Barrymore had escaped, as a bird from the net of the fowler.

She had a fine inner library of somewhat antiquated anecdotes touching the great forces which drive the universe, and now and again Aunt Barrymore did not shrink from the use of a word not generally found in the mouth of what we used to call, as children, "Lady come to tea."

Suffering bores gladly, she would carry on the most perfect mechanical conversation it has ever been my fortune to admire. Interest, sympathy, fitful surprise, all were there in the inflexions of the voice, though she was not listening to one word she was uttering, and her auditors were ignobly, if kindly, deceived.

As she sat on the bank talking of savouries, with mysticism floating in her blue eyes, a fool, I suppose, would have boasted that she grew intimate with Aunt Barrymore. Liberally she spoke about the war, Mr. Redmond, Sir Edward Carson, the price of bacon, her friends, and life in general, yet once outside the gate her very personality tricked and eluded memory. Small wonder that she loved birds, she was more fearful of approach than any bird; small wonder that she appreciated the triumph of watching them take crumbs from her fingers, she who all her

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days had never been able to bring herself to feed from any hand.

Just as she made it impossible to cross the threshold of her house, so with an equable gentleness she made it impossible to trespass into one of the rooms in her mind, where there must have been great silences she would not have broken, and dead faces from which she would not lift the sheet, and about those things which lay close to a hot heart she had raised a wall such as an enclosed order builds to separate its community from a cold and unintelligent world.

She was Irish. Did she not say that had there not been the Great War there might have been war in Ireland—and there might be yet? The fact that she had lived for years in England left her inviolate, uncorrupt. The foreign land had only accentuated the exile.

On yellow evenings, as she sat talking intimately to strangers amongst the first perishing leaves of an English summer, I felt her to be delicately protected by the racial insularity of a proud and distinguished people. More than that, I felt her to be an eternal and circular problem in herself.

If there were trouble in her house it was her own trouble, and she wanted no intrusion in the shape of assistance; and if there was sometimes

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darkness and distress behind her doors, I believe that she preferred the enemy within her gate to the friend without.

\* \* \*

In these latter days I have been back to Barrymore. The smoke of a huge bonfire was winding its way up the steeple of the church, where it seems more than possible that Aunt Barrymore may have been wasting her time, for the Great War continues and it has not prevented war in Ireland.

It was raining. The garden was folded away in heavy mists, and there was a slow sound of dampness dripping from the branches overhead. A solitary blackbird strayed across the lawn as if looking for a friend, and the windows of the house were dark and shut. Only, in the room which I knew to be Aunt Barrymore's, there was a light, but since the garden was now out of the question and the house forbidden, there remained nothing to be done but to pass on with a sightless hope that behind the curtains she might fare well.

*1916.*

## The Man with the Fiddle

**H**E capers through all time, all nations, and all romance, this man with the fiddle. I call him the man with the fiddle, for though he does not necessarily carry such an instrument, it is always his destiny to play that others may dance.

I first realized him before I could read, when somebody gave me a book of verses with illustrations. On one page was a picture of a wedding party. Hunched in a corner on a three-legged stool was the man with the fiddle, fiddling away while the bride footed it with the youthful bridegroom. The next page showed a deserted place, the guests departed, the bride away with her man, and the fiddler face downwards on the turf with his silent fiddle beside him. The desolation of this picture was more than I could endure; it worked that fascination upon me which an accident does upon some people—I wanted to run away and I wanted to look at once; and it is, perhaps, because of this early influence that

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I grew to recognize the man with the fiddle as a personage eternally linked to the poetry, the melancholy, and the pleasure of human life.

If we consider him we find him no obscure character, but one with whom we are all perfectly familiar. As long as any society exists it will make this victim, produce this actor of minor yet immense importance.

Though he commonly appears in the Georgian Highwayman's coat and peruke he wore in the picture of my childhood, we meet him at every corner and in every fashion in history.

In Ireland he plays a fiddle indeed, when the wooden chairs are pushed aside for the dance in some hovel where he stops an hour to shelter his rough head from the rain. In the Pyrenees he plays a pipe at dawn, and the goats shuffle after him with little hurrying feet.

We have seen something of him in the white and puckered face of the hunchback in *Sumurun*. We find him in modern fiction, and he moves across the stage in the problem play of the hour.

While others reap glory, he becomes something of a gossip, with his gazette of the week's events.

“ Pendant quatorze années d'avoir joué ce rôle  
D'être le vieil ami qui vient pour être drôle.”

He is a vagabond, an onlooker, and he is nearly



## The Man with the Fiddle

always poor ; all that he may gather is, as I have said before, that though he plays a secondary *rôle* it is one of immense importance, essential to the drama of existence ; and no festival is complete—or, indeed, possible—without his ragged presence.

Sometimes he is utterly benevolent, pouring out music for feet that ache to dance ; but every now and then he is malicious, and commits an act of violence, resentful that there is nothing for him on the Christmas tree of life.

What a fate ! To starve while others feast, to die of thirst beside the fountain—as Villon, who did nothing of the sort, put it.

Such a man I once knew well. He was not deformed, save for an appearance that was somehow slightly ridiculous, a shape alien to romance. He lived in London, in two rooms off Piccadilly, on as little as it is possible to live on like a gentleman—that is to say, without turning one's shirt-cuffs or washing the tea-cups in the bath.

I have heard it said that he was a snob, and perhaps it was true, but it is more probable that the accusation arose from the fact that he was as necessary to Mayfair as he was to South Kensington.

His landlady, who was one of the lean kind with a curled fringe and a flash of false teeth,

## As You See It

was the only woman who had ever looked at him with a moist eye, and it must be confessed that even she was dazzled by the rich friends and distinguished relations who waited outside her door in purring motors.

Husbands trusted him with their wives ; women told him everything ; and fathers at railway stations pounced upon him as the travelling protector of their youthful daughters. These may or may not be compliments, but he had never once experienced the luxury of being a peril.

I fear he went to tea parties ; nor did he object to being the only man ; it was, as it were, his *métier* to be slightly ridiculous.

At balls he was the first to arrive in the chill decorated room to support the anxious hostess, who clung to him as a fainting woman clings to a piece of furniture, and in the cruel dawn he hailed the last cab for the last guest.

At weddings, he was the person left behind after the rice. While relations shut themselves into rooms and slept, or hurried to the oblivion of restaurants and theatres, he stayed amongst the *débris* to see the tent taken down in the garden, the chairs heaped on vans, and amidst the sickly smell of soup and champagne, distributed stale sandwiches to poor children and faded flowers to hospitals.

## The Man with the Fiddle

When a death occurred he frequently did the things that other people shirked—bargained with the undertaker, saw the parson, and accompanied the corpse to the crematorium.

At Christmas he appeared as a clown twisted in a ribbon of shrieking children.

Young girls clung about him as if he had been a pet donkey, and, like their mothers before them, told him everything. Frightened boys came to him with their debts, follies in which he himself had never taken part.

He had an unflinching intuitive understanding of the weaknesses, the desires, the powers, and the sufferings of human nature. He was the confessor of the world in which he moved when it chose to be serious, just as he was its musician when it chose to be gay. But when the feast was over, and the lamps expired, he was the figure alone in the gloom.

One day he was found dead in his bed without one word to say how he went and what he thought about it all. He lay turned on his side comfortably, with the sheets in a little tent round his head, as a young boy sleeps who does not wish to be roused; he looked wonderfully youthful, determined, and settled.

The place was very soon smothered in flowers, and it was the landlady who attended to the

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last details. She sorted the wreaths, putting those which bore titles in the most conspicuous places.

Vigorous people stood round his grave ; girls whose lives he had shaped, boys whom he had sheltered from the parental tempest, women fretful to be back in life, with the Will-o'-the-Wisp "What is going to happen next?" forever dancing before them. On this occasion they were supers ; it was the first ceremony in which he had played the principal part, and a ray of sun, like a shaft of limelight, was levelled at him.

## Dropping Out



**W**ALKING through Belgravia early one Sunday morning I noticed an old woman, a crossing-sweeper, shaking from head to foot and holding on to a pillar-box for support. She rocked once or twice and then fell down on the pavement in a ragged heap. A young woman who happened to be passing dropped a coin, and in a liquid Irish voice, destitute of humour, told me she was going to church so that she could do nothing. Now London in August before eleven on Sunday morning is pretty well deserted. There was the old lady on her back, the support from Ireland rapidly retreating to the sound of bells, and no other help in sight. So I hied me to the police-station five minutes off and reaped two large policemen.

As we returned to the scene of the catastrophe we passed the time of day. I explained the corner, the particular crossing over which the old lady reigned. "Now I come to think of it,"

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I remarked, "she has always been there, only I never noticed her till to-day."

Then the policeman said a quite wonderful and memorable thing : "I know, I know. They are all over London. They stand there for years and years, and then one day they are not there and they are dead."

\* \* \*

I had only one-and-six, but the policeman did his work with courtesy. I know no more. Most of us follow the good Samaritan to the lifting out of the ditch, but how few of us make provision till we come again.

Life has taught us it is wisest to pass on—that the drunkard on his feet only too often steers once again for the tavern.

So, with the wisdom of St. Martin, we give half our coat.

But in everything, from the governing of a country to the baking of a loaf, it is the good Samaritan who is to be commended. For how many follow to the breaking of bread, how few to the carrying of the cross ; and it is he who sees the thing through to the weary and solitary end, who is really distinguished and worth while.

\* \* \*

"I know, I know. They are all over London. They stand there for years and years, and then

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one day they are not there and they are dead.”

It is true. They stand there for years and years, and one drops pennies into their hands just as one drops letters into a letter-box. It is only when the letter of one's heart is threatened with missing the post that one notices the letter-box: it is only when the crossing-sweeper falls down in the street that one notices that, like the pillar-box, he has been there for years and years.

At the policeman's words I remembered many of them. One whom I had to cut on principle, for had I acknowledged all his salutations I should have dislocated my neck for life. One, with a blue enamel plate on his arm, perched like a bird half-way up the area railings. One, a hump-back, whom before Democracy came in, our cook refused to have in to dinner on Christmas Day as she said "she must draw the line somewhere." An old apple-woman, who sat outside Kensington Gardens when we trundled hoops, an old woman who was so old then, that she was like the people one reads paragraphs about in the paper. And now that our children scoot up and down the Broad Walk, she is still there, and I doubt not that when their children play some game as yet undreamed of in the mind of

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Damage, that she will be there still, grown younger in a new shawl. And how many more of them with apples, with matches, with boot-laces we never, never buy, and they never, never sell ?

\* \* \*

They are not only all over London, but all over the world.

Last winter, six hundred miles away, I was in a large *Casa di cura* with many other exiles. We were like people thrown together on a limited island ; we ate together, walked together, were of much temporary importance one to another, intimate in the swift manner exile grows intimate with exile. Every week some one came ; every week some one left, and I think departure was more significant than arrival. Now and again one would wake with a faint chill round the heart because some one was leaving who more than passed the time of day, and another morning one would spring up elated because some one else was crunching off down the gravel in the old station 'bus.

And there were deeper tragedies. Sometimes a patient for whom nothing more could be done, smiling a little from knowing at heart that this was only the prelude to a longer journey, would totter down the steps in the early February



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sun. Often we would call him back to mind and wonder if he had yet handed in his ticket.

And, yet, again, a place would suddenly be vacated at our table, and no one would notice. Then some one would ask, "Who is missing from the chair in the window?" and the question would echo round the table. "Who has gone from the table in the window?" Then an observer would inform, "Don't you remember? The thin woman who did her hair on top. She was there for months and only ate macaroni."

Then all of us tried to remember the thin woman who did her hair on top and only ate macaroni. And, of two tragedies, this last seemed much the greater.

\* \* \*

I once heard a silly man remark to a nimble-tongued woman, "Partir c'est mourir un peu," and she replied instantaneously, "Mourir c'est partir beaucoup." Yes—to die is to go away a great deal, and it is mysterious to think that there are in this world persons who must die or fall down in the street before they manage to attract any kind of attention—persons who, as the policeman said, "stand there for years"; persons to whom we give pennies, and on enthusi-

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astic days shillings, who are suddenly not there  
and vanish . . .

“As shadows amid shadows we would watch the  
hour-glass,  
And at the dawn no ear shall catch the sound of  
souls that pass ;  
And silent as the shadows, as dreams in a lost  
night  
We shall go hence returning to the endless, endless  
light.”

Prince    ∩       ∩       ∩       ∩       ∩       ∩

**M**OLLY DURGAN flung open the window with that sense of exhilaration, that desire for a diviner atmosphere which often comes to those who have suddenly made up their mind after a period of indecision. The winter was past ; below waved the green mist of spring on the trees of Sloane Gardens, while behind in the light of an unnecessary fire glowed the purple cushions, violet-sprinkled chintz, and heliotrope carpet of Molly's little sitting-room. In one corner was the writing-table of a woman who considers herself busy ; invitations to lunch and dinner thrust into pigeon-holes, theatre tickets and patterns for new tea-gowns propped against vases of mauve anemones, photographs of lovely women with their bald offspring, and enthroned on a pile of new novels the ever-ready telephone.

Molly leaned her warm cheek against her hand and looked down at the taxis whizzing by below. Four—five—nearly six years married, and with some depression she added six years to twenty-

## As You See It

eight, which was her age when she became Mrs. Durgan. "It might be worse, far worse," she ruminated. "Thirty-four—it's nothing in our days."

Life had not always been like the mauve room in Sloane Gardens. Molly had grown up in Sophia Terrace, Brighton. The Penns had been considered very well to do, and they had sent Molly to a first-rate boarding school at Westgate. They thought all Roman Catholics rather disreputable, and all Low Church people dowdy, so they chose a High Church school for Molly. She had been, moreover, very carefully brought up, and a sharp and unquestionable line shown her between the things that one does and the things that one does not do.

In the summer the Penns moved to Folkestone for what they called "a change."

When Molly was eighteen she came out and went to every subscription ball that was given, and that year, while they were at Folkestone, Mr. Penn took her across to Boulogne that she might experience the Continent. More than one winter they rented a handsome house in Earl's Court; in fact, Molly had every advantage, and it was her own fault if she had one affair after another that came to nothing. It was one long unbroken procession of express letters, last inter-

## Prince

views, and first avowals, but somehow they all drifted, which was precisely what Molly intended them to do.

She had to endure ten years of subscription dances and as many summers at Folkestone before her deliverance came, and she was twenty-eight when Jock Durgan arrived at the Métropole to recover from an attack of influenza.

He was a huge loosely-swung young man, as good looking as it is possible to be without being offensive—jealous, simple, affectionate—and he was very much bored at Brighton until one evening he loafed into one of the eternal subscription balls, where he speedily succeeded in getting introduced to Molly.

Next day he went to Sophia Terrace—and the next, and the next. It would be, on the telephone, in the morning: “Hullo—are you there? Are you there? Is that you, Miss Penn? I am so sorry to worry you, but do you think you could possibly tell me of a place where I could hire a decent motor?” “A motor? Wait a minute. Father gave me an address only last week. I do believe I’ve gone and lost it—too idiotic of me—wait just a second and I’ll go and see.” “Never mind—please don’t bother. I’ll come round this afternoon on the chance of your finding it—you might perhaps be so good as to

## As You See It

tell the maid to give it to me. Good-bye ; so sorry to have worried you."

And round he came, and it ended in their going to Rottingdean in the motor together ; and they went and looked at the house where Mr. Kipling used to live and at the house where Sir Edward Carson used to live ; at the church with its three windows glowing in the narrow, dark chancel, and at the gallant figure-head on the flagstaff before the White Horse Hotel, and so back to Brighton by Roedean, the huge school on the bleak down looking like a small illumined mediæval city in the foggy twilight.

When throbbing occasions of this nature had continued for about a fortnight, one evening Jock went to dine at Sophia Terrace. After dinner Mr. Penn had to go and take the chair at a political meeting, and Mrs. Penn retired to the study to answer some urgent letters. Jock and Molly and the psychological moment were left alone.

She had one of those rather long noses which project very slightly from the profile, light eyes with irises that radiated like planets, and a mouth that was a shade—only a shade—underhung. Too many late nights in stuffy rooms, too many memoirs read in bed by candlelight, too many anxieties as to her future had left their mark ;

## Prince

she looked at once youthful yet worn—and this youth of the spirit warring with the weariness of the flesh can every now and then be hauntingly seductive. It was so in her case.

She sang several songs, a verse here and there, talking to Jock between while. They were mostly old reckless songs of history. “Here’s a Health unto His Majesty,” “Jock o’ Hazeldean,” “She is far from the Land.” At last she broke into another :—

“Will ye no come back again,  
Will ye no come back again,  
Better loved ye canna be,  
Will ye no come back again ?”

“I think that is for you to say,” said Jock, flinging an arm round the silken shoulder.

He could not pass examinations, and he found it hard to sit out anything deeper than musical comedy, but he did not make mistakes in this line—in this particular field he was certain of his ground. His arm tightened and he repeated again : “I think that is for you to say, Molly.” And as two patches of excited pink started out on her cheeks he kissed her with the happiest of combinations, ardour and experience.

The tears rained down Molly’s face—tears of impassioned relief. The Future had come.

\* \* \*

## As You See It

Jock planted Molly in the midst of his own people—first of all his family, and then the particular set which claimed him as their own. She was not one of those women who enjoy hostility and who do their utmost to aggravate it ; on the contrary, she liked to worm herself into people's hearts, and lie curled up basking in their appreciation. She completely conquered old Sir David Durgan, and after three days' criticism Lady Durgan took her to her large precipitous black satin bosom. She even got round Agnes, Jock's solitary and unpleasant sister, who spent the summer bicycling in Switzerland and the winter teaching morris-dancing to heavy children with noses like ill-regulated taps. As to Jock's "set," if Molly had desired a different world she had most certainly found it, and not being in a position to be critical she was not aware that it was not a particularly first-rate world. It was built up of persons who yearned to be in high places and who clung like barnacles to a number of people who had forfeited their heritage by doing something odd.

Amongst these people Molly trod delicately. At first they called her the little governess, but very soon she held her own, and six months had not gone by before she had picked up their jargon and their manner of life. She



## Prince

learnt not to pay her bills, to speak of her complexion as her "compy," to have it steamed, massaged, and talked incessantly about. One day she drank lemon to get thin, the next she was gulping down milk to grow fatter. It became a matter of real importance how Molly was looking. "I met Molly Durgan in Sloane Street looking about twenty, in a hat with pink wings," or, "I saw Molly Durgan lunching at Prince's and looking a hundred"—in fact she was always looking something. She developed that admirable capacity of being at death's door one week and going round the world the next.

As for country-house parties, she was the life of them. She hid hair-brushes and put wet sponges in people's beds, and rushed up and down the passages in a dressing-gown and a bow.

She smoked till she developed a cough; she played bridge after breakfast, and she collaborated with Lady Judith Taylor in a book that was banned by the libraries. She looked in crystals and saw fair women who were her enemies; and she looked at the lines in her hand and saw dark men who were her friends.

So much and no more.

"It is amazing," she would say sometimes to herself, "perfectly amazing how a middle-class upbringing sticks."

## As You See It

It took five years and Peter Hennessy to shake the middle-class upbringing. If Jock had been an apt pupil in the art of love-making, Peter, with natural aptitude and thirty years' incessant practice, had become a past-master. He was not as young as he had been—one knew that by the back of his neck—but he was still a fine figure of a man, with a blunt nose, and he was able to do and say a great many things which would have been impossible in the young men of Molly's former acquaintance.

Molly did not know this was because he was a gentleman, but she liked it all the same.

He was able to voice audacious ideas, to make startling suggestions and statements as if they were all the most natural and daily occurrences in the world—to turn over all the routine of thought, till Molly often imagined that she was mad and he was sane—and he knew exactly how to create that atmosphere of adventure and excitement which to some women is as stimulating as a warm bath. He met Molly in extravagant places—the South Kensington Museum, Kew Gardens, the National Portrait Gallery—and one day they warmed the sordid gloom of the Chamber of Horrors with the glow of a rendezvous.

Molly liked to motor down to Windsor and

## Prince

drop into the White Hart about tea-time all motor-veil and orchids, to notice the buzzing conversation flag in the lounge as every expectant eye followed her to her chair, and for Peter to follow in a few minutes, with an indifferent solicitude which seemed to say: "The world must think there is nothing in it, but there is." And Molly flaunted her *amitié amoureuse* in the infuriated face of the "set" who had often told her that whatever Peter's faults were he was a connoisseur.

The situation reached a climax one foggy November day after lunch in Peter's flat at Buckingham Gate. They had spoken less than usual, and the atmosphere was charged—great silences that refused to be broken kept rolling across their efforts at conversation. On the mantelpiece was a bronze replica of the Metal Pig which sits in the Flower Market at Florence wallowing in its own mire surrounded by little marshy reptiles of the under world—symbolical, perhaps, of heaven knows what bestiality in the heart of beauty.

Peter really put it rather neatly.

"You see, Molly," he said, laying one large, dry hand on the animal's bristly back, "I have always been one of those people who believe in going the whole *porcellino*"—and driving back

## As You See It

in the taxi he became persuasive and argumentative.

Then, quite suddenly, quite genuinely, he broke up and went utterly to bits. Molly was no fool; it would not have surprised her to hear he had done precisely the same thing fifteen times before in his life; nor would it have moved her less; an emotion is not necessarily less potent because it is recurrent.

He seized her hands till they were mutilated by the ostentatious rings she wore on nearly every finger, and he said all those things which every man of every country and every degree of intellect says at that particular moment.

At last he grew inarticulate, shooting out words here and there, fighting with his own impotency of speech.

“*Voyons, chère ange, soyez raisonnable.*” Now, if there was one thing she most certainly was not, it was an angel; and if there was one thing she most certainly was, it was reasonable.

The twin suns in Molly's eyes gleamed—she seemed to look far down the path of her existence at the ultimate issues of acts. As for the middle-class upbringing, it simply went down the stream like a straw; but she made no answer, and the taxi was pausing outside Sloane Gardens. “Ring me up—for the Lord's sake, ring me up, I shall

## Prince

not stir from the flat till you ring me up," he said on the door-step.

Jock had gone down to Stoke Poges to play golf, a thing he always did on Saturdays when they were not away for the week-end ; he would not be back till dinner.

Molly went to her room and powdered her nose and played with her front hair, which was parted on one side, and put on a pair of shoes which had been the source of a quarrel between her and her shoemaker. Her feet were not her strong point, and she knew it. "One has to be all the more careful over one's shoes," she remarked, as she put them on carefully with a shoe-horn.

And as she administered these sedatives her spirit glowed with triumph, adventure, and emancipation, the three things that were food to her being ; and passing into the little lilac sitting-room she flung open the high window, and rang for tea.

She was too absent-minded to notice the number of minutes that elapsed before Prince, the butler, staggered in with the loaded silver tray. Prince was always slow. He was a small, shabby man, with a strained expression, as if he spent his life—which, indeed, he did—carrying weights that were not heavy for him. Molly

## As You See It

had often longed for some one smarter, but Jock insisted on keeping Prince, for whom he had an inexplicable affection.

He began to make a clatter with the plates, to arrange poisonous little cakes, bread and butter sausages, when Molly interrupted him. "Another cup, Prince," she remarked, "another cup, please ; tea for two."

It is difficult to convey accurately what happened to Prince's face ; not a muscle stirred, but Prince had lived in the set longer than Molly ; half his lifetime had been spent in pouring out their wine, putting on their coats, standing in the rain whistling for their cabs, and he had nothing to learn. Over the skimmed milk of his complexion spread a faint illumination which was a subtle cross between knowledge and humour.

Prince knew. Thirty years of triumphant amours went down before that look, and nearly as many of Sophia Terrace lifted their moribund heads.

Never for one second before had Molly looked at adventure in the light that flickered behind that shoddy mask. Nightmares hurried past her, visions of pert maids hurrying down passages with letters concealed under their toy aprons. One by one she called them up, the tyrants—

## Prince

Reine—Louise—Marguerite—the confidantes of her friends, with that awful glint in their hard all-knowing eyes.

In the servants' hall they and Prince doubtless compared notes.

And there rose before her the parlourmaid in streamers who used to "maid" her in Sophia Terrace, rigid, correct, engaged to an undertaker in Hove; and suddenly, with passion, Molly hungered for respectability. She thought of Brighton, and how the family of Penn had always been well spoken of; she craved the respect of tradespeople, servants, and strange, unpleasant individuals in stiff clothes who might be tax collectors, house-agents, or commercial travellers.

\* \* \*

Waiting at the other end of the telephone, Peter became desperate. Three hours went by, and he wore the carpet to holes. At last he did what he had never done before in his life—an act which sadly gave away his departed youth—he ceased to scheme, to shape sentences and situations; and going out into the street hailed a cab and drove to Sloane Gardens.

Prince, his executioner, let him in.

Upstairs Molly was sitting quite comfortably on the fender seat, while Jock, who had come

## As You See It

home earlier than usual, was ringing up the Savoy for a table. The conversation was mostly between him and Peter ; Molly poked the fire and put in a word here and there ; and as soon as it was decently possible, Peter got away.

After he was gone, Jock knocked the ashes noisily out of his pipe.

“ Poor old Peter,” he said, rather thoughtfully. “ Poor old Peter. I felt a perfect brute for not asking him to come with us to-night. Of course, he’s had his day and all that ; but doesn’t it strike you, Molly, he’s getting a bit long in the tooth ? ”



Chris      ∩      ∩      ∩      ∩      ∩      ∩

SHE was most probably Christabel, but she elbowed her way to the front as Chris. Chris was written in diamonds across her vigorous little chest ; Chris appeared on a gold bangle that was always falling off ; and Chris was traced again on the back of a minute watch which was the admiration and envy of the whole dancing class.

All these trophies were prizes she had won at competitions for different accomplishments—some for swimming, some for writing, some for music ; she was simply decorated with proofs that she could do things better than other people.

She made her first appearance at Mme. Eglington's with her arms bare to the shoulder, and even at that early age I realized to some extent the beauty and intention of those extremities—just as I saw, in spite of all the cackling of the mothers who sat round the room like hens on a perch, that Chris was hopelessly, sweetly adorable.

“She has no features, no complexion,” they

## As You See It

said ; “ she will grow up quite plain ; besides, she will always have that *terrible* voice.”

As a matter of fact, she had no features. Her round face was rather pasty, and out of it looked two wide open green eyes, dreamy and bold at once—the whole thing set in a shock of silver hair, not curly, but on end like the ruff of a Persian kitten. She had beautiful legs in silk stockings, and black satin sandals strapped on to her ankles with silk ribbons.

One day she was all limb with a yellow sash round her knees, and another day she would be all skirt with a blue band under her arms.

Once she was in all black—not because her grandmother had died, but just out of mere cheek. She had then, and ever after, the rare gift of wearing audacious and versatile clothes with an apparent total lack of self-consciousness, of creating effect and sensation as if she was extremely ignorant of the fact.

Awful stories went about as to her doings in the dressing-room. She had thrown a glass of milk at her maid. She had whispered something terrible to Cora Beach, the peaky little girl from New York with a bow like a kite on the summit of her flaxen head.

Cora Beach became extraordinarily popular in consequence for a week or two, and every one

## Chris

wanted her for a partner in the round dancing, which was generally considered the best opportunity for conversation.

Chris was invariably accompanied by a lady, limp and sweet as a tobacco plant, who was addressed as Aunty Maud, and who exercised a mysterious authority over her charge. Though I often heard Chris excessively rude to her, I never saw her disobey her.

In the dressing-room officious mothers offered combs, scent, cosmetics, and Marie biscuits. Much as they hated Chris, they yearned for details as to her private life, and they battled for the chair next to Aunty Maud in the dancing-room.

But Aunty Maud was civilly uncommunicative.

As for Chris, one never got much out of her.

She would dash up to me and squeeze my hand, ask me passionately how old I was, where I lived, and how many plays I had been to, and then she would suddenly get bored, break away, and her green eyes resume their eternal dream about herself.

No one had been to so many plays till she put this favourite question to the actor-manager's little daughter ; that day Chris was in an impossible temper for the whole of the lesson.

## As You See It

Very soon she was showing us all how to do it; the bare arms were waving, the silk legs twinkling for our edification and example.

Needless to say, we were fit to be tied.

Lady This and Lady That were nowhere, and the little new-riches with opulent mammas learnt for the first time how the one thing that may sometimes conquer money is personality.

And we, the critical daughters of Terpsichore, who knew how the thing ought to be done, saw quite clearly how she did not really do it very well.

I cannot tell how it happened—she was hideously unpopular with teachers and pupils alike—but somehow she was always in front, always being shown off, always being exploited before everybody; without any visible effort the round elbows were for ever pushing.

It reached a climax when a charity play was to be given called *The Queen of the Fairies*.

It was a foregone conclusion that one of the little Jewesses would take the leading part, as their people would, of course, immediately buy up the first six rows of the stalls.

Again I cannot say how it happened—but in spite of the long purses of Israel, in spite of the concentrated hatred of mothers and teachers

## Chris

combined, Chris was Fairy Queen, with her silver skirt and her silver hair and a controlled triumph in those cat's eyes of hers.

It was a different Chris that appeared at the gymnasium some years later. The silver hair was smoothly parted and plaited into a rather skimpy tail behind ; it is true she fastened it with an unnecessarily large bow to try and pretend it went on underneath, but we soon discovered it did nothing of the kind. There was more colour in the round face, which positively gleamed with soap and health.

All vanities were abandoned. She wore a serge dress and an Eton collar—not quite like the other serge dresses, but similar enough not to excite alarm. Just a flat-backed, up-standing, jolly boy, as far as one could see.

She was, she said, engrossed in studies ; there was a French governess in the morning, an Italian in the afternoon, besides music lessons and Latin lessons and drawing lessons—lessons, in fact, in all those hundred and one things a girl never touches again after her first ball.

Aunty Maud was limper than ever—simply weighted down with satchels and lesson books—and Chris never accepted so much as an invitation for tea, for she had always a lesson of some sort or other on hand.

## As You See It

People began to collect courage—to feed Chris tentatively with crumbs.

All went well till a photographic interviewer came to take photographs of the gymnasium for a periodical. When the magazine appeared, everybody rushed to purchase a copy.

Chris was on every page. Chris leaping the parallel bars ; Chris vaulting the leathern horse ; Chris leading the march round the room ; Chris listening to the instructions of the gymnasium master with a bent and submissive head.

People grew nervous ; one or two questioned if the leopard could change its spots.

Then one incautious family—people who said stoutly that Chris had a good heart—asked her to stay with them at their place in Surrey. Rumours of a fearful crash reached us.

Darling Toby, who was doing so well at Eton, came home. Chris, they said, was just the bright sort of girl who would be up to everything in the holidays. There were sailing parties and bathing parties and cricket matches and picnics. The hoarse voice was heard bantering in the lanes—impassioned letters were discovered (and read) by the gardener.

Toby returned to Eton—where he no longer did well—and Chris returned to school.

\* \* \*

## Chris

When I next saw Chris it was at a Hunt Ball, and she was ringed about with men, clamouring for a dance.

She was quite beautiful. It was impossible to say how the pale, moon-faced little girl had managed it, but I suppose the beauty of children is generally one of colour and that of women one of shape—and shape Chris possessed—faultless, vigorous, Artemisian.

She was a regular ballroom girl, all white arms, wreaths, and energy, but the boy in her was still there, elusive and isolate, the hoarse voice rising and falling, rising and falling, and breaking into a rough wave, and she wore her ball dress and a mystery of spotless frills exactly as if they had been cricketing flannels.

She had not got one single cheap trick, or stock look, one reach-me-down gesture. I found it hard to believe stories, mostly of an amorous nature, that were circulated about her.

She had left Lady Venners' ball to drive round Regent's Park in a hansom with young Denis Morant at one o'clock in the morning—without so much as a wrap. She had gone to the charity ball at the Savoy as Columbine with no other chaperonage than Oscar Baring, the artist—and he had painted her just as she stood, pink wreath, pink tarlatan, and pink sandals strapped round

## As You See It

the ankles, just as she used to wear them at nine years old.

Mrs. David Danfield, Chris's greatest friend, whom the society papers called "One of the prettiest of our young married women," said she really could not have Chris staying with her any longer, and repeated outrageous things she declared Chris had said at her luncheon parties.

About this time Chris became engaged to Maurice Banner, quite a nice boy, in quite a nice regiment, but she chucked him three days before the wedding, and all the presents had to be sent back, except a few which Chris had rather prematurely sold, "because they were such utter terrors."

"She has done for herself now," said the mothers, "she will never marry."

Girls who have never been engaged at all may never marry, but one who has been engaged once is almost invariably engaged twice—indeed, her chances seem to increase with each experiment. When Chris was leisurely walking in the direction of twenty-five she married the inevitable eldest son.

He had the inevitable place in the country and the inevitable house in town; he had also the inevitable Father who could not last long, but who always does. He was a tall, well-set-up



## Chris

young man, a good fellow, but he had one of those unfortunate profiles which remind one of a fish seeking crumbs in the water, and when he was very much in love—which he most certainly was with Chris—his complexion went the colour of household soap.

Every one sent presents so that they might be invited to the wedding, and all the mothers were grovelling in the hopes that their daughters would be chosen as bridesmaids.

But Chris chose just the professional procession of that year ; Lady Althea Fayne, whose marriage on July 10 “ will be one of the most brilliant social functions of this season ” ; Daphne Fairweather, the daughter of the great actress ; Miss Rachael Samuel, the daughter of the great grocer ; and the sons of a Cabinet Minister tripped and stumbled and shed tears of rebellion over her train.

There was a photograph of the bride leaving for the church on her father’s arm, and a beautiful group of the bridesmaids, all with the right expression and all holding sheaves of lilies as if they were rocking so many babies to sleep.

In the pew I heard the mothers talking.

“ I wonder if he knows what he is in for ? ”

“ I don’t believe he is one quarter as rich as they say ; he is up to his neck in debt.”

## As You See It

“ Well, anyway, she’s settled at last.”

That is just precisely where they were wrong, and where I was wrong, and where everybody who had watched Chris for the twenty years was wrong. As for Auntie Maud, it killed her—the poor tobacco plant snapped and died.

Chris, the embodiment of intrigue, calculation, self-preservation, and glory, was destined to do the one inexplicable, insane, incredible thing—to take the one step that still removes women from the coveted front row of the chorus to the more or less dim ranks behind.

She left him, the young man with the agitated gills, left him without a word. Needless to say, she was not long alone—but that is another story, and not mine.

Chris forfeited forever the rich promise of progress, kicked aside the old Father’s waiting-shoes as if they had been the wayside leavings of a tramp.

I suppose she found that, after she had asked him how old he was, where he lived, and how many plays he had been to, she could stand it no longer.

And, looking back on her brief career of overwhelming influence and conquest, I believe this solitary act of uncontrollable violence was the secret of her power.

## Chris

There was flame in the crystal. With all her insufferable passion for Dead Sea fruit, her seagull perseverance in hovering over rottenness in general, her total lack of all that makes for heart and humanity, somewhere deep down Chris was worth while.

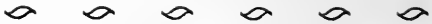
“And would you believe it,” said a mother, “would you believe it, he still adores her, and would take her back any day?”

Of course he would.

Chris lives abroad. One of those Latin civilizations which shelter the stranger who has done something wrong cherishes the zenith of her beauty.

Far away she is still calling in the hoarse voice—and the answer comes sure enough across the olives just as it floated in a Surrey lane so many years ago.

Shore



SEVERAL months of the war had gone by when I saw the depressing necessity of becoming a paying guest. An old friend bade me seek out Mrs. Morris. "I happen to know she has a room just now," said my friend. "Go and talk to her about it, it's the sort of thing I can't explain ; you will see for yourself. Take it from me you will be happy and may be comfortable, and, what is of far greater importance, you are quite certain to be enormously amused."

It was a soft day in early spring when I rang at Mrs. Morris's door in Chelsea. A patient figure in a thin apron opened the door without curiosity, and behind her some one came clapping down-stairs crying, "Hold the fort, for I am coming." It was Mrs. Morris herself ; there could be no doubt about that. She was a tall woman with square shoulders that had borne burdens and could on occasion reluctantly bear more. I wondered and am still wondering what her age

## Shore

was. She wore a Russian blouse smothered in cross-stitch and a necklace of crystal beads on a gold chain mingled with the red and blue cotton tassels that dangled from her neck. In spite of the fact that a broad smudge of black decorated her right cheek she had all the appearance of having that moment stepped out of a most scrupulous bath. She seemed at once independent and timid, for the colour glowed and faded readily in her face while she preserved some inner freedom, some weary liberation from the ordinary consolations and refuges.

Vaguely I mumbled my errand.

“ Oh, you’ve come about Shore’s room,” she said immediately, waiting for no explanation. “ Do please come in, please do,” and as I followed her up one of those staircases which lead to an experience not to be missed she talked incessantly.

“ It’s a jolly nice room though it’s so high, in fact it’s in the roof among the stars. It’s only a glorified attic, but a man who spends the greater part of his time underground likes to be high up when he gets a chance, doesn’t he? It’s always been Shore’s room, and now he has gone to the war I might as well let it. Of course he might come back any day, but on the other hand he might not. Don’t men treat one as if one were God? I mean whatever they do and

## As You See It

however far they wander they always seem to expect us to be waiting for them to come back. It must be a great compliment. Not that Shore's like that ; Shore's Shore."

I was often to hear her make this cryptic statement.

At the top of the house Mrs. Morris flung open a small black door. She stood back rather proudly and I looked into a room it was impossible to call empty.

"It's a nice room, isn't it ?" she said.

It was. The walls were papered with a pattern of leaves and oranges ; there was a brick-red lacquer cabinet that invited and held the sun, and the place seemed to smell of incense.

There was a tree of life covered with fruit and blossom worked in shining silks, and under it a script which drew my wondering attention.

"What in the world is that ?" I asked. "That script on the wall under the tree of life ? ' Il y avait la Sainte Vierge et y avait le roi ' ? "

Mrs. Morris put her hands through two mysterious slits in her blouse which evidently eventuated in the satisfaction of pockets.

"Au temps qu'on allait encore aux baleines, si loin que ça faisait, matelots, pleurer nos belles, y avait sur chaque route un Jésus en Croix, y

## Shore

avait des marquis couverts de dentelles, y avait la Sainte Vierge et y avait le roi," she read.

"I just put that up because that's Shore. He likes all the sort of things I like—the north of France, processions in the street, fishing nets, the sea, *Les Jésus en Croix*, modern French poetry. But he cannot live without things I don't care a blow about—*Les marquis couverts de dentelles*. See? He's not one bit a democrat, Shore, not one bit, and it sums him up splendidly. 'Y avait sur chaque route un Jésus en Croix, y avait la Sainte Vierge et y avait le roi.' Do you know who wrote that?"

"No, I haven't the remotest idea."

"Thank God! I like some one who knows nothing; it is so restful. You are going to adore Shore's window," she went on, putting aside the scarlet curtain. "You can spend hours looking out of Shore's window." I could believe that. Beyond a tall tree that was breaking into bud, between two brick walls I could see the river towards Cremorne, sometimes silver, sometimes grey, but to-day frankly golden, with the great barges swinging to the loose tide.

"Many ships go up and down," said Mrs. Morris. "Sometimes they distract one terribly and then they obscure the view across to the other side. You see the chimneys, the factory

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chimneys ? To you they may seem squalid, but you would not believe how beautiful they are at sunset ; more beautiful than distant churches. It is the chimneys and the barges one loves in the long run. Like the poor, they are always with one, though for a short time in the summer they are hidden by the leaves ” ; and it was the view out of Shore’s window that crystallized my fluid imagination and decided me to take up my abode with Mrs. Morris.

Very early Mrs. Morris used to get up and turn on gas rings. She could not, she declared, stand the charwoman before breakfast.

At ten the Lady of Char did or did not appear. If she failed to turn up Mrs. Morris would say, “ She’s at the World’s End, I know she has gone to the World’s End, she’s got a great friend at the World’s End.”

“ It’s the kind of place where one might need one,” I remarked, but Mrs. Morris would be beside herself. I soon discovered that the non-arrival of the char was the great classic tragedy of Chelsea. Indifferent as she seemed to fate of lover, friend, or kin, the perfidy of a char would toss Mrs. Morris into a frenzy of sympathy with her dearest enemy. She would fall on the neck of the deserted, dripping succour like honey. “ Do let me help,” she would say, “ let me do



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the shopping, I make glorious soup out of onions and potatoes, I do macaroni like nothing on earth. Maria taught me in Florence. I can polish the floor, but I can't do the bath. I can't do that, it's the one thing that kills me."

Never shall I forget when Verveine Ragg, a friend in the next street, lost her lover and her char on the same day. Mrs. Morris spent the night on the sofa in the house of loss:

"The lover, that was nothing," she told me on her return next morning, "one can replace that any day, but the char, and such a char as Verveine's treasure! She was the only one in Chelsea who really left the sink clean."

There was also a diminutive male char who was in great request; he cleaned windows and performed all manner of Alpine feats on window-sills that put the weaker sex to shame. Considering his fame it is wonderful that any woman ever contemplated standing for Chelsea. He bore the name of a poet that our youngest critic would hardly turn down, and Mrs. Morris swore there was a distant relationship.

Mrs. Gibbs, our own particular char, was deaf, "an advantageous infirmity she shares with my confessor," Mrs. Morris had stated on our introduction. Mrs. Gibbs wore a claret-coloured cape which one nervously felt might conceal almost

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anything, and she hung up on the kitchen door a hat like a disease, which she told us she had made on brown paper.

Though she was deaf she used to sing. Many a time when she was scrubbing the floor I have heard her optimistically asserting, in the words of a rightly popular song, that "There was a good time coming for the ladies," and I indeed hoped that when the occasion came round Mrs. Gibbs would not be excluded from this anticipated carnival. She had a passion for cinemas, and it appeared she had a friend at court, for she told me that one of the proprietors of what she called "the movies" was an enthusiastic vegetarian and used to give her a free pass for a couple of beetroots and a lettuce.

Mrs. Morris never looked at a paper herself, but she took three for Mrs. Gibbs, a daily, *The Chelsea News*, and a Sunday popular.

When Mrs. Gibbs left in the evening, even if one happened to be alone, she would turn round and say "Good-bye All." That was the adieu of every right-minded char in Chelsea, and that is how Mrs. Morris came to be called All by some of her friends.

At eight Mrs. Morris came into my room with a bowl of foaming chocolate and a roll. She invariably said she had not a moment to spare

## Shore

and then sat down on my bed to talk for an hour. Her conversation was disjointed, dashed with unorthodox brilliancy, full of places where she had been, of people she had seen, morbidly intense etchings of her many friends. I think she actually visualized faces and situations as she spoke, and heard again words out of an eventful past.

“ You seem to have had a great many people in your life,” I remarked.

“ Too many ! ”

“ You seem to have loved a great many people.”

“ Too many ! ”

“ For a woman who understands something of literature I never heard any one twist the English language into such tortuous sentences as you.”

Mrs. Morris laughed from rather an unholy well of mirth.

“ Ah ! ” she said, “ that has been useful, very useful. That’s how one really says it in the end.”

“ Says what ? ”

“ What one means to say.”

Sometimes she quoted Shore, and the quotations were whimsical and significant. He was evidently a tribunal.

She assured me when I came to stay that she never dined out ; I can hardly recollect an occa-

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sion when she dined in. She lived at cinemas, music-halls, and little local restaurants, and when she was very hungry she went to the Radnor in the King's Road, "because the fried potatoes are just like what one buys outside the Fair at Boulogne." Sometimes, in silk stockings, long light gloves and taxis she went off West to lunch with relations or go to the opera with rich friends. This was called being a Perfect Lady.

"You do not understand Chelsea," she complained one day. "You are like my relations who think me poor, but here I am Such as do stand. Poverty in Chelsea is when you cannot pay for the cinema, when you cannot afford a meal, when you have to walk to the Town Hall to knock a penny off your 'bus fare. Of course I've been in low water, but these privations are comparatively unknown to me. You know you are most awfully nice, but I don't find you very quick on the uptake. I understand the people up West, I come from them. I understand the people down here, I live with them. I understand the World's End and I understand the Ritz, but you don't seem to understand anything at all. Up West the women have lovers because they can't afford to live without them. Down here the women don't have lovers because they can't afford to live *with* them—see? Where

## Shore

love is, licit or illicit, with or without the ring, there finance is also, and if you don't make money out of love, love makes money out of you. Dreadful, you think? The great immutable laws are not nearly so dreadful when one faces them. It's the same with religion, and that's another kind of love. I often wonder what religionists feel when they are shouting at the top of their voices that they long to be nearer to God and some one comes and shakes a brass plate under their noses. You may pray, but you must pay. No, you don't see, you don't see one bit. You belong to the blind heaving mass of tadpoles who are so eternally strong because they never have, never will understand or see anything."

I must have looked somewhat disconcerted, for she passed over my ruffled head the hand with which one conciliates a faithful dog, saying, "You're all right. You're a good sort, you wouldn't let one down. Only for some people life, like Jesus of Nazareth, passes by."

It must be confessed that the financial basis of Chelsea was original. Mrs. Morris kept her money in an old biscuit tin and counted it several times daily. I discovered other people did the same. When they came to their last penny they dropped in to see if there was anything doing, and how-

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ever poor they were they seemed to be able to give each other handsome books.

There were people who came in motors, people who came in taxis, people who came in 'buses, and people who came on foot to save the 'bus fare. There were people who rushed in breathless and bare-headed and people who came from afar in furs and clean gloves. There were people who read Macaulay and people who read Elinor Glyn. There were people who made speeches on platforms and men who only lifted up their voices in the security of a domestic audience.

Next door lived a great golden stupid creature who slept on a sofa in the sitting-room and who used to emerge from a casual toilet in the kitchen with a result any duchess might have envied. She was over fond of what Mrs. Gibbs called "the pleasures of the table," and her beauty, which might have been impeccable, was marred by that slackness about the jaw which is the too vivid memory of a delectable meal. She used to sit to artists as a favour, and to walk on with a wreath of violets round her honey-coloured hair in an oriental turn at one of the big music-halls. Her conversation, totally devoid of humour or intelligence, was a well of joy for Mrs. Morris.

"You should really (reelly she called it) come and see us," she told Mrs. Morris. "We come

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on at 9.30 just before the performing seals. There are ten black slaves with fans as well as fifty white ones with cymbals and lyres, and I have a lovely dressing-room with three other girls—reel ladies—we always stick together. It was a little difficult about the blacks at first ; they are rather unpleasant ; we didn't like them. But now they dress with the seals, so that's all right."

She had an enthusiasm for respectability, and was just as full of adventures in which she had been treated as a reel lady as girls of the world are full of adventures when they have not been treated as such. Eventually she married the rich and only son of a Bristol merchant, a young man with ideals, who felt he was rescuing a lily from a dunghill.

In the same house as the golden one lived a colt-like girl who smelt of the moors and made one think of the Raggle-Taggle gipsies. To her Mrs. Morris was devoted.

A bit of a girl used to come folded away in a limp black cloth cape. She carried enormous boxes and one day, I knew, the wind from the river would blow her away. She lived, she told us, on *crème-de-menthe* and a sardine, and her appearance fully justified this diet.

Mr. Snapper came. He was tall and thin

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with a narrow, shiny dark head. He was like a pre-war match dressed in stiff clothes. He used to sit with his elbows on the arms of his chair joining and rejoining the extreme tips of his immaculate fingers. Soon he came no more. "I simply had to turn him down," Mrs. Morris told me when I remarked on the sudden cessation of his visits. "It's a thing I hate doing to any one, but I just had to. He is desperately clever and academic and scientific and philosophical and all the rest of it. In fact, he has reduced life to a sewing machine. He seems to think he will impress one by stitching a couple of sheets of expensive notepaper into his waistcoat—slips aren't they called? It's like wearing spats on your chest. And they only succeed in making him like a sidesman. One expects him to present a lectern to the church and come round with a jingling plush bag and disturb one's best thoughts.

"I simply can't bear his ideas about women. Of course, one knows the poor devil has got it hot from some one at some time, but it's not permissible to take it out in some ways."

"All your friends are not so particular?"

"Aren't they? You make no mistake. That's just what you don't know. All my friends are particular, very particular indeed, or they wouldn't be my friends. I don't mind him



## Shore

thinking, it's not that, it's the *way* he thinks I hate. All men sooner or later. . . ."

"Disgusting."

"That depends entirely on the man. You have evidently been unfortunate in your experiences."

"Now, All, no cheek." If one lived with her it was absolutely obligatory to make this condition occasionally.

"Well—to return to my Snapper. Would you believe it, he is writing a pamphlet on the 'Abandonment of Women in Love,' I find it hard to credit from any personal experience. One hates to be unpleasant, but I was forced to say I knew nothing about the abandonment of women in love, but that men in love were like the people who refuse to go below in a rough Channel crossing."

"No wonder his visits have ceased."

"He will never, never come again, and that is such a blessed thought."

There was also Suggie. He used to bring an enormous white bull dog which answered, or rather did not answer, to the name of Tasso. As Tasso proceeded upstairs, a metal collar like a gaol gate sunk in the dowager wrinkles of a throat which seemed tormented by chronic bronchitis, it was as if one of the lions from

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Trafalgar Square had come to tea. He would bound into Mrs. Morris's trembling lap while Suggie would cry in a voice which inspired no confidence whatsoever: "Down, Tasso, down at once."

Mrs. Morris explained Suggie.

"Dear, dear Suggie. He lives over the sweet shop, and the sweet woman loves him so that she gives him chocolates for nothing. He looks as pink and white as a May-day lamb, but some people will have it that he's a Satanist. I don't know what's a Satanist. It's not a subject I have studied."

I looked at Mrs. Morris steadily, and her challenging gaze fluttered under my regard. She moved uneasily; she could never endure to hear her friends criticized.

"Well, what's the matter now?" she asked sharply. "Hasn't Suggie paid his baker's bill? Doesn't he fold up his clothes before he gets into bed? Does he use a whisky bottle to prop his Bible with?"

"There are some people who would be better and safer under the earth than above it. You might as well give buns to the people on the Embankment as try to give Suggie a hand."

She suddenly softened and turned on me eyes of a weary, tangled intelligence.

## Shore

“ But Suggie is one of the people on the Embankment of life. That’s just what he is, but I am not at all sure that it is not he who gives me the buns. I think the Embankment of life must be very educative, they know such a lot, those people. Yes, it is all wrong, they have no business to know ; effortless and lazy, doing impossible things, you still feel they would go straight to heaven if they died. It’s a question of light. We know so little about light. However valuable it is, light alone seems to be no use, yet nothing can be done without it. What use is it to have seen the promised land if you have no bricks and mortar or industry with which to build in it. Yet the people who have the bricks and the mortar and the accursed energy cannot build because they have not seen ; darkness hangs round them like black plush curtains. It’s practically always like that. I suppose one day there will come some one who has seen the promised land and who knows how to build.”

“ That will be a great day for you.”

Mrs. Morris looked out of the window at the beloved view. For a swift moment she shone like a frail hope ; then the slow heave of a long sigh lifted the crystal necklace.

“ It will. It will be a great day for all of us.”

“ Did Suggie and Mr. Snapper ever meet ? ”

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“No,” said Mrs. Morris. “I have been extraordinarily lucky over my friends. I mean just one or two never have happened to come in while I was talking to a Government official. I myself feel there is room in the world for them both, but I don’t expect everybody to be so catholic.”

It is necessary to have experienced Mrs. Morris’s friends to fully appreciate the flavour of this statement. Mrs. Morris had no secrets, but I have found the deceptions of others more illuminating than her easy honesty. There was no back door to the house and no key to any drawer or room, and when I first came I complained of this lack of privacy.

“I never knew such a house. Everything comes to the front door, and there’s not a key in the place. How can you get along without keys?”

“Because I can’t get along with them. Besides, what have I got to lock up? I am not Pierpont Morgan or Gilles de Retz. As to the door—if you don’t like it you can go. One knows where one is when everything comes to the front door.”

One day, as she was stirring a chocolate pudding on the gas-stove, she spoke more definitely of Shore.

She thought he might be coming back.

## Shore

“ And you will go and meet him ? ”

“ Meet him ! What should I be doing meeting him ? He’s all right to see off, but impossible to meet.”

“ How is that ? ”

“ Well, to begin with, it takes quite three days to get to know him again, and by the time you are in step he has to go off, and he just drops you like a greatcoat he finds too heavy to travel with—so,” said Mrs. Morris with a most expressive movement of the shoulders.

“ He sounds the most uncomfortable sort of friend to have.”

“ As far as comfort goes I find him about the most comfortable person I have ever known in my life.”

“ And where does the comfort lie ? ”

“ In wisdom.”

“ There are better things than wisdom.”

“ I am glad you have found them,” said Mrs. Morris.

My gaze travelled over her face in which every feature contradicted the other. It rested on the tidy mouth, where the lower lip managed to be a shade heavier than the upper one, and to thicken slightly at moments with some memory or hope that gave the lie to a total detachment of which I sometimes fancied she liked to boast.

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“ I suppose he thinks the most awful lot of you ? ” I asked.

“ Of me ! Gracious no, why should he ? I’m all right when I’m in good form, but he is never nice to me—never—it would give me seven fits.”

“ I should have thought that sooner or later anybody would have been nice to you.”

“ That is precisely where you and an extensive legion of fools have been and always will be mistaken,” replied Mrs. Morris.

“ And you ? ”

Mrs. Morris faced me, widely, transparently. It was obvious my question bewildered the scattered fragments of what I soon discovered to be, behind everything, a very orderly mind.

“ I ? I’m glad to see him—it’s one of the best things in life. He knows exactly what I mean. Where others crawl he gets there on wings. But I don’t feel it quite like one does about other people, you know ? Not quite as one ought to—properly—here,” said Mrs. Morris, putting one sticky hand above the capacious pocket of the check overall.

“ Yet sometimes you seem to think there is no one in the world like him ? ”

“ There is no one in the world like him—not in the least like him. When I find some one who is I shall write home about it.”

## Shore

Letters used to come from Shore, long letters in a beautiful neat handwriting. They were duly answered by Mrs. Morris in a huge scrawl across a packet like a portmanteau. Most of Mrs. Morris's correspondence used to be tossed into the fire before she could possibly have grasped the contents thereof, but Shore's letters used to lie about for a day or two for the appreciation of Mrs. Gibbs.

"That is since I have read 'Towards Democracy,'" replied Mrs. Morris when I remonstrated. "The poor thing has so few pleasures. Unfortunately Shore's style is obscure."

There came a day when we heard that Shore was not getting his letters, and this news revealed a Mrs. Morris I had never calculated for or with.

Her face literally grew thin as one looked at it, like that of a starved kitten in a back garden, and her eyes sank into her head like dead violets.

That morning she, who cultivated the enervating habit of two hot baths a day, had no bath at all. She dabbed powder over the sad wreckage of her face and folded her half-dressed body in the nearest garment from the nearest hook—a melancholy old black opera coat bordered with tiger skin.

Late that evening the bell rang and I ran down anxiously and opened the door. Mrs. Morris had

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come back, and with her, neat and tall in blue serge, with storm-coloured eyes in a cream-coloured face, Mrs. Willoughby. I knew what that meant ; they had been to the Soothsayer ; they always went to the Soothsayer together.

The Soothsayer was very old and lived at Kilburn, and Mrs. Willoughby carried French memoirs under her arm, for the diversion of whosoever remained outside the consulting-room of the oracle. She always accompanied Mrs. Morris on these occult pilgrimages, and Mrs. Morris said she had a good appetite and a sense of honour.

Mrs. Morris dragged herself upstairs. She was gibbering with exhaustion, and sprinkled generously with mud and snow. She had been to the War Office, she had wired here and telephoned there, she had been to see every one and any one she hoped might prove of any use. And at last, in despair, she had fetched Mrs. Willoughby and they had gone to the Soothsayer.

“ I have spent the whole day in a taxi and I have spent so much money I shall not be able to go to Chelsea Palace for a month ; you simply will have to pay me in advance. And the Soothsayer was not really in good form. Of course it's always rather glorious—rather like the doctor. You pay ten bob and they talk of



## Shore

nothing but you for half an hour. But to-day I did not get what I wanted, and now I shall starve." And, tired beyond human endurance, she began to cry in a snivelling kind of way, wiping her eyes on the old fur cuff, complaining into the sleeve, wishing the earth was over her, cursing Shore, cursing life, saying she was fed up doing all the spade work, helping people out ; when was some one going to do something for her for a change ? And thus she was so funny that she made me positively hysterical, so lonely that I burned to approach her, but as I put an arm round her heaving shoulders I felt her whole quick body stiffen against sympathy.

"For God's sake don't try and console me," she cried, looking at me with eyes so strained that they seemed to belong to some one who might go blind. "You can't console me, you don't know the truth and I do, and the truth is bad, bad as it can be. Distressful thoughts from somewhere are giving me pains like knives through my brain. Nothing can stop them till the trouble has passed. They are a certain testimony that something has gone to wreck in the inner circle of my life."

Sure enough, in a week or two, her accursed letter wandered back much the worse for wear.

After this cerebral crisis she was ill in a manner

## As You See It

which terrified me, but which she took perfectly quietly. Virtue seemed indeed to have gone from her and left an empty shell. She was for a few days unable to speak, move or think, and though after that she revived a little she was far from being her normal self.

“I’m often like this,” she declared. “It will last about two or three weeks. I think I take it out of myself a bit.”

It was small wonder.

The Chelseaites turned up with divers cures.

Morgan, a tall girl like Galahad in a fur cap, arrived with an enormous black bottle under her coat.

“What you want is a bottle of medicine,” she declared. “It’s brain fag—that’s what it is. I had this for a sore throat and it did me a power of good.”

Mrs. Morris took the black bottle gratefully. “How beautiful you are, Morgan,” she said, “I have never seen a woman so beautiful. What does it bring one to be as beautiful as that?”

“Not much,” said Morgan.

Next came she of the sardine diet with a new-laid egg and a pork pie in a string bag. Mrs. Morris went into raptures over the pork pie and said it was the only food she could have looked at, while the girl clung to Mrs. Morris’s green

## Shore

sweater with her little claws and interrogated the wan face.

“Lord,” she exclaimed, “what is the matter with you, All? You do look an undertaker’s hope. Your poor little face is all to pieces, and why will you insist on wrapping your corpse in that green sweater. What you want is a bottle of fizz.” That was her remedy, and she suggested others at which Mrs. Morris pleaded weakly, “Stop it, stop it, I haven’t a kick in me, and if I laugh I shall die, and I’ve spent the money I had saved for the funeral on a box for the opera.”

The child slammed the front door, and from the window I watched her struggle with the wind at the river corner. Her cape billowed out like a great black wing behind the white dress which beat against her apology for a body, and she reminded me of some light-breasted, dark-winged sea bird.

The gipsy girl followed in the evening with some yellow chrysanthemums drooping over the arm of a coral smock. Later, a chicken and oysters, came out of the West like young Lochinvar.

One wet evening a little untidy man with broad uneven shoulders and flickering blue eyes called. I had never seen him before, and to my

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surprise Mrs. Morris seemed to know him quite well. She removed his wet coat, gave him a cup of hot tea and addressed him affectionately as Horace.

As she knelt on the hearthrug holding the damp wet sleeve to the fire, regardless of my presence, he took her hand and kissed it.

“That coat,” he said meditatively, “once belonged to a Cabinet Minister.” He left nothing behind him but an evening paper and a smell of pipe, and in three weeks he called again at the same hour in the same inclement weather and historic garment, leaving once more behind him what I felt to be his only possessions.

Had he made a will I am certain there would have been nothing more to leave.

Mrs. Morris did not recover rapidly; she remained in the top room huddled up under the Tree of Life.

It was Christmas-time, and a spray of precocious white lilac drooped its precocity over the oak table at her elbow.

The young man, the very young man from America, used to “come around” as he called it, at tea-time. Sometimes he lived at the Ritz and sometimes he had to borrow half-a-crown. He had been in love with Morgan; he had been in love with pretty nearly everybody.

## Shore

He and Mrs. Morris were for ever reading poetry, and one evening I found them at their usual occupation.

Mrs. Morris, not satisfied with her invalidity, had allowed a rusty pen-knife to slip and cut her hand, and the young man was tying up the damage with a beautiful large handkerchief from Piccadilly. Mrs. Morris went on reading as if nothing had happened. Now and again she stopped to exclaim, "Now that's a rotten line and a half if you like," to which the young man would reply, "I consider it quite the best line I have ever written," and in spite of this running pugnacity they never seemed to quarrel permanently.

"In spite of everything," she said, "he is like Gringoire, '*tres peu voluptueux au fond.*' And I like that too. I think he must have been brought up in some wonderful wide country full of wet young trees. I think he must have walked in the rain without a hat.

"That is just because he is an American. He comes from a young country. You never quite lose the feeling that they once sat outside a tent in the rain, and some of those things which humans do well to dispense with were washed away for ever. That is why I hope they will come into this war. They have often

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enough wanted our age, but now we want their youth.”

“You are for ever getting people to tell you their adventures, yet you never seem to take any interest whatsoever in that side of life,” I remarked, ruminating on her last nebulous statement.

“Oh, go along, you tire me. You’ll make me say in the memorable words of Mr. Wilkie Bard, ‘Haven’t I been night porter at the Hotel Métropole for three years?’

“He’s very generous,” she went on, “very generous. It was he who gave me the crystal necklace. I did want it so badly. I’ve lost so many things and given so many others away, and I have often had to go without the naked necessities of existence, but it is astounding how I manage in the end to get the things I starve for.”

Mrs. Morris slowly unfastened the crystal necklace on its golden chain. The bright beads, cool, clean, sparkling, slid through her fingers.

“Isn’t it perfectly lovely? It’s not quite a necklace, it’s a rosary. You would not understand. It’s divided into decades, there are big beads and little beads, and it’s made up of mysteries—mysteries of life and death. There are sorrowful mysteries and glorious mysteries.

## Shore

Some people think about the sorrowful ones and other people think about the glorious ones. It's a matter of temperament—don't you think ? ”

“ I noticed your crystal necklace the first day I came to the house. It's the first thing I noticed about you. It did not seem quite to fit in with the rest of your get-up.”

“ A good many have thought that. I love it ; I shall be buried with it. I don't wonder that some people see visions in crystal—do you ? It seems a good, a safe medium for life to pass into.”

Mrs. Morris leant forward and put her arms along the oak table. She was growing paler and paler from some desperate exhaustion, but she would not stop talking. Between her cold fingers the crystal rosary trickled like drops of dew, and she re-arranged the precocious spray of white lilac. At her touch one or two of the frail blossoms scattered themselves on the dark wood, and the faint scent, like no other scent in the world, met the warm air of the low room.

“ I don't know how it is,” I said, “ but lilac at this time of year makes me think of death. The flowers are so white that they are nearly green ; the leaves are so green that they are nearly white.”

## As You See It

“ With me it is just the other way. It makes me think of life. I know I ought not to have it now it is so horribly expensive, but one goes without so much, and to me it is never so beautiful later on. You find that a little morbid ? I am so sorry. It is hopelessly extravagant, but I find it so hard, almost impossible, to live without it. Isn't there, for some of us perhaps, a form of extravagance which is permissible ? Of course the white lilac might have been turkey and plum pudding. I know that ; but there is the recklessness of the precious ointment, and though most Saints come to us canonised for their several economies, one at least comes to us canonised for her extravagance, carrying between her lavish hands the expensive instrument of her particular passion. And let me tell you this. If we were to spend in one second all our heritage out of the past, all our tremulous hopes for the future, we could never buy anything precious enough for the feet of life.”

The interlude of sickness, and of gravity that was the outcome of this sickness, passed, and once more the house echoed with the biting word and laughter indifferent to censure.

A month or two later Mrs. Morris came into my room with an orange envelope stuck in her black belt.



## Shore

“Shore’s wounded,” she remarked casually as she put down my breakfast by the bed.

“Wounded? Not badly, I hope?” I exclaimed, starting up.

“Very badly. He may get well but he may not, one never knows, does one?” and she went on pulling the curtains aside and letting in the weak light. I watched her for a little, then I asked :

“Why were you in such a state over that letter while you are perfectly calm over this disastrous news?”

Mrs. Morris had a gesture of impatience. “How do you know if it is disastrous news?” she answered—she so careless of speech suddenly using the word in its literal sense. “His leg may be broken, but for all you know his sky may be full of stars, and he may yearn to die with his face turned to them. You may be perfectly happy with a broken leg and consumption of both lungs, and unspeakably miserable if a letter does not arrive that is full of things you are panting to know—things all, all about yourself. Shore’s awfully fond of Shore. Dying doesn’t matter, it’s how one dies that matters. Living doesn’t matter, it’s how one lives that matters. Shore knows that, in spite of *Les marquis couverts de dentelles*.”

## As You See It

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I say. Shore knows in spite of *Les marquis couverts de dentelles*; he knows everything, though the *marquis couverts de dentelles* are perils for the soul. It's easier for me. Mine has been a rough road—the high road, but it had brought me to a place of liberty, an open common where one can breathe. But it's dreadfully difficult for the people who are comfortable to see the truth. It's going to be dreadfully difficult for Shore. That is why there are days when I am so sorry for him, days when I would do anything for him in the wide world.” There gathered in her eyes tears from some spiritual anxiety that no physical wound could have called up from a heart now so disconcertingly cold, now so inexplicably tender.

As the spring unfolded along the Embankment Mrs. Morris went westwards more frequently in pale grey and taxis. She took great care of herself; was faintly rouged when she felt tired, faintly powdered when she found herself over robust; her hands were manicured, her hair waved, and there was spotless lawn round her neck. She went to the Berkeley grill, she lunched with people who lived in the correct situations and walked in the park afterwards.

## Shore

She even went so far as to buy a parasol, which she unfortunately left in a taxi next day. She was exultant ; she walked as if there were wings on her ankles.

“ You seem to be on the top of the wave,” I remarked. “ Have the gods given you a blank cheque ? Has anything new come into life ? ”

Mrs. Morris laughed.

“ ‘Perchance she droops within the hollow gulf  
Which the great wave of coming pleasure draws.’ ”

“ It’s coming, I always know, but by the time it arrives I shall most probably be in rags. Get the shouting over first ; I anticipate a bit. Just the same about grief. I do the crying a month or two before the catastrophe, like the White Queen. I always meet destiny on the other side of the bridge.”

Then suddenly she wearied. She went west no more, but spent her days wandering dreamily about Chelsea in an old blouse and rush hat.

The months drifted on and Shore did not return.

“ He might come in June and he might not,” said Mrs. Morris. “ He might never come again. He might go back to Ireland forever.”

“ Why to Ireland ? ”

“ Because that is where he comes from, and the

## As You See It

people who come from there have a way of going back."

"That would be a tragedy."

"It would—for him."

"And you?"

"For me there are no tragedies any more."

It was May, and we were up in Shore's room. There was white lilac everywhere and Mrs. Morris was cleaning my silver. There was no kind of necessity for her to do this; she did it badly, and Mrs. Gibbs, who was drinking cocoa and reading her Sunday newspaper downstairs, would have done it far more satisfactorily. It was one of those days when Mrs. Morris seemed drunk with superfluous energy. She sat on the oak table, her hands thrust into the protection of titanic gloves, rubbing the back of my brushes for all she was worth, and I remembered how though there had never been any obvious barrier, though I had had cheerful access to her at any hour of the day or night, we had never for one moment been truly intimate. She had always remained on the island. I had always watched from the mainland.

"It will soon be a year since I came to you," I remarked.

"It will."

"And the time has come for me to go."

## Shore

“ Sooner or later,” said Mrs. Morris, “ there comes a time when every one has got to go.”

“ I leave you on the brink of a second spring. I have seen you in summer and I have seen you in winter, I have seen you in winter and I have seen you in summer, far and near, here, but not beyond—I have seen you miraculously calm and I have seen you abandonedly distraught, frenzied with life one day, moribund with inertia the next. What is it makes you all things to all people, yet for ever alone ? An exile everywhere, yet at home in every place. Crystal and lilac we many of us love in due measure, but they are not a basis for life. What makes you clean my silver while Mrs. Gibbs lazies in the kitchen ? What makes you still buy white lilac when you have split both seams of that most disreputable pinafore ? ”

Mrs. Morris put down the polishing leather and rolled the ridiculous gloves into a ball. She stretched out both her arms as one crucified to show me the full damage done to her old cretonne jumper.

It was very mellow in the little room. Three broad, soft bars of sunshine slid in through Shore's window, and myriads of atoms danced in the light.

They danced round her bare head, round her

## As You See It

extended arms, round the glittering beads of the crystal rosary, and in the brighter bar that struck her across the heart their dance was frenzied.

It would have been difficult to say if she was the giver or the recipient of this spinning vitality ; in either attitude she was equally defenceless, equally strong. She could not help it. It was none of her doing.

Quietude folded her like the arms of love itself. I, who habitually approached her as one nears the area of a storm, crept across the room as one creeps towards a pool.

“ Good-bye,” I said, with a tight, dry desolation in my throat, “ good-bye, All. But before I go, tell me just once what makes the whole bally thing worth while ? Is it worth while ? Do you know ? Does anybody know ? Does nobody know ? Not even Shore ? ”

Mrs. Morris looked out of Shore’s window. A luminous day brooded like an angel over Chelsea, and the river was transfigured in a white and trembling light which changed the sordid landmarks of odoriferous factories into the beacons of a beatific and continuing city. A flight of hungry gulls shot into the air to be lost to sight ; a battered sail drifted by, and a fierce little tug tossed up small waves round the imperturbable permanency of the anchored barges.

## Shore

“It is perfectly incredible,” said Mrs. Morris, as if she were talking to herself, “perfectly incredible how those little tugs fussing up and down distract one. I suppose they have got to be, though they keep on ruining the view. But the barges remain. The white lilac falls, one may lose the crystal rosary in the street any odd time, and sooner or later everybody who comes has got to go. But the barges remain. Like the poor they are with us. They are faithful; they forgive one spending for the feet of life, as they swing their own length with the slack tide under the fugitive lilacs of Battersea Park; and when one comes back from sleep, disaster, or a holiday, they are still waiting below the eternal chimneys across the water.

“It cannot be said that light perpetual shines upon them. Anybody who has lived here knows that it is not so. For days, for weeks, sometimes for months they are lapped in gloom, but now and again on such a day as this, they dream in the sun.”

“This may be rhetoric, but I don’t see what any of it has got to do with Shore.”

Mrs. Morris turned a merciful but uncomplimentary eye upon me.

“But you see Shore would. That’s what makes Shore, Shore.”

Be With Us Still    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

NOW the hot world charges ; make  
Round our soul a quiet lake ;  
Guard the bridge—if bridge there be  
'Twixt the land and such as we.

Let us only know and hear  
Voices unrevealed but clear—  
Voices that we heard of yore  
Calling on a nameless shore.

Ancient friends, be with us still,  
Wind and rain and heath and hill,  
Pool and pine and patient herd,  
Startled beast and winging bird ;

Wizard spaces in the shade,  
Blasted patch the gypsies made,  
Haunted pond and hollow bell  
Tolling where the cattle dwell.

Beacons waving by the sea—  
Strains of errant minstrelsy,  
Angel forms with fearless faces  
Passing to their native places.



## Lucy Angel : A Christmas Story

**L**UCY ANGEL gave no one dreams. That was the tragedy. She had grown up Lucy and not Angel, having none of that charm which, though it brings inevitable suffering in its wake, brings also colour, fire, and adventure.

At twenty-five she had been earning 25s. per week, at thirty-five she was earning 30s., and she knew well that unless some crisis occurred to disturb the natural current of events that another ten years would find her in much the same position.

Her long, fair hair was wound round one of those peaky little faces that some tedious mould seems to turn out in thousands on our London streets, and her hands, which were like those waxen models one sees in reliquaries, were always dancing over the typewriter. But she was a perfect lady. She always "ascertained" instead of finding out, "commenced" instead of beginning, and rolled up her "serviette" and put it into a pink celluloid ring; and in these elegan-

## As You See It

cies of expression she found a consolation like faith.

Also, she had a great desire to travel; that was another elegance. "I know where the money will go when my ship comes in," Lucy Angel would say. "I shall travel; I just long to travel." She inhabited a lodging-house in Bloomsbury with a girl called Doris Basset, who was looked upon as something of an heiress because an aunt allowed her 10s. a week, and Lucy Angel was perpetually bullied by the landlady in a subterranean way as she was known to have no "private means."

The only thing that really inspired respect for Lucy Angel was a rabbit-skin coat. She had saved up and bought it at the ladies' dress agency, and she always alluded to it as "me furs." On cold days, when pennies were too scarce to put into the gas stove, Lucy Angel would crawl into bed and spread the comfortable glory of "me furs" over her shivering limbs.

She was quite unadvanced; quite early Victorian. She did not belong to the cheery crew who extract powder puffs and perform an open and unabashed toilet in 'buses. She had never read *Love's Coming of Age*, or got beyond the picture on the cover of *Three Weeks*. Vaguely she had heard of Mr. Wells as a wicked novelist

## Lucy Angel

and Mr. Bernard Shaw as a licentious play-writer.

It was impossible to disturb established beliefs in Lucy Angel. There were no shadows for her. Paris was a sink of iniquity somewhere in France ; England a *Nirvana* of safety where women cooked red steaks for men and pushed babies in perambulators.

She had that pig-headed, immutable obstinacy which is the salvation of this race, and had you told her that men had been known to be faithful to women in France and false to them in England she would simply not have believed you. It is as hard to calculate the greyness of such an existence as to imagine the distractions of a contemplative nun.

Just as one finds a streak of fire in one of those countless pebbles on the shore, so the trait which had prompted Lucy Angel's mother to add Angel to Lucy had left a vein behind in her daughter. For she had one vice ; one source of excitement ; one door open to romance. Lucy Angel "told the cards." Upstairs in the "bed-sitting" Lucy Angel was for ever telling fortunes, and her waxen hands fluttered incessantly over the sixpenny pack, worn thin and shiny from constant shuffling. This gift—and it was a gift, for she had a distinct psychic tendency—gave her quite a little position.

Ivy, or "Oivy," as she called herself, the

## As You See It

general, who was got-up on Sundays in a mob-cap, and looked for all the world like a white rat with a paper-bag on its head, would come up to hear what Fate had in store for her ; and Doris Basset, the lady of means, would feed the gas stove with pennies for hours ; while even the widowed landlady, Mrs. Croad, would emerge like a mole from underground in hope of a second and less alcoholic husband.

It was the cards that foretold the coming of the dark young man. Lucy Angel met him at a tennis party at Putney. Of course, she knew him at once. He also was a perfect gentleman ; he also "ascertained" instead of finding out. He walked home with Lucy Angel, and in half an hour ascertained all the little there was to know about her.

He was, he said, a journalist, and, wonder of wonders, he, too, longed to travel ; when his ship came in that is where the money would go, and he insinuated he would not care to travel alone.

Lucy Angel used to take a little home-work to make extra pocket-money, and next time when she and the dark young man met at Lyons' over a cup of tepid cocoa he read her some of his work.

"He's one of your brainy, highly-strung men—all nerves," said Lucy Angel to Doris Basset

## Lucy Angel

in the evening, with that ancient gloating of the woman over the intellectual.

Once he kissed her under a tree in Kew Gardens. It was not really very thrilling at the moment, but as she lived it over and over again it grew to be a memory of flame.

Night after night Lucy Angel sat up typing the dark young man's articles for nothing. At last she fell ill, and she had to sell the typewriter to pay the doctor's bill. Manuscript kept on pouring in from the dark young man, and she wrote and told him what had happened. She received no reply, and, like every amorous woman since the world began, she thought the letter must have gone wrong in the post.

She wrote another, but she never heard anything more until she saw his death in the Roll of Honour—so complex is human nature—and the long silence stretched into an eternal.

It took Lucy Angel some time to recover the dark young man. It was the cards that served once more as tonic to her flagging vitality.

This time it was a legacy—"a death in the family that would not cause pain."

Six weeks later Aunt Aggie, a terror with a secure income, died, and left Lucy Angel a gold watch and chain, a garnet ring, and some furniture that might have added to the comfort, if

## As You See It

not to the embellishment, of the "bed-sitting." But through some error in the will the things had to be sold, and the result went back into the estate, which was inherited by a son with a good business at Norwich. This was the second time the cards came true.

The world was not going well with Lucy Angel. Her boots were inadequate, and the constant rain gave her chills; her umbrella was like a starry sky, and she could not afford that coveted luxury of the office girl, a mackintosh. She took a week's holiday, and found she never knew how tired she was till she attempted to rest. For a long while the cards had been unpromising and monotonous, but just before Christmas they became more hopeful.

Now Christmas had always been Lucy Angel's lucky time. Aunt Aggie had once given her a five-pound note at Christmas. "A great change" was close at hand; "a new place of habitation"; "an end to the present condition of affairs"; "a long journey." Lucy Angel floated through the crowded streets of shopping women with the look of the people who sat in darkness and saw a great light.

It was Christmas morning that Oivy knocked at the door and received no answer. Oivy was surprised; it is not often the office girl over-

## Lucy Angel

sleeps herself; but, after all, Christmas comes but once a year, and, just as the Latin races celebrate festivals by getting up earlier, the Anglo-Saxon observes them by lying in bed.

Oivy knocked a second time, and a third, but as the silence continued she opened the door.

The whole room was pervaded by a sweet smell not at all like a lodging-house smell. Outside the bells were ringing, running after one another joyfully.

Lucy Angel, her fair hair strewn over the hard, grey pillow, was lying flat on her back with a new and austere face that Oivy had never seen before

“Me furs” were thrown over her feet, the cards were scattered all over the honeycomb quilt, and her waxen fingers were outspread as if to protect her last hope. A single red rose was dying in a coarse tumbler on the mantelpiece.

This was the third time the cards came true.

The “great change” had come, and Lucy Angel, who had longed to travel, had gone a long journey.

## The Dream-Ship : a Christmas Fantasy

WHAT can you bring to me, bright ship,  
from far lands fraught ?

What can you bring from forest-heart and  
hills ?

Muscateles with sashes and bunches of ripe  
thought,

Little prayers in clusters and oranges in frills.

What may you bring to me, sun ship, from  
southern lands ?

What may you bring to warm and comfort  
me ?

Apricots in silver, and angelica in strands,

And a plump round pudding with a little holly  
tree.

What do you bring to me, gold ship, from  
distant wharfs ?

What do you bring to light this sombre room ?

Snowdrop in her coffin, and the seven brown  
dwarfs

Wreathing red roses round her crystal tomb.



## The Dream-Ship: A Christmas Fantasy

What will you bring to me, dark ship, from bitter  
times——

Bring from a country that turns away her  
face ?

An old tree, a sweet tree, a tree of silver chimes,  
An olive-branch of plenty : set it in its place.

Oh, what shall they sing to me, good ship, for  
Christmas Day,

With fiddling and with piping as they steer  
in from afar ?

A song about a people who found the Shining  
Way ;

And one about a Shepherd ; and one about  
a star.

Then what will you bring to me, happy ship,  
from Otherwhere ?

Bring ? What I always bring—holly hip and  
haw,

A little plaster Christ-child with roses in his hair,  
Asleep beside his Mother on a bed of straw.

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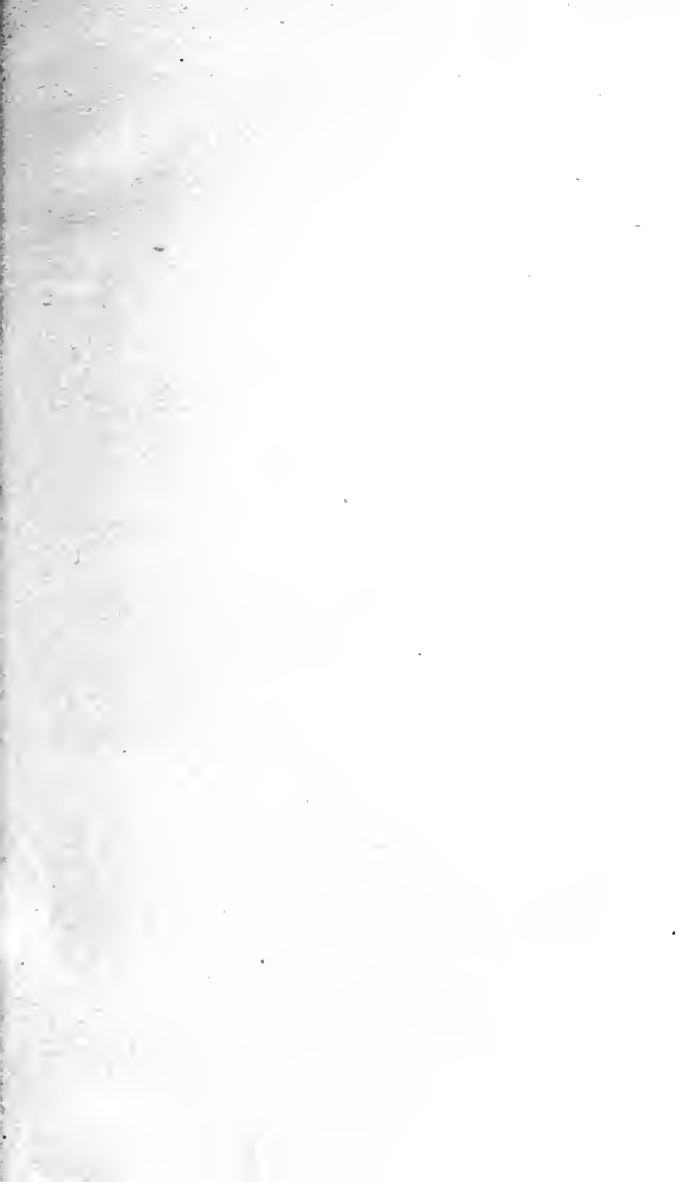
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