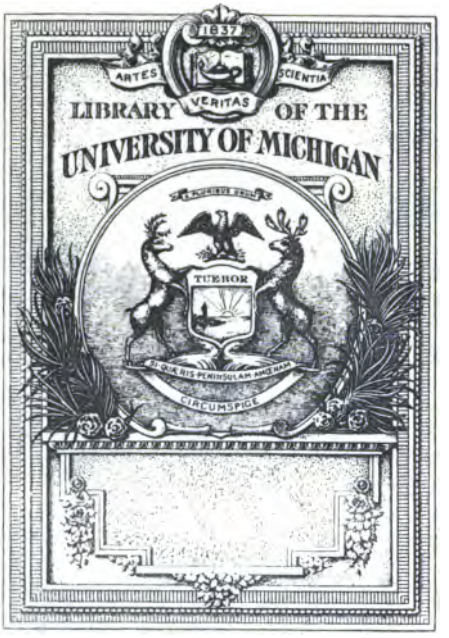

Compliments of Hans Latis

Edna Bagley Underwood

FAMOUS STORIES
FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Other Books by Edna Worthley Underwood

SONGS FROM THE PLAINS

SONGS OF HAFIZ
Translated from the Persian

FAMOUS STORIES FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES

TRANSLATED BY

EDNA (WORTHLEY) UNDERWOOD

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CONTENTS

DEDICATED
WITH ESTEEM AND GRATITUDE TO
PROFESSOR CALVIN THOMAS
SCHOLAR AND LINGUIST

THE LITTLE BLANCHEFLEURE

By RUDOLF HANS BARTSCH

BARTSCH

RUDOLF Hans Bartsch is the Austrian writer who won the attention of world critics so quickly by the three books—*Vom sterbenden Rokoko, Elizabeth Kött,* and *Zwölf aus der Steiermark.*

In Vellhagen and Klasing's Monthly, Dr. Carl Busse says of him: "Because he is such a creator—by the grace of God—while all that he writes is so genuine that it seems to have come from some divine source, we love this Austrian writer. No story teller of to-day surpasses him in depth of contents, and charm and grace of surface. Few possess such natural gifts."

The story we give is from *Vom sterbenden Rokoko,* a book in which he paints powerful and delightful pictures of the 18th Century.

THE LITTLE BLANCHEFLEURE

My friend Fräneli Thaller from Solathurn, was telling me about an old picture.

From the second hand dealer, Hirschli, by the Hafnersteg, I bought a picture of the little Marquise Blanchefleure, who, with a great part of the French nobility—in that year of bad taste, 1792—lost her charming head. Here in the picture she has her head; and that head has a high coiffure, and astonishingly arched eyebrows—just as if they had been drawn by the brush of Watteau—and a merry looking little face. She is charming, and she fills my heart with longing.

You do not know anything about the little Marquise Blanchefleure, do you, who was always right? You do not know anything, of course, do you, of the ridiculous passion of my great grandfather, the Swiss, Thaller, whose portrait in enamel hangs just below hers, nor of the foolish actions of the Jacobins, those people devoid of all taste and charm?

No?

Well, the little Marquise Blanchefleure was always right. She was right to come into this world as a duchess. Remote blood of Savoy—although somewhat far down in the list of rank of Versailles—but still she was

a little duchess, who one day would blossom out into the merriest Marquise in the Court of the King. She was right that she was better than all other creatures in her father's castles, villages and estates; better than the music and dance teacher, the overseer, peasant, maid, ass, ox, serf, and all else that was there. She lived laughing and merry, and the world bent before her beauty and splendor. Just as the wind sweeps over grain fields, making them bow and bend, so crowds of people bent before her; *compliments en mille.* She was right to marry Marquis Massimel de la Réole de Courtroy, over whose stupidity the court laughed so that he became indispensable to the king, and was always present at his *lever* to ensure good humor for the day. She had lovers in plenty, men rich enough to gratify all the caprices of a Blanche-fleure.

Her laughing habit of command is illustrated by the following incident. Every one knows that in the French army it was forbidden—under penalty of death—to sing the *kuhreihen.* The reason was because the awkward German children of the Alps—when they heard it sung or played—would either run away like a herd of cattle, or die of homesickness.

Zu Strasburg auf der Schanz,
Da ging mein Trau'ren an . . .
Das Alphorn hört ich drüben wohl austimmen,
Ins Vaterland muszt ich hinüber schwimmen,—
Das ging nicht an.

And my great, great, grandfather, Primus Thaller, sang the *kuhreihen* in the midst of the streets of Paris! He stood in the courtyard of the Swiss barracks, where the sand is yellow and glowed in the light of the setting sun, and where the soldiers were getting ready to go into the city. This was the way it happened. He had just received a letter from America, from his brother Quintus, who was six years younger, and had been a drummer boy in the regiment of the Prince of Orleans. It was the typical letter of an eighteen year old boy who wrote enthusiastically of Lafayette, Washington, Freedom, and the rights of the individual. Young Quintus said that the Regiment of the Lilies would return to France; over their heads were invisible, prophetic tongues of fire, which, in France, would burst out into a great conflagration, great words; Freedom! Equality! Fraternity!

Great words? Freedom, equality? Then my poor, lonesome great grandfather thought how all this had existed in his own home country for hundreds of years—in Appenzell, from which village he had come with the hope of winning fame and gold. And he thought how they were bringing these ideas from America, across the sea, to proclaim them new and world astonishing, while in his own little home village, they flourished quietly. The great laws of the human race are cause neither for a great intoxication nor a great jubilation. They represent merely a careful estimating; for the great mass of humanity they are meat, bread, shelter, hearth, a little sunshine, and green

grass, or hard labor, that the beast of destruction may sleep in safety.

In his home in Appenzell, they already had that which they whispered so carefully in Paris. He thought of his circumspect uncles, their cows and calves, their fields and Alps. It is surely the Paradise of the human race, my dear Switzerland, thought the sergeant—and—thus deep in thought, without knowing what he was doing, he sang the *kuhreihen.*

There it was and done for.

The news from America had put more rage into people's hearts than my honest great, great grandfather Primus could estimate.

For a long time discipline in the army had been neglected. There were men of his own country in the regiment, and a dozen joined softly the refrain of my great grandfather's song, so that the *kuhreihen* rang far and loud. No one had sung it before for decades, and therefore no one had been punished. But now it sounded quite differently than in the olden days. Not a song of exile and homesickness! No; now it was a song of defiance. They reveled, and shouted the song. But although my grandfather stole away when he saw they were destroying the spirit of his song, and although only a couple of Appenzell cow-herds ran away and deserted, he was the one who had started it. They arrested him. According to law, he must be punished with death. The death penalty was about the only thing that bound the subjects to their king in those days. I do not know of

course whether it is the same way in other countries to-day.

It was the King's duty to revive the punishment of the old law. At his *lever* he thought earnestly over the fate of my great grandfather, Primus. When the Marquis Massimel de la Réole de Courtroy approached him laughing merrily he said: "What shall we do with this fellow, Primus? He has brought into fashion an old piece of stupidity." The Marquis did not really know about the subject of conversation, so he said impulsively: "Sire, if it is a question of fashion, why not turn it over to my wife to decide?" The entire court laughed, and His Majesty, who was an agreeable person, laughed too. He had procured delay—which was pleasing to him—so the fate of my great, great grandfather rested in the charming hands of the little Marquise Blanchefleure, who at that moment was tying the ribbons of the morning cap of Marie Antoinette. The *lever* of this enchanting, frivolous Queen began an hour later, but the Marquis, as husband of his wife, and messenger of the king, was already there. In the meantime he had informed himself about the case of Primus Thaller, and explained it to the Queen and the Marquise. Madame Blanchefleure clapped delightedly her little hands. A Swiss! How charming! I beg the handsome King of France to give him to me, to build a Swiss dairy for me in La Réole, and an Alp, and get me some dappled cows.

The Queen laughed and agreed.

"He must get some real cow-bells, a grey coat with a red waistcoat, a shepherd's hat, and blue ribbons the color of the sky. In June our Imperial Majesty will visit La Réole, and then, on top of the charming Alp which he has built, we will make him sing the *kuhreihen,* so all can hear it. Is not that true, beautiful Queen?"

The merry, frivolous Queen laughed and agreed, and the King pardoned my great, great grandfather, who had been the cause of such a joyful occurrence. Then Herr Primus had an audience with Madame Blanchefleure, in order to thank her for his life.

He had proved that he was useless as a soldier. He appeared before her in the little round hat, and the peasant clothes of Appenzell. Because of her curiosity and excitement over the situation, Madame Blanchefleure had cold hands and flaming cheeks. When the pitiful, awkward, grey figure of the poor cow-herd was ushered in, her breath stopped. She had pictured to herself a powerful revolutionist and popular agitator, whose words were flame, and here came a little commonplace law-book of citizens' rights; good, honest, quiet, a regular—"You give me that and I'll give you this."

Can you make a guess as to what Madame Blanchefleure did? When he entered and said to her with great sincerity: "It was good of Your Grace to turn your attention to a poor fellow like me," she looked at his face, because his clothes and his personal appearance were so unimportant. He had our grey, keen eyes, an honest, narrow face; high temples, thin nose;

only youth gave a sort of gentleness to this unpleasant Cato-face. He was so unshakable and self-centered, that ten measures of wine could not change him, nor falling in love, nor the political upheavals of a period of revolution. He stood in front of her as the very symbol of reliability, with his two little legs spread wide apart—an old habit of the Swiss—inherited through generations. But she observed this commonplace little face and thought:

"I'll bring him to the point where he shall say of me: *elle me fait troubler.*" This was the standpoint from which she regarded men.

"But listen to me," she began amazed, "you! You have sung? But you do not look in the least like it."

"I can not sing. I just came to thank you."

"Then how could you sing your *ranz de vaches?*"

"Oh—it just came—from the inside of me."

"Were you homesick?"

"No; I only just thought that Appenzell was better than Paris."

"Good heavens! And you want to go away from here? What have we done to you? You are slighting us. We, we love you Swiss. You are the honest little mirror in which we see ourselves just as we are. O please say something rude to me!"

"I can't! I don't know you well enough."

"O—then you don't know Paris very well. How is it possible that no one has fallen in love with you here? In Paris—everyone is loved by some one. Even soldiers have sweethearts.. How can it be that our pretty children and women have not said a good

word to you about Paris? You have a sweetheart, of course? Or you have several? Perhaps you have too many?"

But my good great grandfather had no sweetheart in Paris, although he was a sergeant. He always wanted one with a blond, sunny face, and that kind he could not find here. The eyes of Parisian women are twinkling stars shining over secret street corners; they always lure one around a corner. My great, great grandfather always walked straight ahead.

That he said to her, but of course in the better language which my honorable great grandfather spoke.

"Good Heaven!" declared Blanchefleure, "how could one make up to you? Perhaps I should try if I were not married."

Poor Primus lifted his astonished grey eyes and looked at her, in order the better to penetrate the meaning behind the silk and ostrich feathers, glittering clothes, and gilded furniture. He looked deep and earnestly into the charming, tender little face, so expressive of unmixed joy, in the gay, opera setting from which it looked out.

He began to feel sad because she was married. She really resembled a sunbeam.

"Can't you say anything at all?" begged Blanchefleure.

"Krüzigts Herrgöttli!" stammered poor Primus.

"You say you might have tried it with me?"

"What?" she questioned delighted.

Then he spoke French again. "You ought not to play any jokes on a poor fellow like me."

"No, of course not," she laughed. "I was only going to say that it's a misfortune for us both. Just think! I haven't any real sweetheart now, and I'm just as deserted as you are."

"But haven't you the merry Marquis?"

"Why I'm married to him!" she almost sobbed, so convinced was she of her own misfortune. "Can you understand at all—you who are from Switzerland where every one chooses as he wishes, what it means to be born a Princess and to be sold according to appraisement?"

"*Ei, ja,*" nodded Primus. "With us in Appenzell, no peasant who owned fifty cows would give his girl to a peasant who didn't own so many. That is good for the family."

"How is it?"

"Keeps them from becoming poor."

"Are you very poor?"

"If I hadn't been I wouldn't have become a soldier."

At this moment the little Marquise asked Herr Primus, if he would like to set up a dairy for her in La Réole—like those in his home, in Appenzell. My great grandfather twirled his round hat in his hand and fought the sternest battle of his life. His honest Swiss mind was interested in just one thing, how much gold he could get. Twice he began, looked up in the gay, sunshine face, and for the life of him, could not get the question out of his mouth. So he said yes without any conditions. He had even forgotten his Swiss reckoning in this charming interview.

It would have been all over with him in Paris the first of May in the year 1789.

* * * * * *

It was lucky for him that he never saw La Réole. Then a quiet tragedy would have passed over him and no one been the wiser except Madame Blanchefleure, who would have found it all very amusing. The terrible, prodigious Revolution prevented Madame from putting her charming plan into execution.

That great Lord, Marquis Massimel de la Réole de Courtroy, enjoyed the distinguished honor of having his head cut off, immediately after the amiable King, which occurrence—no matter what scorners may say—cost him his life. This act was one of the proofs of the equality of all men, because the Revolution said so. Madame Blanchefleure in spite of the sweetest of tears, together with hundreds of the friends who had idled with her in those golden gardens of Versailles, was imprisoned in the dungeon of the Temple, along with the flower of the nobility of witty, elegant France. Professors, academicians, fashionable painters, enchanting poets. In fact the choicest spirits of France were here. A company composed entirely of men of noble birth, of men of distinguished career, whose important heredity made them dangerous—(The Revolution had a sharp eye for just such people). An assembly such as only could be found in France—grace, wit, charm, superior habits of living.

It was a glorious thing, the way they amused themselves here, and the way they went to death. Madame

Blanchefleure was as much at home with these distinguished spirits, as a butterfly which one shelters in a hot house from the cold of winter. The death sentence transforms commonplace people into sad figures of tragedy. But these people—the most finely constructed the world has ever seen—played it through like a comedy. They met death defiant and brave, with head erect—*en rococo*—just as they had lived.

And now about my great grandfather, Primus Thaller! Since that first of May he had not been able to forget little Blanchefleure, with the flower face. He thought at first that it was just gratitude on his part, and carried her picture about as a monk would the likeness of the Virgin. The great Revolution swept away, along with impertinent, merry Versailles, and the old nobility, every vestige of the plan for the dairy at La Réole. But the little Marquise remembered about honest Primus Thaller who nearly lost his life because of the ancient decree. He became an officer, a captain upon the spot. He was assigned to a regiment, all whose distinguished leaders had been killed, and in their places saloon keepers, errand boys, and street urchins had been put; in fact all the distinguished do-nothings who had been elevated by the Revolution. He did not feel very comfortable, but he took the money and that pleased him. But he kept thinking all the time: "I wonder what has become of little Blanchefleure?"

Then he heard that the Marquis had been beheaded, and that the little widow was in the dungeon of the Temple awaiting, perhaps, a similar end. Ah!—at

that thought the winds of freedom began to riot in his heart! Now he knew that he was in love with her. Now she was a widow! Now she was poorer than a cow-girl of Appenzell; now he could marry her.

This logic surprised him as much as a mole hill in a meadow where the bees hum. His brother, who had once belonged to the regiment of the Prince of Orleans, did duty as watchman in the Temple.

"*Du Quinteli!* is there with you imprisoned a young woman who wears a flowered silk, and three ostrich feathers in her hair?"

"No," replied Lieutenant Quintus, who had once been drummer boy. "I haven't seen any one like that! But perhaps she has taken off the flowered silk. What's her name?"

Primus told her name and Quintus began to ponder.

"I know her very well—a tidy little woman who said to me one day: "The Americans do not understand anything of our fine life," and as I was about to tickle her under the chin, thinking I knew something about it, she said: "A man has eyes and a dog has a nose, and that I was not as good as a dog. From America nothing good can come."

Just then a noble gentleman, Vicque d'Azur was brought into the Temple. He had let the soldiers drag him along just any way, but now he heard the two brothers talking and declared:

"That is true—and it goes still deeper. One can despise this French Revolution, but one can not help but be afraid of that cold, American, little-shop-keeper way of thinking. A mind capable of forecasting facts

might indeed make this prophecy: The cultivation of Europe will perish one day because of this shop-keeper thinking of the United States. Because of this unfortunate apeing, we shall become just one of America's intellectual colonies; not much better than Greece since Mummius destroyed inelegant Rome. Our artists will become like those old ones—able only to wave broken wings of longing. The Americans will then visit with a holy abhorrence the ruins of our life, which was much too fine for them. Europe was original for the last time in May 1789." When he had finished speaking the soldiers shoved him forward.

"Friends," he said gently,—"I do not need any suggestions from hostlers," and disappeared within the dungeon of the Temple.

"What does the fool mean?" queried Quintus.

Primus thought about it, but he couldn't make it clear. Then he asked permission to speak to the little citizeness widow, Massimel.

"Go down into the cellar and find her," laughed Quintus. "I don't dare let her come out."

When he reached the cellar he was amazed, because what he saw surpassed the power of the imagination. Soft, secretive sounds of violin, flute, and bass-viol flattered the ear, and slipped along the wet walls, like a little kitten on a silk dress. They were playing upon instruments that had been smuggled in. M.Miradoux, first violinist of the Royal Opera, had the violin; the flute, Vicomte Chantigny, whose breath could perform just such wonders as the breath of the west wind. With the tenor-viol the Strasburg canon, Avenarius,

had grown humpbacked, and the contra bass was played by the celebrated Abbé Mervioli of Florence. A silver bribe—even under the Revolution—could bring golden music into the dungeons of the Temple.

The delicate serenade of Mozart!

It worked wonders here in the twilight dark—Palaces towered in their former royal splendor, and graciously listened to the amiable inspirations of the Salzburg Music-Lord. The old days came back, charmed into life, in defiance of the *Marseillaise* and *Carmagnole*. Around the dungeon walls sat noble lords in silk hose, and ladies in thread lace, elegant and aristocratic, in the midst of misery—these captives sacrificed to the fury of the mob. Knee crossed over knee, the great lords sat, and the ladies, graceful heads resting upon slender hands—nothing here but illustrious nobles. And over them floated the fragile melodies of Wolfgang Amadés, graceful and enchanting, like clouds of incense.

Near the end of the Alegro there comes a passage lovelier than all the rest of that lovely melody, as if suddenly the player had remembered a soft, little hand that stroked his cheek. When this passage came, Herr Primus heard behind him a whispered "*Ah!*" He whirled about—Blanchefleure. She held up one little hand as a signal that he should make no noise. Soon the music was over, and while the lords and ladies stopped to congratulate the players, Captain Thaller made his honorable proposal for the hand of the poor, pale, charming, little Blanchefleure. She listened to him with astonishingly arched and surprised brows,

as he began, "Now you are a widow and just as poor as any cow-girl of Appenzell—thank God."

"*Oh!*" she exclaimed doubtfully—"*Ah!*"

"Now we soldiers are the whole thing. The Revolution thought it annihilated the officer—and it made him the Lord God. I'll take you out of this hole—Quintus will find a way to do it."

"Wait," said Blanchefleure—"there comes the minuet again."

In fact the musicians began to play again that enchanting melody of the old days, dancing to which one said more with eyes and finger tips than the plebian waltz knows. And the frivolous crowd took their places for the dance.

"Perhaps it is the last minuet," said apologetically Blanchefleure, with her graceful laugh. "I should never cease regretting not having danced it—with you, M. Captain."

The poor young man looked down at her confused, as she took him by the hand.

"Don't be afraid. We have now equality and fraternity. What—don't you believe in them?"

The sweet, melancholy, coquettish dance of Frivolity which was about to die, began. It was the minuet from *Don Giovanni*, and they played it just before the stroke of fate—impertinent, frivolous and graceful as the music. As they approached, Primus Thaller continued with his honorable wooing. "I love you as no other and you must be my wife."

The teasing, backward movement of this dance of coquetry carried Blanchefleure away from him. Her

eyes laughed, but she said: "What foolish things you think of. You haven't any taste, my Friend."

Again the gentle rythm of the dance brought them together; their hands met. "You might have been my lover, down there, in the country—in La Réole, where the cow-bells preach of nature. I always had my season of return to nature."

And she bent back and stepped away from him with coquettish grace, while the heart of poor Primus raged with flames, as if the great, destructive Revolution were confined within his own body. Again she danced back. "But to become Madame Thaller—my dear, good, honest Friend from Appenzell! What *are* you thinking of? One could, of course, kiss you—just for fun! Ah!—it is too bad we could not have played our comedy in La Réole. A stupid shame! Now we must renounce the kiss! unless you are willing to put up with kissing my hand?"

They had reached the place in the minuet, where—upon the stage—Zerlina destroys the sweet frivolity. And, although the gallant gentlemen, Miradoux, Vicomte Chantigny, Avenarius and Abbé Merivoli changed the music for a brief uninterrupted return to a merry *da capo,* Fate ordered the original setting. The door was thrown open and a harsh saloon keeper's voice tore in shreds the flowery chains that bound their dream.

"You—there—citizens and citizenesses! Peace—in the name of the Republic!"

The dancers knew what this interruption meant. It was the daily reading of the names of those sum-

moned to court—to hear their sentence read. Out of the Temple the road lay along a dark street, with only one little window of exit—into eternity—*the guillotine*. This time the name of the little citizeness Massimel was read.

"Here!" she called; but her face grew white.

"Are you thinking of my offer of marriage?" asked Primus Thaller stepping up behind her. The poor, pale Blanchefleure looked at him with terrified eyes, above which arched her amazing eyebrows.

"Ah!—God, my Friend!" she replied pensively. "You republicans can not even let us enjoy the dance. Over there in the corner sits my little maid, who insisted upon being imprisoned with me. Zénobe! Dance on with this young fellow! Please excuse me on account of this ridiculous interruption—and take her in my stead. She is a charming child. Adieu, my Friend!"

And M. Miradoux, the incorrigible of the *ancien regime*, began that enchanting melody of Mozart, softly, softly—laughing gently, the couples took their places as before. But little Zénobe did not dare to join them. She wept for terror, and my great grandfather did not care to dance with the little maid. He turned his back coldly on them all.

That was the memorable minuet which Captain Primus Thaller danced with the distinguished nobility of France. It was the last minuet of the rococo period, and its grace and sweetness was interrupted by the summons of the tribunal of the Jacobins. Captain Primus, with a heavy heart, climbed the stairs

back to the daylight, and little Blanchefleure left the dungeon to appear before the tribunal.

The trial room was like a wine shop. Four or five rough men crouched about, dirty and evil of mind like savage peasant dogs.

"Citizeness Blanchefleure Massimel? Widow?" snarled one of them.

"If that is the way you wish—"

"Formerly of the court of citizeness Antoinette Capet?"

"Of whom are you speaking? *The Queen, you should say!*"

"Ah!—should we? Write that down, Citizen Pouprac. She said Queen."

"I think that is sufficient," growled Pouprac. Then he looked up wickedly.

"Why do you laugh, Citizeness? You are insulting the court! Why do you laugh?"

"Good Heavens—how you look!" chattered poor, little Blanchefleure, her face turning deep red.

"When one wears such trousers—as you!" she covered her little face with her hands and laughed and laughed and laughed.

Pouprac glanced at his trousers which were made of red, white and blue cotton. They testified to his republican leanings.

He jumped up in a rage, and stood on his short, widespread tiger legs.

"You are condemned to death, Citizeness Massimel," he roared. "You are condemned because you have insulted the flag of France!"

The little Marquise took her hands down from her face and looked at him. She sniffed with her little nose, and arched her brows.

"*You—you* would judge me! Go wash yourself—and put on hose—before you can be of any service whatever to me!"

And she went away. They say she laughed upon the scaffold.

My great grandfather heard that she was not willing to have her hair cut off.

"Is that really necessary?" she asked. "The headsman can use my hair as a handle to hold my head up to show it to the crowd—as is the custom."

When the *Sans-culotte,* in his huge apron, stood before her, she shrugged the sweetest little shoulders and declared: "I don't care! I knew, of course, when you came to cut my head off, that you had no aesthetic sense. And I have always been right."

After these last inspired words, she died, the poor, little, trembling woman. She died, and all they who would have wept for her were dead, too, or preparing to die.

So no one knew what became of beautiful Blanchefleure, who had always been right. And my poor, great grandfather he had never understood her. Only I—only I! I understand her, I who bought her picture from the second-hand dealer—as a sort of revenge upon them of a later day who did not care to be a great, great grandmother.

Lucky for her that she was not! She remained, instead, young—always young—and an object of love.

And I can love her as the honorable Primus Thaller loved her—only better; with more intelligence, with more aesthetic joy.

She was always right, and I long for her today.

THE EXCHANGE

By SVATOPLUK ČECH

ČECH

SVATOPLUK ČECH was born in 1846 and ranks as one of the most important figures of the literature of Bohemia, both in prose and verse.

Among his popular ballads and story telling poems are—*The Lark, The Smith of Lešetin, In Shadow of the Linden, The Goblet of Youth.*

In prose he has written many stories and sketches distinguished by that gay and fantastic humor which strikes us as peculiarly the property of certain south-central races of Europe, such as the Poles, Bohemians, and Hungarians. These stories by Čech frequently show the light touch and splendid surface that is characteristic of French prose, with the addition of a brilliant irony that drives home successfully the point he wishes to make. Several volumes of stories of merit stand to the credit of Čech.

THE EXCHANGE

CHAPTER I.

HERE is the pocket book of the hero of this story, Mr. Alfred N—. I ask you to take it and look into it. You see several compartments, and in them,—*nothing.* We turn the pocket book upside down and shake it. What falls out? Nothing.

Twilight clings to the corners of the room. The clothes closet yawns toward us—empty. The bed dreams in vain of luxurious pillows. The book cases are empty. Poverty grins from every corner. The cold pipe falls from the hands of the occupant of the room. The bitter smile disappears; the eyelids close, —the golden dreams have vanished.

Some one knocked softly. Alfred jumped up. Should he open the door? It was probably a mistake. None of his acquaintances would come to see him now because they knew he had nothing which they could borrow. Cautiously he opened the door, being mindful of his worn trousers, and the pitiful fragment of a coat that hung from his shoulders.

A diminutive man stepped into the room. His neglected appearance fitted exactly the words he said:

"Old clothes—dear Sir! Aron pays—pays *fine!*"

The bitter smile reappeared on the face of Alfred.

"I have nothing!" he replied to the Jew.

But the Jew did not permit himself to be dismissed so easily.

He pushed his way into the room, and peered inquisitively about.

"Perhaps you'll find something. Old shoes—books. Aron buys everything, everything, everything!"

"Look for yourself," commanded Alfred, bitterly. "Here is the clothes closet; here are the book cases, here—"

"As God is good, not a thing!" declared the Jew, amazed. "It's as if it has just been swept out! Too bad—Young Man! Too bad! Aron pays—pays *fine!*" At these words he drew from his dirty caftan a leathern purse and began to shake it. The bright sound of gold rang out; the alluring voice of the metal, more alluring than the voice of a siren. Alfred trembled at the sound. His eyes looked greedily upon the dirty purse. Over the face of the Jew flashed lightning swift a look of satisfaction. Patting lovingly the fat purse he continued:

"Aron pays—pays *fine!* Aron buys everything, everything, everything!"

"But can't you see that I haven't a thing to sell?" demanded Alfred angrily.

"Certainly the gentleman has *something*—for which Aron will pay many, many pieces of gold—"

"Stop this humbug, Jew! If you don't, I'll throw you down stairs and straight into Abraham's bosom!"

"Aron knows what he says", replied the Jew, in

a wheedling, submissive voice. "The gentleman has a precious jewel for which Aron will pay whatever the gentleman may ask."

He plunged his bent fingers into the deep purse. Alfred followed the gesture with sparkling eyes and replied:

"Speak out! What is it that I can sell to you? What is it that I have that I know nothing about?"

The Jew came nearer and whispered: *"Character."*

Alfred surveyed him with surprised eyes. "Character? Are you a fool?"

The Jew stepped back, straightened up and spoke boastingly.

"The gentleman is surprised? Well—Aron buys everything; worn out clothes, the virtue of women, old umbrellas, honor, trash, and the divine fire of genius, rabbits' skins—Aron buys the entire world. Why should he not buy character? Character is a rare thing nowadays—and valuable. There are plenty of people without character—"

Alfred regarded the speaker with terror. Through the window the last light of the setting sun penetrated and gave the Jew a sort of ghostly, inhuman appearance. The purse in his hand became red hot like a coal. The unkempt hair and beard were changed into threads of gold. Gold gleamed from every fold of his caftan. It gleamed from his features, and it was as if two golden ducats shone from his eyes. The Demon of Gold stood before him, bent of neck, with greedy claw-like fingers, that were ready to fall upon any prey and crush the life-blood out.

He covered his face with his two hands. When he looked up again the sun had set, and the Jew had resumed his ordinary appearance. The nimbus of gold had vanished. "Well, my dear Sir, will you sell your character? Aron pays—pays *fine*. There is a great sale for character just now—and not much to meet the demand. Will you sell? Aron will pay you a prodigious sum."

The Jew took a ducat from the purse and held it up between his fingers. Alfred looked longingly toward the shining circle, then he turned his head away and replied firmly: "No,—I will not sell!"

The Jew shook his head.

"No? By heaven,—a fine character! I'll give twice as much for it. Three times—a noble character! No? I'll make you a millionaire! You shall dwell in palaces, drink wine of the choicest vintage, kiss the sweetest lips—"

Alfred looked about as if some beautiful vision floated before him in space. Then he repeated with a sigh: "I will not sell."

"Well—just as the gentleman pleases. Keep your character together with your misery. Aron will keep his gold. I bid you good day." He threw the ducats back into the purse, placed it in his caftan, and turned to go away. In the door he paused and looked back.

"Aron has a good heart. He does not like to leave a man like you in such misery. Do you know something? I'll lend you the gold, and you pledge me your character. How does this offer please the gentleman?"

Alfred meditated. He looked about the room; the closet was empty. The bed had no pillows. The book cases were empty—everywhere poverty. He made a despondent gesture. "Well, take it!—I pledge it." Then he paused. How could a person pawn his character? That was the dream of a foolish brain.

"I know what worries the gentleman. And Aron knows help for it, too." He took from his pocket some little pill boxes, opened and closed them. "Look—here is your character," he replied scornfully, tapping upon the cover of a box. Alfred looked at the little box. In the dim light he read the superscription: "Noble characters!"

"Look—see how I classify character—all according to merit."

"Here you have old fashioned Bohemian characters. They belong to old people—with long beards. Here are light characters—comparatively cheap—but not durable. I have to guard them constantly against changing winds. Sometimes politicians buy these characters for presents. In this box are found stern, upright characters. They are often found at army headquarters. But what do you care about them? You'd rather see the money counted out." He took out another purse and piled shining ducats one upon another. Suddenly he paused. "In five years, at this same hour, Aron will come again, no matter where you may be. Then if you do not pay me back the sum with interest, the character belongs to me."

Alfred nodded. The ghostly Jew grabbed deeper

and deeper within the purse. With fabulous swiftness gold coins were piled up to the ceiling like great columns of marble. The purse evidently was inexhaustible. The more gold he took out, the more gold there was in it. God give all men a purse like this!

Chapter II.

Five years passed.

Alfred stood in the center of a merry crowd where champagne flowed like a river. Diamonds flashed; silks and velvets rustled. Sparkling fountains, bright shadows on water, penetrating perfumes, splendid gardens,—all this the Demon of Gold had brought together in one place. Alfred, too, has changed. He is heavier and more round bodied. His cheeks glow with health; his eyes shine with contentment. It is evident that he had been drinking from the cup of pleasure, with the careful discernment of the epicure. Over there sits his wife. Is she that beautiful motionless maiden, whose vision had so moved him five years ago? Not at all! The ice of her heart had melted under the glow of Alfred's blazing ducats. The vision charmed him no more, that had once enticed him. He did not love her and she did not love him. They treated each other courteously before the world, but in private—what a difference.

The lack of character of Alfred was an open secret. Every one remarked about it, yet he carried his head high, and everyone bowed before him. His breast was covered with orders. The highest honors were his. Fathers held him up to their sons as model.

"See,"—they say—"how he has advanced."

In that same garret where he used to sit, there is a pale youth in shabby slippers and ragged coat, dedicating to him a long poem about the exalted goal of human endeavor.

And I—I would rather write an Ode to Gold! Such an one were worthy of the age. Dershawin's "Ode to God" is old fashioned. It has no merit for our age except the form in which the Emperor of China has preserved it—in letters of gold upon a banner of silk.

Gold is the god of the age! Heaven announces its glory; above the moon (on the dollar), and the stars (on small silver pieces) shines the giant ducat—the sun. Upon earth we pray to it—in the monstrance and the cross. Under different names we serve it; some as faith, love, right, truth,—others in sinful Mammon. For the sake of gold we preach morality, we shed blood on the fields of battle. For the sake of gold—with a dull pen—I write this satire. O! shining, mighty, divine metal—I praise you, prostrated in the dust before you. Surely, Dear Brothers in Gold, you will pardon me this diversion.

A servant resplendent in gold braid, announced to Alfred, that a dirty Jew was waiting who insisted upon coming in.

"Take him to my study", he ordered.

It is a softly sensuous, luxurious room. From baseboard to ceiling, the walls are covered with pictures of beautiful women, gorgeously dressed.

Again Alfred and the ghostly Jew are face to face.

"You are late," said Alfred, glancing at the clock.

"Yes—on account of bribes," was the reply. "And I lost a noble character, too, which I bought abroad. On the boundary they confiscated it. One would think character contraband of war."

"You bring my pawned pledge back, do you?" interrupted Alfred.

"Of course, Your Grace!" replied the Jew, and drew from his pocket the little dirty box.

"Keep it! Keep it! I don't care anything about it. I am convinced that one lives better without character. But there is something I'd like to sell you."

"Well?"

"A little feeling of shame that has remained with me—and sometimes makes me uncomfortable."

Aron shrugged his shoulders, shook his head and laughed disagreeably.

"Nothing doing! The article is out of fashion—something nobody buys. As a proof—Your Grace—I beg you to consider these portraits which hang upon your walls—"

CHAI

By AWETIS AHARONEAN

AHARONEAN

In the village of Igdir—not far from the boundaries where Russia, Persia and Turkey are close together—this writer was born in 1866. He went to school in the village, and later attended the famous Armenian cloister school, Etschmiadsin. After finishing the prescribed course of study there, he taught for ten years, until, in fact, the Armenian schools were closed. Then in order to earn a livelihood, he became a newspaper man, and his activities took him to Switzerland and to the Caucasus. Later he obtained an editorial position in Tiflis.

He has published a good many short stories and he is particularly popular among his people. He belongs to the new school of Armenian writers. The scene of a good many of his stories, is the little village where he was born.

CHAI

It was night; winter and snow. The night was so dark, so full of terror that people in the little mountain village of O— could not remember when they last saw day and the sun; bright light and blue sky. The wind blew, too! And what a wind it was. It was as if it came from some world of the dead, because in its voice there was something that made the nerves tremble and painted horror before the brain. It played with the snow, and the play was the play of a demon. Not only people shivered, but the entire mountain village, its poor little houses, its hay stacks, and the dry mounds of manure piled up for burning. And one could not tell whether the shivering was because of the cold, or because of the accursed storm that was raging. For these mountain village dwellers, thunder and lightning, storm and cold, were not merely harmless caprices of nature. The peasants knew how sad the result might be. Why should they not be afraid and tremble! But it was lucky that the sign of the cross was sure protection against lightning; and for the snow storm there was the stable and the *sakhi.**

Woi—woi—howled the storm. Every time its terrifying voice rang out, the men in the *sakhi* of

*Sakhi, a windowless room, containing a fire place.

Melikh-Shalim, who were lined up along the wall facing each other, ceased speaking, took the pipes out of their mouths and drew nearer together.

Lord God!—snow and cold must come in their time, but this storm—this fearful storm—for what can it be good? No one dared interpret the voice of the great storm. For each one of them it was the mighty song of destiny, which the storm-wind—the eternal wanderer—had constructed out of the sorrows of the world, out of the sighs of the helpless, and the tears of suffering. Thus thought the frightened peasants in the *sakhi.*

Woi—Woi—the wind grew stronger. The *sakhi* creaked and trembled. Sometimes it sounded as if someone were walking heavily across the roof.

"Hell has broken loose!" declared one, in order to have something to say. "I would not wish my worst enemy to be upon the mountain tonight!"

"Upon the mountain!" answered another scornfully. "As if you had courage enough to walk to the wine garden. And you talk of the mountain! Heaven and earth are fighting each other tonight."

Again silence reigned in the *sakhi.* They were busy thinking.

The door creaked ominously. All looked in that direction. In the dim light, the form of a man, wrapped in a herdsman's cape was visible. He looked like a heap of snow.

"Good evening," said the newcomer, shaking the snow from his shoulders.

"God is good to you, Chai. Come up—you must be frozen."

"Make room! Give him a place to sit."

"By heaven, I'm frozen", he replied. I couldn't stay out another minute. I thought the sky was cracking over my head. They are frightened in the village, too. I said to myself, I'll go to the *sakhi*. I'll warm myself, and then I'll go out again."

He seated himself beside the wall.

Above the *buchar** in a blackened space, hung the oil lamp. The sad flame trembled and wavered, as if it, too, were terrified by the voice of the wind. But it gave sufficient light to show some of the faces under the lamb's fur caps. An occasional pale line of light fell upon the new comer. It was a peasant's face which hard work and suffering had made harsh. He was a young man but he had the appearance of having lived much. Under his short mustache were two thick lips so tightly pressed together that they gave the impression of stubbornness. The eyes were small, but full of fire. He was the village watchman. And he was an Armenian. Many of his race had attempted to live in the mountain village, but they had been driven away. Only this one had remained like a deserted crane. He did not want to beg, so he became watchman. The villagers did not know his name. Instead of Nacho they called him Mcho, some even Mko, but at last they agreed upon the name of Chai.

*Buchar, an open fire place.

It was an easy word to say. And he was really Chai* from the village Osm.

The *sakhi* was warm. The snow storm continued. The wind roared like a wounded bull.

" 'Twas a night like this when that poor fellow was surprised—*yes,*" declared Gewo, the magistrate. "How could he help it?"

He spoke of a peasant who had perished in a snow storm on the mountain a few days before.

"How often have we said it—it is not wise to run about in the snow," observed another.

"What nonsense you talk! He *had* to go!" thundered Melikh. "Who can escape fate?"

"True, true, Melikh," some agreed. "What is written by fate is written."

They agree that man is the toy of fate. Against this nothing prevailed.

"I don't believe in fate!" called a voice from the corner by the *sakhi.* All eyes turned toward him. The surprise was universal.

"Who is this brave man?" inquired Melikh scornfully.

"I am your servant, Melikh. But I do not believe in fate," repeated the same voice doggedly.

The men did not know whether to laugh or to be angry. The one who did not believe in all powerful fate was the miserable Chai.

"The meanest goat can lose his temper," murmured Melikh, half in scorn and half in wrath. The declara-

*Chai, colloquial for Haj, meaning Armenian.

tion of Chai had aroused them. Melikh, the rich, powerful Melikh, believed in fate—and feared it. The magistrate, Gewo, before whose decisions they trembled, like aspen leaves, was afraid of it. And the head of the church—no matter what he sermonized about—in the end reverted to the subject of fate. They were all subject to this powerful influence.

"No—I don't believe in your fate," repeated Chai, as he took notice of the scornful looks directed toward him. "I could prove to you all in a moment that I am right, if I did not have to go out and make the round of the village again."

"Stay! Stay!" they called.

"Magistrate tell him to stay."

At command of the magistrate Chai sat down again.

In that year there were ten of us—ten mad men. The Turks and Kurds called us conspirators. The Armenians called us defenders and saviors. We and the eagles became the lonely lords of the mountains. We were alike, too, in the way we swept down upon our prey. How many dogs of Turks and Kurds did we not kill! Sometimes they hunted us. Then we disappeared and they could not find us. It was not easy to find us, and when they did find us, it was not easy to meet us.

One day we were on the summit of Mount Sim, when supplies gave out. It fell to my lot to forage food. I knew where there were villages, but whether the inhabitants were destroyed or alive I did not know. In broad daylight I climbed down from our mountain

nest, without a weapon, without even a stick. For a time all went well and I met no one. Before me rose another mountain. I must go over it and down into the valley on the other side. I climbed and climbed. Just before I reached the top, a Kurd jumped up, a *hornidie,** well armed.

"Good day," I said carelessly.

"Good day, Armenian," the Kurd replied. He did not pass me, but stepped in front of me. I continued my way, but I felt that the Kurd was still standing there, and following me with his eyes. I did not hasten. I was afraid of arousing suspicion.

"Armenian—*wait!* Wait!" suddenly called the voice of the Kurd. I looked back, then stopped. It is fate, I thought. Fate might well take the form of a Kurd. A gun rested upon his shoulder; there was a moon shaped blade by his side, a dagger with an ivory handle stuck in his girdle. I saw that his eyes were those of an angry wolf. He came nearer.

"At this time, in this place, there should be no Armenians. Who are you? Where are you going?"

"Kurd," I replied, "the time is bad, I know, but do not forget that we are neighbors. I say to you as a neighbor that I am from Chnt. We are starving there —that you know. I am on the way to Derdschan to get bread for my children. Let me go in peace."

"You can't deceive me, Armenian! You are a bad lot."

"You have a God, too, Kurd. You see I have no weapon. There is not even a knife in my pocket. If

*Hornidie—name of a Turkish regiment.

I were a bad lot what could I accomplish with just two hands? I beg you, let me go in peace!"

"Walk in front of me. I'll give you over to the law."

"To the law! You could not do anything worse when you know the police are seeking us. Do not do that, Kurd! Even if I were set free, it would delay me. My children are suffering. They are dying of hunger. For God's sake, Kurd,—brother, neighbor, let me go!" The Kurd was unshakable. It is my fate, I thought and walked on. What could I do? He was armed. I was not.

Around us the world was beautiful. The sky was clear and blue, the mountains green. Birds flew about; everywhere was life and happiness. Above, high in the air, a crane flew, free and bold. Forgetting the danger of my position, I looked up at the bird and envied it.

The Kurd walked on in silence. He looked at me. Our eyes met, and for some seconds we were both unable to look away. Each tried to find out what was hidden in the thought of the other. Is not the eye the involuntary betrayor of the mind? I understood that the Kurd had made up his mind to kill me. That I read plainly. I began to meditate. I sought for help. But what help was there for me? At this moment my eyes rested upon the handsome dagger which the Kurd carried in his girdle. If I only had that in my hand!

"Go on," commanded the Kurd. "Why are you stopping?"

I walked on. We were going through a lonely, uninhabited valley. The Kurd became restless, and began to look about. He kept taking the gun from his shoulder and then putting it back again. I felt that my end was near. I began to walk slower. I did not dare step in front of the Kurd. That would make him angry.

"Quick—*quick!* Go on!" he urged. He was constantly trying to make me walk in front of him. I made an effort to walk evenly with him. We both seemed to understand that we were fighting a silent battle for life. Suddenly I stopped. My sandal strings were untied. The Kurd came up beside me and paused. Without lifting my head I observed his position. He stood on my right, and the ivory handle of the dagger gleamed from his girdle close beside me.

"Make haste, Armenian!" he called angrily.

I lifted my head quickly, snatched the dagger from his girdle, and before he knew what had happened, I buried the entire blade in his breast. He roared like an animal, then fell to the ground. I was saved. And this is the dagger that saved me."

Chai drew from his girdle a dagger with a handle of ivory, and held it up for his listeners to see. They fell upon their knees and examined the weapon carefully. The poor, shabby Chai had become a hero. He was a brave man who ruled his own fate. He snapped his fingers at it.

"I don't believe in fate," he declared again doggedly. This time his words brought forth neither laughter nor scorn. Chai took his dagger, stuck it in his girdle and

went out. The others were silent. Outside the wind howled, but it no longer terrified them with the implacability of fate. Under the manifold wild voices of the night, they seemed to hear human voices crying—"Revenge! Revenge!"

IN PRISON

By AWETIS AHARONEAN

IN PRISON

Chapter I.

It was midnight. Oppressive silence reigned in the prison. Occasionally one caught the sound of the heavy, even tread of the watchman. The little round holes in the tower of cells looked very black against the space about them. They looked like great eyes of the dead.

In the room of the prison superintendent there was a light. There two men sat opposite each other at a table upon which a piece of paper was outspread. They were the superintendent and his helper. They pointed with pencils to names of prisoners who in the morning would be brought out to be sentenced.

Kli-r-r! Kli-rr-rr—

"There it is again!" said the superintendent, throwing down his pencil.

"What's the trouble?" inquired his companion.

"A new prisoner. With those confounded chains he disturbs me day and night."

"Why does he make such a noise?"

"Why? How should I know? All the time that dog of a giaour walks about and gives me no rest. The devil take a business like mine! In all the years I have been here I have never got used to it—that accursed sound."

Kli-r-r! Kli-rr-rr—

This time the noise was louder.

"I can't stand that!" roared the superintendent. "I can't stand that sound any longer. Last night I never closed an eye because of it."

The helper began to laugh.

"Why do you laugh?"

"Why do I laugh? A boiled hen would laugh if you should say to it that the wolf is afraid of the sheep. What's the use of your anger and discomfort? Silence him."

"Silence him! Easy enough to say."

"Tell him to go to sleep."

"But what if he doesn't sleep?"

"Make him sleep! There's a way, isn't there?" pointing to the rows of knouts along the wall. The light of cruel impulses shone in his little eyes.

Kli-r-r! Kli-rr-rr— Again the shuddering rattle of rusty iron. The superintendent began to meditate. He bit his lips angrily and left the room. He turned toward the cell from which the sound came, opened the circular window and roared.

"You dog of a giaour, stop rattling those chains! *Keep still!*"

"I'm not doing anything," came a voice from within.

"Why do you make such a noise all the time?"

"Why? The chains—they knock against each other."

"Then why do you move?"

"What shall I do?"

"Sleep! Sleep! If you don't, I'll—" The superintendent did not finish the sentence.

"Sleep—that's easy to say," thought the prisoner. "How can the defender of man's freedom sleep—if he is buried alive and has no hope?"

The mind of the *haiduk* was a volcano; the cell was narrow, the chains heavy. The rattle of chains was the hideous song of autocracy, which since the beginning of time has echoed from prison walls.

The superintendent went away. The prisoner stood still for a moment, pondered the words, then began to move about again. He tried to walk softly along the wall, carefully, little step by little step. And the chains rang and rang disturbing the night.

"How long has the good-for-nothing been here?" inquired the helper.

"Three days ago they caught him in Toprag-Gale. He must be a bad lot who can not sleep. No one knows who he is nor whence he came."

"Will he ascend—it?"

"What? You mean the gallows? Of course—if they sentence him!"

They were silent. It was not a suitable subject for conversation. Therefore they thought about it a good deal and said nothing. The silence was broken by a sudden crash of the chains.

"Just wait till daylight, you dog of a giaour!" murmured the superintendent. "Wait!"

The helper got up, said good night and went out.

Daylight came and the hour when the prisoners are given their breakfast.

"Now you'll keep still forever, Giaour," murmured the superintendent, who, with a dish full of food approached the cell of his noisy prisoner. He opened the door and placed the food upon the floor. The prisoner was sleeping. He went out stealthily. He closed the door but did not go away. Something held him to the spot. He put his eye to the keyhole and looked in. The prisoner was handsome. He had an air of nobility. His broad brow was unclouded as if noble thoughts moved behind it. The face indicated strength of character. There was something about the sleeping figure that affected the superintendent peculiarly. Fear awoke in his heart. He tried to suppress this feeling which was new to him. Why did he stand there and watch him? Why did he not go away? He did not know and he did not like to think about it. He tried to reason with himself.

He saw the prisoner get up and approach the food. He followed every movement. His knees began to tremble. He leaned heavily against the door. He wanted to turn away but he could not. His throat began to feel dry. Why should he destroy that noble looking figure with the broad brow and inspired eyes? He opened the door and called:

"Wait! Wait!"

The prisoner looked up at him in surprise.

"Wait! I can't do it. Rattle your chains all you want to."

He picked up the plate, ran from the room and closed the door. The prisoner understood. A smile passed across his lips like the last, faint glimmer of

sunset. He rejoiced. Under the low roof of prison, behind locked doors, he had conquered.

Chapter II.

Weeks passed.

Kli-r-r! Kli-rr-rr— This time the chains were clanging through the village of A—. Between rows of glittering bayonets appeared from time to time, a white face. The prisoners were being led to the place of execution. Even in daylight this clanging of chains was terrifying. Doors were quickly shut, windows closed. This sound was the terror of the land. It filled the streets, and made the hearts of the brave tremble. A crowd had accumulated about the square. There were judges, lawyers, court accountants. The superintendent was there too, and his helper.

"I did not do it. I am not to be blamed," the superintendent kept whispering to himself. The judge turned to the prisoner.

"You are A— from the village of A—?"

"No; I am not from A—."

"K— is your friend?"

"I do not know him."

"Did you kill G—?"

"Yes; he was my enemy."

"You procured weapons and took them to S—?"

"No; I did not procure the weapons."

The helper of the superintendent, who until then had listened indifferently, went up to the judge and

whispered to him. Then, upon a signal from the judge he walked up to the prisoner and stood directly in front of him, and quite near.

The place of execution became silent. Every one expected something unusual and all eyes were turned toward the two men who stood face to face. It was not two faces that confronted each other, but four eyes . . . four flames. The spectators shivered as if from fear. Something was going to happen, something out of the ordinary. Still they stared at each other, eye against eye. Their eyes did not wink. Their lips did not move. Their eyebrows did not twitch. No sound escaped their lips. No word was spoken. They only looked and looked, and one was in chains, but inspirited with righteous wrath. The other wore the uniform of a Turkish official, and yet he trembled and seemed afraid.

The prisoner stepped back. The chains rattled. He turned away with a gesture of scorn that made the other feel shivers pass down his spine, and he stuttered.

"I—I—*know you.* You are A—"

"Yes," replied the other. *"You were my friend."*

Friend! What a word to use here! The word took on form and towered like a giant in front of the helper. He saw himself in all his baseness. He was in terror at his own likeness. Ah!—how much blood he had shed for these shining buttons on his uniform. Involuntarily he touched one of the buttons. It was cold like ice. He drew his hand back quickly. How many years had he feigned to be a friend to this hero

who fought for freedom, and how many just like him he had tricked and brought to ruin. He touched his sword, then drew his hand back, and glanced at the heavy chains of his old friend and former companion in the strife for liberty. Which was better, the sword of the Turkish official or those rusty chains of the martyr for freedom? This question which he thought he had decided long ago, came up again.

It is night—a gloomy night. A restless wind roamed under the black sky. The helper started for the prison. The superintendent had called him. His walk did not have its usual animation. The darkness was not pleasant, nor the wind either. He kept thinking of things he did not wish to think of. How hard he had tried to hide himself that morning when A— climbed to the gallows. He did not succeed. The prisoner seemed to search for him. He found him. He looked at him again just as he had looked at him on the place of execution. Before he died he wished to burn that look of scorn and contempt into his brain. There—before him in the dark—were two burning points—*eyes*. He could not go on. He stopped. They were the eyes of his friend. They were just like them—just so large. Should he go on? He meditated a moment and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the two eyes were still looking at him again—only they were larger and there was a different expression within them. He started to run. The eyes disappeared. It was a cat which leaped

ahead of him. He laughed at his fear, but he walked faster than usual.

At length he reached the prison yard. He looked timidly toward the place of execution of the morning. He thought the man was buried and all was over. But he saw the body gleaming through the darkness. And when the wind touched it, the gallows moaned and moaned. And the wind carried the sound on and on. The helper ran without looking up, but as he neared the gallows his steps were heavier and heavier. The old shuddering swept over his body. At last, trembling, he entered the room of the overseer. It was light there. At least there was a human being there. The superintendent did not look up; he was thoughtful and both were silent.

"Now you can sleep," remarked the helper in order to break the oppressive silence. "Now the chains do not rattle."

"Hark! Don't you hear that?" Outside, above the sound of the wind, came plainly the creaking of the gallows. It was a sad, monotonous sound, a gigantic slumber song over the body of the heroic dead.

"Why is he not buried?"

"That is what I have called you for. To-morrow morning you are to take him down and bury him—because you were his friend."

The helper was silent. What an ironic play of wit was this. Anyway he will not make any noise, thought the helper.

The superintendent dropped his head; his eyes were in the shadow. Slowly the helper got upon his feet,

took up the lamp and held it in front of the trembling face of the overseer. The overseer threw back his head in anger, grabbed the lamp from the hand of the helper, threw it upon the floor and smashed it into pieces.

"You cowardly betrayer—he was your friend!"

The room was in darkness. In every corner shone a dozen gleaming eyes that kept growing larger and larger. It was frightful; he wished to get away. But he could not find the door. He circled vainly around and around. At last he stumbled upon it. Carefully he opened it and stuck his head out. It was no less terrifying outside; blackness and wind, and the creaking gallows. Ah!—what a sound was that! It penetrated the marrow of his bones and made him suffer. Up there the dead man was shaking in the wind. Where should he go? He made up his mind to run as fast as he could, but he had only taken a few steps when something forced him to look up. There in front of him, in the darkness, were two gleaming, swollen eyes, streaked with blood. His knees gave way. Trembling he turned back toward the door of the overseer.

"Cowardly betrayer!" murmured the overseer again. The helper turned and ran again. But this time the wind blocked his way and he found himself beneath the gallows. This time the dead man did not seem to be angry. The eyes looked down at him sympathetically and the lips said: "Friend, Friend."

He twisted and crawled along like a snake. Then with feverish haste he put up the ladder, climbed it,

and untied the rope. The corpse fell. Quickly he twisted the same noose about his own neck and swung himself up into the air. With the angry voice of the wind there mingled the peculiar choking sound of a human voice—and then the sound came no more. The two dead men looked at each other, one upon the ground, and the other swinging high in the darkness and the wind.

THE ELOPEMENT

By ALEXANDER PETÖFI

PETÖFI

ALEXANDER Petőfi, the great lyric poet of the Magyar race, was born the first day of January, 1823. His was a true poet's life—brief and stormy. Only twenty-six years were his in which to live and purchase fame. Despite the fact that he took an active part in the wars which were numerous during his brief day, and was active as an editor and politician, he found time to write some of the finest lyric verse of his race, and tales in prose, and to leave a considerable correspondance with the distinguished men of the period.

His best prose work is the novelette, *The Hangman's Knot.*

THE ELOPEMENT

"But where shall we go?"

"To Buda Pesth."

"To Pesth?"

"Of course!"

"Why there?"

"It's the safest place."

"Very well."

"Early—"

"I'll be ready—early."

"Use every precaution."

"Do not worry."

"On no account be late."

"No; of course not!"

"Good by, Anna dear—!"

Poor Andrew von Csornay! And at this moment in the club he is saying "Checkmate," with an air of triumph to his opponent, just as if he himself had not just been checkmated in life, for Anna is his wife, and Carl his nephew.

A few days later they talked of nothing in the little village where this happened, but the elopement of Madame Andrew with her nephew, Carl von Csornay.

"It served the old fool right! Why did he marry such a young and beautiful girl?"

"That's too much for me! I can't solve the problem. Probably because they were so much in love with each other."

"True—I suppose."

"But I'm sorry for the old man. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if the grief killed him."

"Poor fellow!"

"And the unfortunate scandal—"

During the time conversation like this was common in the little village, Carl and his beautiful young aunt, had met in Pesth. While their carriage was on the way to the hotel, another carriage started from there.

"Oh!" screamed Madame Anna, in terror.

"I hope he'll lose his eyesight," thought Carl von Csornay to himself, throwing a hasty glance in the direction of the other carriage. They both wrapped themselves up in their cloaks as well as they could. The man who saw them was a merchant from their home town.

"He did not recognize us," declared Carl reassuringly, when they entered their room in the hotel. "If he had, he would have spoken to us."

"Thank heaven for that!"

"Now you belong to me, Anna,—wholly—wholly! To me belong the beautiful brown hair, the red, sweet lips, the glowing, black eyes, the proud, swan-like neck—"

"Yes—yes—I belong to you Carl!"

And they were happy—for a little while. But the love of the senses is an intoxication from which one

awakens and when they awoke and came to their senses, they both exclaimed:

"In the name of goodness what are we going to live upon? We have no money! We have nothing to eat."

They had not finished speaking, when some one knocked at the door and a stranger entered.

"Have I the honor to address M. Carl von Csornay?"

Carl listened confused and frightened, because he felt that they had been discovered.

"You do not answer," continued the stranger, "but your surprise proves that you are the one I seek. I beg you to sign this little piece of paper. Exactly one year from to-day I will come to see you again. Do not forget—in just one year. Good by."

The mysterious stranger went away. It was difficult to say which was greater, the surprise or the joy of the lovers. The paper which the stranger gave him, was draft for a sum of money sufficiently large to enable them to live in luxury for a year. According to the written demand of the stranger, the money was paid to them promptly.

"It is incomprehensible," declared Madame Anna, looking at the money.

"I should say it is incomprehensible," agreed Carl. "Gold falls upon us just like manna from Heaven."

Now they could live happily. They had no material cares to worry about. And they thought now of course that the merchant did not recognize them. If he had, would he not have told M. Andrew von Csornay?

"And at the end of the year," explained Carl, "the stranger will come again, and we shall have more money. Is not that what he said?"

"Yes, indeed."

Six months after the departure of Madame Anna with her nephew, a young man appeared suddenly in the home of old M. Andrew von Csornay. His face expressed suffering and a decision reached in a mood of despair.

Old M. Andrew had just returned from his club, in a rather melancholy frame of mind. He was either sad over the disappearance of his young wife, or because the priest had beaten him again at chess.

When the young man entered, the old man, white and trembling, sank back in his chair. The young man seized his hand and implored:

"Uncle—Dear Uncle—what shall I do to be forgiven? I am ready to do anything!"

"Where is she—the woman?"

"She—*she*——is not here."

The old man drew a deep breath of relief.

"I am going to tell you the whole story," declared Carl. "You will see then that you ought to pity me, and not take revenge upon me. I can't tell you how I have suffered. My happiness did not last long. I lived in a veritable hell. Your wife has the face of an angel—but all the devils there are, dwell in her heart. She is the worst tempered woman I have ever known in my life. I could not stand it a day longer—I had to run away and leave her—"

"My poor nephew—I do pity you from the bottom

of my heart. But you ought to pity me; she only remained with you six months, while she remained an entire year with me."

"You, too, Dear Uncle?"

"You are surprised, I suppose, are you not? Every one thought we were happy. But you should have seen us when we were alone! Then—you would have learned a thing or two. When I think of her it makes me shudder. When I found you had eloped with her, I blessed you. No one could have done me a greater kindness. In order to reward you—as soon as the merchant told me where you were—I sent you a yearly allowance,—so you would have no inclination to come back, and no hinderance where money was concerned—"

SAIDJAH

By MULTATULI

MULTATULI

MULTATULI, whose real name was Edward D. Dekker, was born in Amsterdam in 1820. His father was a merchant. When he was eighteen years old his father sent him to the Dutch East Indies to enter the service of the colonial government. He was rapidly advanced to the highest government position in the colonies. And in this position he was tireless in his endeavor to improve the condition of the native population.

Because of this desire he gave up at length his position, with all its advantages of money and honor, and went back to Holland to tell the people the true condition of the native population over whom they ruled. He was dismissed from service without a pension, and for years after this he lived in poverty. It was during this period of deprivation that he wrote the novel, *Havelaar*. He tells us that he was obliged to borrow money to buy the ink with which to write it.

Other books followed this in quick succession, among them the drama, *A School for Princes,* which is still popular in Holland.

In 1870 he went to live in Wiesbaden; from Wiesbaden he moved to a village on the Rhine where he died in February, 1887.

SAIDJAH

SAIDJAH was about fifteen years old when his father ran away to Buitenzorg. He did not accompany him because he had plans of his own to carry out. He had heard that in Batavia there were rich gentlemen who would employ slender youths like him, if they were nimble footed, to sit on the rear seat of the two wheeled carriages. He had been told that he could earn money in this way. In two years he could earn enough money to buy two water buffaloes. This prospect pleased him. He walked along proudly like a person who carries something important in his head. He was on his way to see Adinda to tell her his plan.

"When I come back," he explained, "we shall be old enough to marry—and then we shall have two buffaloes to do the plowing."

"Good, Saidjah, I will be your wife when you come back. I will spin. I will weave and embroider *sarongs*."

"I believe you, Adinda. And when I come back, I will call you a long way off—"

"Who could hear if we happened to be pounding rice in the village?"

"That is true. Then wait for me by the Djati

Forest, under the *ketapan* tree, where you gave me the *melatti* flower."

"But, Saidjah, when can I know when you are coming? When shall I go to the tree?"

Saidjah thought a moment and replied.

"Count the moons. During three times twelve moons I will remain away. But this moon now does not count. See, Adinda,—cut a notch in the riceblock for each moon. When you have cut three times twelve notches, I will return. On that day wait for me under the *ketapan* tree."

"I will be there by the Djati Forest, waiting for you under the *ketapan* tree."

Saidjah tore a piece of cloth from his blue headdress, and gave it to Adinda. Then he said good by to her and to Badur. He went through Rangas-Betung, which was not yet a place of importance, and on to Warong-Gunang, where the assistant governor lived. The next day he saw Pandeglang, the village that looks as if it lay in a garden. A day later he reached Serang, and stood astonished at the splendor and the number of the houses. He remained here one day because he was tired, but when the sun set, he went on again and at length reached Tangerang. Here he took a bath in the river and rested in the house of a friend of his father.

As soon as it was dark he took out the *melatti* flower which Adinda gave him and looked at it. Then he was sad because he had not seen her for so long. The farther he traveled from Badur, the more he began to think that the thirty six moons represented a very

long time. It was not so easy for him to go ahead. He felt weary and without ambition.

Saidjah arrived in Batavia. He sought a rich gentleman who hired him at once, when he found he could not understand what he said. In Batavia they prefer servants who do not understand Malay, and are not spoiled by contact with Europeans. Saidjah soon learned Malay, but he kept it to himself, because he thought only of Adinda and the two buffaloes. He grew tall and strong because he had something to eat every day, which did not happen in Badur. His master promoted him to the position of a house servant and increased his pay. But at the end of three years they said he was ungrateful, because he gave up his position. But he did not care what they said, his heart was glad because he was getting ready to go back. He counted over and over the treasures which he was going to carry home. In a hollow, bamboo stick he had his passport and the testimonial of his master. In a case swung over his shoulder by a piece of leather, was something heavy that beat against his back. Within this case were thirty Spanish dollars, with which he intended to buy three buffaloes. What would Adinda say to that! And that was not all. In his girdle shone a Malay *kris* with a sheathe of silver. The handle was of carved wood which he had wrapped carefully in silk. In the folds of his outer garment was a leathern girdle with silver links, and a clasp of gold. This was for Adinda. Around his neck in a little silk purse, he carried the dried *melatti* flower.

He did not pause to visit any of the cities along his route. It seemed to him that he could hear the voice of Adinda calling him. This music made him deaf to everything else.

At length, in the distance, he saw a great black spot. That must be the Djati Forest, which was near the tree where Adinda was going to wait for him. He groped in the darkness and felt the trunks of many trees. Soon he stumbled upon a piece of level ground that seemed familiar—the south side of a tree. He put his fingers in a gash in the side of the tree which he remembered had been cut to drive away an evil spirit that had hidden there and given some people of the village toothache.

This was the *ketapan* tree which he was seeking. He sat down in front of the tree and looked up at the stars. And when he saw a falling star he understood it as a greeting to him on his return to Badur. Then he wondered if Adinda were sleeping now, and if she had counted the moons correctly on the old rice-block. Would it not be a pity if she had cut one too many, or one too few? Thirty six moons there should be! He wondered if she had woven beautiful *sarongs*. And he wondered too who was living in the old home of his father. Then he recalled his youth, and his mother, and the buffalo that had saved him from being torn to pieces by the tiger.

Very carefully he watched the setting of the stars in the west, as they disappeared along the horizon line, and estimated the time before light would begin to come from the East, and how much time would elapse

before he met Adinda. She, of course, would come with the very first ray of light. Why in the world could she not have come the day before? He was sad that she had not got ahead of this beautiful hour, which had fed his soul with delight for three long years.

His complaints were foolish. The sun had not yet risen. Not yet had the sun sent its long rays across the levels. To be sure, over his head, the stars were now growing paler, one by one, as if ashamed that their domination must end so soon. Strange, wild colors fluttered over the lonely mountain tops, which seemed blacker afterward. Something that shone, floated now and then, across the clouds banked in the east; arrows of gold—flame—but they fell back again into the darkness that hid the day from the eyes of Saidjah.

Gradually it became lighter. He could see the landscape. He could hear sound of the leaves from the Klappa forest behind Badur.

And yet how could she sleep? Did she not know that .Saidjah was waiting for her? Probably the village watchman had just knocked at her door, and asked her why the night lamp was burning. Or perhaps she sat all night in the darkness on her rice-block, counting with her fingers the thirty six marks for the moons. Perhaps like him she was waiting for the rising of the sun.

He did not wish to go to Badur. He seated himself at the foot of the *ketapan* tree, and looked out over the levels. Nature smiled back at him and welcomed him. But his eyes kept turning toward the narrow

path that led from Badur to the *ketapan* tree, along which Adinda would come. But there was no one to be seen upon the path. He waited a long time, and looked and looked, and still there was no one upon the path. She probably watched all night and then fell asleep at dawn, he thought to console himself. Should he get up and go to Badur? She might be ill— or dead.

He got up and ran along the path to the village. He heard nothing. He saw nothing. Yet voices called and called—"Saidjah! Saidjah!" The women of Badur came out of their houses and looked at him. Their faces were sad. They recognized Saidjah and knew he had come to see Adinda, and that she was not there. The head of the district of Parang-Kudjang had taken away the buffaloes of Adinda's father. Her mother died of grief. Adinda's father feared punishment because he could not pay the land-rent, and he had fled. He took Adinda with him. But because Saidjah's father had been whipped in Buitenzorg for running away, he did not dare go there, but to the district of Lebak, which borders the sea. There they had taken ship. But Saidjah was so grieved he did not understand what they said to him.

He left Badur and went to Tjilang Kahan where he bought a boat. After a few days sail he reached the Campong coast, where there was an uprising against the rule of the Dutch. He joined a troop of soldiers less to fight than to search for Adinda. One day when there was a general massacre of natives who had been subdued by the army of the Netherlands, he

wandered through a little village that had been set on fire. As he was walking around some houses that had not been yet completely burned, he came upon the dead body of Adinda's father. There was a bayonet wound in his breast. A short distance away lay Adinda, naked and dead. A little rag of blue cloth was pressed in the bayonet wound in her breast. Saidjah met a soldier who was using his bayonet to drive the few surviving insurgents into the burning houses. With all his strength he rushed forward, and drove the soldier back, while the point of the bayonet pierced his lungs.

In Batavia there was rejoicing over the victory that had brought fresh laurels to Dutch arms in the East Indies. The Governor wrote to the home country that there was peace again in Campong. The soldiers were rewarded with crosses of heroes. In the churches prayers of thanksgiving were said because the Lord of Hosts had again fought upon the side of the Dutch.

ABISAG

By JAROSLAV VRCHLICKÝ

VRCHLICKY

JAROSLAV Vrchlický, whose real name is Emil Frida, is a significant personality in modern Bohemian literature.

He was born in 1853. He studied at various secondary schools and later attended the University of Prague. Here he devoted himself almost exclusively to theology and philosophy, and then—thanks to the generosity of Count Montecuccoli-Laderchi—traveled for a time in Italy.

In 1893 he was made Professor of Modern Literature in the University of Prague, of which he became one of the most distinguished figures.

His fertility as a writer is so unusual that it can not be passed over in silence. He has published many books of lyric verse, dramatic verse, stories in prose, and translations from many languages, including the work of English and American writers. He has given his countrymen versions of Schiller, Dante, Ariosto, Victor Hugo, Leopardi, and Provençal and Spanish poets.

The story *Abisag*, which we give, is from the collection of prose tales entitled *Bits of Colored Glass*. Vrchlický died in 1912.

'ABISAG

KING David lay upon a royal couch of cypress wood. From the ceiling swung huge receptacles carved of bronze, from which the smoke of burning perfumes rose, and whose dim, wavering light, showed carven cedarn walls and a ceiling starred with plaques of gold.

The night was warm and windless. From the city from time to time one could hear the measured tread of watchmen, and the clang of swords; from the vineyards that swept about Jerusalem like a girdle of green, came the voices of men who guarded the wine. The moon, resembling a warrior's shield of gold, reflected itself in the mirror of the flat roofs and flung fleeting, ghostly shadows about the twelve great gates of the city. The light fell upon the city wall, the purification pool, gardens filled with bee hives, long alleys of sycamore trees, of palm and fig trees. It fell upon tethered camels becoming restless at approach of day. It saw its golden surface in deep cisterns. It shone upon graves in which the bones of ancestors rested under the curse or the blessing of the sons of Israel. Night swept across the world of space like a prodigious face across the mind of the dreaming prophet.

The king lay like one dead upon his bed. Motion-

less, four men sat opposite him, their misshapen knotty hands rested upon the carven lions' heads that formed the arms of their chairs. Their faces were so still it was as if they were made of stone and only the trembling flames in the bronze receptacles swept over them the unreal motion of shadows.

The first wore the dress of a priest of Israel. His beard was parted and combed and reached to his waist. His name was Sadok. The second wore the insignia of the head of the army. His name was Banahash. The other two were courtiers, Semej and Rej. Their richly oiled hair smelled of sandal wood and hyacinth. They had torn the costly garments that covered their breasts. Grief dwelled in their hearts and lessened the quick pulsing of blood in their veins. Their attitude was expectant. It was evident that they were waiting for something important. Their eyes rested upon the bed where David lay wrapped in the lion's skin. His face was like a mask. It was the face of the dead. The body of the king was beginning to grow cold.

"Nathan does not come," remarked Sadok.

No one answered.

Banahash drew his brows together ominously. Semej and Rej sighed.

Again there was silence, heavy and prophetic.

"Does Bethsheba know what Nathan said?" inquired Semej in a whisper.

"Yes, she knows," replied Sadok.

"And has she agreed to it?" asked Rej.

"She had to agree. Does not God speak through

the mouth of Nathan? It is her fault that she does not perform the last service for David the King."

"She is old. She is burdened with years and illness," objected Semej.

"Hush! The King moves," whispered Banahash.

"No—it was just a rustling noise in the outer hall. Slaves are bringing the warming pans, and the coals."

Seven negroes in short, red tunics entered. They bore bronze pans filled with glowing coals, which shone like the sweet star, Sahil, when it first pierces the mist of evening and looks down upon a sleeping world. They placed two pans at the foot of the king, two at the head, and one on either side. They sprinkled myrrh and powdered incense upon the coals, and disappeared as softly as phantoms. The seven glowing pans lighted the dim room and sent up a blueish smoke that filled the air with fragrance. The pale face of the king looked paler. The four men who sat and watched him sank lower their heads upon their breasts.

To the warmth of the summer night was added the heat of the steaming pans. Beads of sweat stood out upon the brows of the watching men, and dotted like pearls their long, black beards.

The door opened. A man of giant body stood upon the threshold. His hair and beard were unkempt. They knew neither oil nor comb. His caftan was girdled with a rope. His knotty, muscular feet were covered with dust. His naked breast was weather stained and looked like the trunk of a gnarled fig tree.

White, bushy brows shaded his eyes which glowed like the coals in the warming pans.

"Nathan!" cried the watchmen by the bed. They arose and greeted him with gestures of submission. The expressions upon their faces changed. The face of Sadok showed curiosity held in check by fear; the face of Banahash, the calm of expectation, and satisfied desire; the faces of Semej and Rej, mistrust coupled with fear of the prophet.

Nathan looked about the room, and came nearer.

"How is the Anointed of the Lord?" he asked quickly.

"As he was when you left so is he now. Did you bring the Sunnamite maiden?"

"She is here; her father, too," replied Nathan, beckoning toward the anteroom.

A man entered. His head was bowed. He had little twinkling eyes, a red beard, and dirty hands. It was Lamek of the tribe of Issaher. A slender maiden enveloped in a veil followed him. Even her face was covered, only the shadow of her eyes could be seen.

Lamek bowed low as to his knees. At this moment he was so small he resembled a dwarf. This impression was strengthened by the saffron yellow caftan and red hair. The maiden towered like a young palm beside him.

"Banahash," directed Sadok," take the maiden to the bath of the king that she may be fit for the bed of the king."

Banahash opened a little door that shone like gold, which was entrance to the place of the bath. The

room was walled with jasper. In the center was the bath, hewn round from a single block of black marble. From the center of the ceiling two sea serpents, in which huge rubies shone for eyes, spouted rose water.

Banahash took the hand of the maiden and led her to the door, where he gave her over to the care of four slave women. Two held jars of precious ointment, two mirrors of ebony, and coverings made of purple wool.

Sadok returned to Lamek who had not yet lifted his head. But his sharp, sly eyes kept circling the room, so that not the slightest motion of the faces of those present escaped him. Nathan, the prophet, stood by the bed of David the King. He held his hands extended as one who implores a blessing. His lips trembled with prophetic words.

"Is this your daughter, Lamek?" asked Sadok.

"Yes; but she is handsomer than I—or her dead mother."

"Are you willing to do what Nathan, the man of God, has told you?"

"If it is the will of God—and the people of Israel may be saved."

"Did she agree?"

"She does not know. But my daughter is obedient. My will is hers."

"Is there one who loves her?"

"Yes—and no! My daughter is beautiful. And yet she really has no lover, because he does not know how beautiful she is. My eyes watch her as if she

were a nugget of gold, or a drop of water in the desert."

"Who is her lover?"

"A youth—an insignificant youth. He owns nor field nor vineyard. He owns no camels, nor is he the chief of a caravan. He owns nothing—*nothing*—It is my wish to obtain money enough to buy a vineyard near Sunnam—to leave to my children—that I may not die childless."

"Does—this lover—know what is to happen?"

"Yes—He is calm. He only said to my daughter, 'I will stand by the outer door of the palace until the end. I will await you there, to lead you back to the vineyard which your father will buy for us. If you remain as you are now, you will come without my calling you. If you do not come until the sun has set, I shall go away and I shall never look upon your face again'."

Sadok did not answer. He went into a room in the rear of the sleeping room, where a massive chest stood. He beckoned to Lamek to come nearer. The Hebrew's eyes greedily took in the contents of the chest. He saw bars upon bars of red gold, cups of beaten silver, rings, armlets, pearls the size of pigeon's eggs. He saw gems as varied in color as the flowers of the fields in spring. Sadok buried his hands in the chest, drew out bar after glittering bar, and piled one upon another upon the floor. He piled up rings covered with gems. Lamek filled his arms, while his eyes shone fiercer than the metal.

Sadok wished to close the cover. But the Hebrew

stood there and would not let him. He kept saying: *"For so little I will not sell my daughter!"* Sadok bent down and gave Lamek another cup, this time of silver and starred with rubies, and two armlets. On each armlet was the head of Anubis carved of a single onyx. Lamek was satisfied now and drew back

The door of the bath opened and two slave women came in leading Abisag. She was robed in white, transparent muslin. About wrists and ankles were jewels. Gold dust sparkled upon her long, black hair, like stars in a dark night.

Sadok signalled the slaves to leave. The Sunnamite maiden stood alone and trembling in the midst of the grey, old men. Her eyes were fastened upon the marble floor. Her arms were folded upon her breast, which rose and fell with the agitation that swayed her.

Sadok drew his brows together sharply. Banahash understood the sign, approached the bed of the king and drew back the lions' skins that covered it. Sadok lifted the muslin robe from the shoulders of the maiden.

Her hair, in which the gold dust sparkled, covered her like a cloak. Her cheeks were the color of the pomegranite. Nathan took her by the hand and led her to the bed of the king, while Banahash, the son of Johad, lifted up the lions' skins.

The maiden embraced the cold body of the king as a daughter would embrace a dying father. Sadok spread upon them a woolen coverlet and motioned to the others. They left the room. Nathan, alone,

remained, kneeling by the bed of David, the King, uplifting his hands in prayer.

The old men did not know that when they led Abisag to the bed of the king, a young man wearing a white robe appeared in the doorway. He went away again as quickly as he came. But he had seen the beauty of the Sunnamite maiden. This young man was Solomon.

From that moment peace vanished from the heart of Solomon. He was even indifferent that Adonias, the son of Hagith, whom friends had chosen king, was reveling day and night in the streets of Jerusalem, with his followers. He did not know that his mother, Bethsheba, stood white and trembling, her heart filled with bitterness and envy, behind a door of King David's chamber, to watch the influence of Abisag upon the life of the King. He paid no heed to the opinions of the unstable courtiers and royal sycophants, nor to what the cunning Sadok and secretive Nathan had in mind. Weary in body and dispirited, he betook himself to his pleasure palace in Baalhamon. Here he shut himself in, and throughout the night wandered along its garden ways, where century old sycamores looked down upon him, listening the while to the cicadas of the nights of summer, sing and sing.

Once when he was about to lie down upon his couch to rest, a slave announced the unexpected arrival of Banahash.

Solomon did not care to see him.

The son of Johad did not await permission, he rushed into the room declaring breathlessly:

"Good news! The king lives. The king spoke."

Solomon arose from his couch as if he expected some more definite communication.

"You must go back with me to the palace. It is a question of the anointing of a king."

Solomon fell back weakly against the heaped up rugs upon his bed.

"I go not there again."

"But it is the will of the king, and Bethsheba, your mother. Nathan awaits us by the river. In his hand is the holy oil for anointing. Adonias fled to the mountains."

"I go not," repeated Solomon.

"The nation awaits you. The judges are on your side. The warriors are calling your name through the streets of Jerusalem. And all this you owe to the Sunnamite maiden."

"Abisag," repeated Solomon slowly. "Am I pledged to give thanks to Abisag?"

"For everything," answered Banahash. "She awoke the king. Otherwise he would never again have spoken."

"Very well. On—on! I go," said Solomon.

Seldom has a king at his anointing shown such indifference as Solomon. They did with him as they wished. They led him hither and thither. After being proclaimed king, he would gladly have gone back to Baalhamon. But David again lay as one dead,

wordless, motionless, between the pans of glowing coals, wrapped in the yellow lion's skin. Nathan, the prophet, thought the end was near. Abisag still visited the king, but her efforts were useless.

When Solomon entered the room of his father, David, the King, it was evening. Banahash, alone, was with him. Solomon sat down beside him and seemed like one in a dream. He wished to see Abisag when she came to the king. Hours passed. Banahash bent over the king and arranged the coverings. A shudder seized him. David's heart did not beat. He thought he must be mistaken. He took a mirror of bronze and held it to the mouth of the king. The shimmering surface remained smooth and bright. David was dead!

Banahash tore his garments, ran to Solomon, fell down in front of him, and touched his forehead to the floor.

"What is it, Banahash?" questioned Solomon, still in his dream.

"You are king! David is no more. I hasten to announce to the priests."

"Wait!" commanded Solomon. "I forbid you to take a step."

Then his voice changed and became gentle and pleading.

"Do you love me, Banahash?"

"I would give my life to you," replied the courtier.

"It is your duty to watch by the King's bed until morning. Very easily you can delay the announcement of the death of the King."

Solomon bent and whispered in the ear of Banahash.

"Will you do it, Banahash?"

"I will, my King, if you will tell me what it was your father demanded against Joab, and Semej, whom they call the magician."

"I will tell you—later."

"No: now I must know it!" insisted Banahash.

"Later I will tell you. I swear it by the body of David, the King!"

"I go—to announce to Bethsheba, and the priests—"

"Listen, then, and hear!"

Again he bent to the ear of the still kneeling Banahash and whispered the last will of David, the King.

"You know what Joab did to me. You will proceed against him as is just. Semej, too, you hold in your power, who cursed me with a grievous curse. In my wrath I swore against him: I will not slay you with the sword! But you—pardon him not. You can make him descend early into the grave."

"I will warn my companions," Banahash thought quickly.

"I will do whatever seems good to me," thought Solomon.

Just as upon the evenings before, the Sunnamite, Abisag, ascended the couch of David, the King. She did not notice that the light was dimmed in the hanging receptacles of bronze, and that the great room grew dark and darker. She did not notice that the pans of coals had been carried away, nor that a great mass of lion's skins and purple coverings had been heaped upon the couch of David. She lay down and fell asleep.

At first her dream was monotonous like the desert. But this desert was not one of heat. Cold winds blew over it. The desert stretched to the horizon; it was dark and deep, like a great room at night. No bird swept across it. Abisag dreamed that she stood alone upon this monotonous grey-yellow expanse, lost in a sea of twilight, and that invisible hands placed weights upon her feet. Across the desert blew cold winds such as are known in the East, and Abisag thought that the stones were such as mark the way of tombs. She was afraid. She wished to cry for help. Then the waste trembled, and the twilight began to lighten. Strips of azure streaked the sky. Grass sprang up upon the sand. Cranes flew overhead. Abisag had closed her eyes, but her eyelids were made of mother of pearl and she saw through them. Where the desert horizon joined the sky something roared and swayed. It was a forest of cedar trees a century old. The sunlight lay upon their fabulously lovely summits, and the wind wafted their fragrance abroad. As by magic the forest drew nearer and nearer. She heard fountains leap beneath it. Narcissus blossoms rose to greet her, and their circle of leaves was like human eyes. Flowering vines embraced her body. In the crown of the great cedar above her head, a bird of gold nested, and when it spread its wings scarlet blossoms fell about her. And the song of the bird was a song of power and mystery. *"Set me like a seal upon thine heart. Strong as death is love, and desire is implacable as the grave—."*

Day touched her eyelids. She awoke. Beside her lay not the dead, grey King, but a man of youth and beauty, robed in white. He slept. Terrified, Abisag leaped from the couch, and stole away from the room. Outside, upon the streets of Jerusalem, where a great crowd swayed, and waving palm leaves were carried on high, voices called:

"Long live Solomon, King of Israel!"

Banahash and Nathan had announced the death of David, the King, because the sun had risen and day had come.

The Sunnamite maiden did not leave the royal palace. Some days later when she stepped from her bath, her slave women told her that Adonias, the son of Hagith, had been slain by Banahash at command of Solomon, and that his dead body lay before the palace door.

Abisag went down the palace steps and out upon the terrace. She saw the dead body. She wept. She fell upon it and covered it with kisses. While Abisag wept beside the body of Adonias, Solomon, amid the clang of trumpets, music of zithers and bells, was welcoming the Queen of Sheba. She came with a great retinue of camels, elephants, negroes and jesters, to learn of the wisdom and splendor of Solomon.

That same day were Joab, and Semej the magician, put to death, just as Solomon had promised David, the King.

THE KING'S CLOTHES

By KOLOMAN MIKSZATH

MIKSZATH

A VOLUME of short stories by Koloman Mikszáth—one of the most original and talented writers of modern Hungary—was published a few years ago in English. The story we give in translation—"The King's Clothes," was printed some fifteen years ago, and we think it was this Hungarian story teller's first appearance in print in the United States.

This story illustrates well his peculiar talent and his ironical, witty, satirical manner. Two novels by him —most unusual in both subject and treatment, are *The Magic Cloak* and *The Village That Had No Men* (Szelistye).

THE KING'S CLOTHES*

CHRONICLERS are sometimes mistaken. They tell us the story of King Morus but they forget to state over what land he ruled. Yet this does not have anything to do with the subject, because who believes believes. I will relate it truthfully.

One afternoon King Morus escaped from the duties of kingship, which means that he signed some seventy documents, which the Minister read to him in a sing song voice. His Majesty closed his eyes and was kind enough to listen to the unavoidable documents from end to end. There were some appointments to make, a few death sentences, and other similar trifles. He yawned only occasionally at the reading. "We have finished," declared at length the Minister, putting the huge book of papers under his arm and sticking the seal of the realm in his pocket.

"Wait a moment, Narciz," commanded the King. "Give me that little piece of iron from your pocket, and stamp it upon one of these empty death sentences, then hand it over and I will sign it."

"An empty death sentence, Your Majesty?" questioned the Minister astonished.

*I published this story some fifteen years ago in a magazine devoted to translations. It was, I believe, the first appearance by Mikszath in English.—E. W. Underwood.

"I'd like to know if you have anything against it? Perhaps it may occur to you that you are my constitutional Minister and it is your business to know what the seal is to be put upon. Narciz you are becoming childish."

"O Your Majesty!—Your Majesty—what can you be thinking of? I am the humble servent of the best of kings."

King Morus graciously patted old Narciz on the shoulders, then took the paper and placed it in the inner pocket of his coat of gold.

"Now, Old Man, I have the genuine, constitutional feeling within me. By Heaven, I have it, and I don't mind telling you—*in confidence*—what I am about to do with this death sentence."

"Most glorious King!" murmured Narciz.

"I am trying to win the favor of a very beautiful lady—and she asked me for this trifle. You see of course I couldn't refuse her a little thing like this."

"Your Majesty is too gracious!"

"I am wise, Narciz! The pity is the poor woman has no power, but she has a husband. I give her the power and she gets rid of the husband. *Sh—sh—Narciz*—Not a word to any one—"

"It is sweeter to kiss than to kill," flattered Narciz.

"Right you are, Old Man! I am going to carry this little piece of paper to her now, because the favor of the King is a fruitful seed. Write that sentence down in the Golden Book of the realm. Have you already written down what I said yesterday about the reckoning of the ground-rent?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty."

"Let me hear how it sounds."

The Minister opened the Golden Book and read the last lines: "A good king is like a gardener who trims the trees often."

"Very well said," opined the king, putting on his fez. He walked to the private garden by the shore of the sacred Nile, the garden which no one was permitted to enter.

The servants and courtiers whom he met on the way bowed to the ground as he passed. "We greet you, great King Morus."

His glowing, golden garments dazzled all eyes, and beneath his proud step the earth trembled. The nightingale in the garden sang of love, as if it divined the King's thoughts. The white lilies bowed their heads. The roses strewed fragrant leaves across his path, and the azaleas whispered a name—not the name of the king—but instead the name Florilla, the enchanting woman who was step-daughter of Narciz. Within the palace all were wondering where the King was going. The Minister whispered to his son: "He is carrying someone's head in his pocket."

Rogus, frightened, felt for his own head. He found it just where it always was, upon his neck, between his two shoulders.

He spoke at once to the watchman who stood by the garden gate:

"Here is a purse of gold. Exchange clothes with me, and let me into the garden."

The watchman refused. "I can not. The King would cut my head off when he returns."

"You are an ass," replied Rogus. "The King can not kill you until he comes back. I will kill you upon the instant if you do not obey me. So you can see you can win both time and money."

The watchman agreed. Rogus, who had long suspected something, put on the watchman's clothes and followed the King. Before him, too, the lilies bent their heads. The roses strewed fragrant leaves, and the azaleas whispered the name, Florilla. But Rogus stepped upon them and crushed them. A secret gate, to which King Morus had the key, led from the garden to the shore of the Nile, along which were pleasure palaces. Among these palaces stood the villa of Rogus, which the King had built just the summer before and presented to his faithful servant. Likewise, just a year before, the Minister had written in the Golden Book, that the favor of the King was a fruitful seed.

Rogus kept following the King, an easy thing now, because the King had forgotten to lock the garden gate.

Profound quiet reigned by the river, even the voice of the ripples was subdued. The twilight was beginning to color the Nile steel blue so that it resembled the curving blade of an executioner's giant sword.

When the King reached the dwelling of Rogus, he blew three times on a silver whistle. At this sign a young woman appeared upon the balcony. I only

say this about her, that the artists of that day could not find a finer head to preserve for posterity.

"Florilla," whispered the King.

Rogus hid behind some shrubbery and listened. To be sure he knew all about it, because he had suspected it long.

"Yes, my King," replied Florilla.

"May I be permitted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?"

"Why ask? A King commands."

"I have left your husband busy at court, so he can not surprise us. Perhaps, too, the end has come for him. Here is the death sentence."

"With the seal of the Minister?"

"Of course."

"A shabby trick in my father," thought Rogus.

"Bring it up to me in an hour," whispered Florilla. "Within the hour I will put all my serving women to sleep."

An hour was a long time for a King who was in love to wait. The evening was hot. An odor of heat arose from the earth. There was no breeze and the Nile was smooth as a mirror. A conceited bee swam boldly upon a rose leaf, without fear of shipwreck. The King looked long at the enticing water, until a desire arose in him. And what a King desires— He seated himself beside some shrubbery near Rogus and took off the yellow shoes with the golden spurs. He laid aside his purple cloak and the gold colored vest with the diamond buttons. He took the silver whistle from his neck, and then took off all his costly royal

clothes, and placed them upon the soft grass. The mighty ruler looked about. No one was to be seen. Who indeed would dare to intrude upon this forbidden shore of the sacred Nile!

The mirroring water alone was shameless enough to look at him and reflect him. Morus jumped into the water which kissed flatteringly his heated body. He enjoyed himself greatly. The trees covered with trailing vines built a fragrant sheltering wall and he walked upon shining pebbles which tickled his feet.

When he had bathed long enough and the hour of the love tryst drew near, he came out of the water and hastened to the place where he had left his clothes. But evidently he had mistaken the piece of shrubbery and hastened to the next one. He went back. There was no trace of the royal garments. He walked—his teeth chattering—from bush to bush. He ran up and down the shore, looking behind all the bushes.

"Where are my clothes? Who has stolen them? It could not have been a man. Do you hear, Earth? If you have swallowed them, I will tear up all the trees and grass in my realm."

He threw himself upon the ground and began to sob. Then he jumped up and began to revile the moon.

"Shine better, you miserable old night-light! If you don't I'll smash your temple."

But the moon did not seem to hear. The moon acted like a timid girl and hid behind a veil of cloud. It began to rain. The dirt and water from the trees disfigured his face. In despair he determined to return to the palace and procure fresh clothes. The

great disgrace of being seen by the watchmen was unavoidable, but he knew how to get even. He would have their heads chopped off. He would make it impossible for them to laugh about it.

He hastened to the secret gate. The gate was locked. Then he remembered he had left the key in it. There was nothing to do but to walk along the shore to the south gate, and from there through many streets to the palace. What ridiculous songs they would write about him—his subjects, when they saw him like this. But fortunately no one saw him. The streets through which he went were empty. There was only a beggar sleeping by the door of a temple. The King awoke him. "Give me that sack that covers you," he commanded. The frightened beggar struck at him with his cane.

"Get out! If you don't I'll knock you down."

The King saw that he was the weaker and hurried on. A pack of hungry dogs began to follow him howling. The watchman was sleeping at the gate when someone slapped him on the back.

"Oh! Oh! Who are you? What do you want?"

"Let me in—and give me your cloak."

The watchman thought it was a joke. He made up a face and then laughed.

"Is that all you want? I'm sorry the imbecile asylum is so far away."

"I command you to obey," repeated the King in wrath.

"Get out!" pointing his spear at the ridiculous figure, with tousled hair and bleeding feet.

"Don't you know me?"

"No."

"I am the King."

"Or a fool. Get out! You are lucky that I am not too sleepy to give you a good beating in the name of the King."

King Morus then began to speak gently. He recalled that this was the way to get on with underlings.

"Listen—my noble Hero! To-night I bathed in the Nile. Some one stole my clothes. I swear to you that I am King Morus."

"You fool," declared the soldier.

Crawling along the wall, weak and dejected, he made his way to the palace of his adored one. He decided to knock and ask for clothes. He also made up his mind to reduce the entire city to ashes—just as soon——*just as soon*—as he procured clothes.

Clothes? Is this all there is to a King? Then he saw the beggar. The old good-for-nothing was up and awake and waiting for the wine shops to be opened.

"Give me that covering of yours," said the King. The beggar threw him a look of scorn.

"You don't feel quite so high and mighty, do you? Where did you pawn your clothes? It's a shame the way the wine merchants carry on. If I were the King I'd hang them all."

"That's just what I'll do," whispered Morus—"if you'll only give me your covering."

"You'd like to trick me, would you, you rascal?"

"I'm the king."

The beggar looked amazed.

"Haven't you seen my face on the gold pieces?"

"I? I never had any gold pieces!" giving the king his covering.

Now he could go boldly to the castle of Rogus. Despite the early hour, there was a crowd waiting at the gate. They were whispering. The King recognized his servile courtiers. They avoided him. They did not want his dirty covering to touch their fine clothes. The King struck the door with his fist.

"Open! I command in the name of the King!"

The watchman by the door laughed. "Poor fool!" Morus began to implore. "Don't you recognize me? My well beloved subjects, look at me! I am your ruler."

Laughter was his answer.

"Kabul, you to whom last week I gave a fortune, why are you silent? And you—Niles—whom I lifted from poverty, can you deny me?"

Neither Kabul nor Niles knew the King.

"Ungrateful men!" he raged. "Where is the mistress? Where is Florilla? She will recognize me."

At this moment the herald of the King came out. Upon his lifted spear he bore a head—the head of Florilla.

She could recognize him no more. She was silent forever. The golden hair fluttered about the beautiful head, and covered part of the long spear. The people shouted with joy. The King sorrowfully demanded who had done this. No one answered, but he soon found out. The herald read a proclamation, then nailed it to the door, so that all could see that it had the

seal of the Minister. King Morus pressed his hands to his temples and murmured: "Perhaps I am not king Morus."

The crowd increased. Knights and ladies came to see the beautiful head, which from now on could cause neither envy nor love. The beggar came, too. The only one who spoke to the King was the beggar who gave him the covering.

"Get out of here! The great lords will beat you and take away the covering I gave you." The beggar took him by the hand and led him away. He felt limp and weak and had no will of his own.

On the great square his eyes again brightened. He saw Narciz. The Minister was hurrying to the royal presence, a package under his arm. He ran after him. He fell upon his neck.

"Narciz! Narciz! You dear old man! Lucky for me to find you!"

The Minister, in anger, freed himself.

"What sort of shameless creature are you?"

"Don't you recognize me? I am the King."

"Of course not!" replied the Minister, laughing. "You resemble him a little, if you were not so hoarse." He tapped him gently on the back with the gold headed cane which the King had given him on his fiftieth birthday.

In the merriest mood the Minister entered the royal dwelling. Servants ran ahead to open doors for him, until he came to the room of the royal presence—where the King—Rogus—awaited him.

Rogus told the story to him; how he had overheard

the conversation between Florilla and the King, how he had put on the King's clothes, and written Florilla's name upon the empty death sentence. What happened after this chroniclers relate, to be sure, but I am not going to repeat it to you, because I do not believe the ending of the affair myself.

WHEN THE BRIGHT NIGHTS WERE

By PETRI ROSEGGER

ROSEGGER

PETRI Kettenfeier Rosegger (born in 1843 at Alpel, Steiermark) is a popular and prolific writer of Austria. His father and mother were both charcoal burners in the great forest which he has pictured so often, and his youthful surroundings were most meager. His mother was a woman of talent; she was one of nature's poets and from her came his mental ability. At seventeen he was apprenticed to a tailor, and in the few years that followed, he worked in sixty-seven different families.

In this way he learned the life of the peasants of his country and at the same time sketched the idea of *Waldheimat* (Forest Home), his first important work —which has now become a classic—and from which this story is taken.

Later Dr. Svoboda, editor of a paper in Graz, heard of him, and with the aid and coöperation of friends, helped him to an education. His descriptions of the wooded country where he was born, and of peasant life in the Alps, are among the finest in the language.

WHEN THE BRIGHT NIGHTS WERE

THE summer had been hot. The moss in the forest was faded and dry, and between the sparse blades of grass one could see the grey ground. Beside the piles of dried pine needles on the floor of the forest, lay dead ants and beetles. The stones in the bed of the river were dry and white as ivory. Fish and frogs were dying in the little round pools that were occasionally visible between the stones.

The air was heavy, and the mountains—even the near ones—were blue. When the sun arose it was as red as the autumn leaf of a beech tree, then, later, pallid and dull, so that one could look straight at it. It crawled lifelessly across the grey desert of the sky; the people began to hope for rain, but a little breeze sprang up, and when morning came, the clouds had disappeared and even the dew was not to be seen.

Down in the village they appointed a day of prayer for rain. From all the forest the people came in crowds. Only old Markus and I remained at home in the empty house, and the old servant said to me; "If fine weather comes, it will rain—so of what use is the day of prayer? If the Lord God made us and put us here, he hasn't the foolish head to forget us. And if he hasn't any head at all but just made the world with his hands and feet, then he hasn't any ears,

has he? So what's the use of all this howling in the village! Don't you agree with me yourself, Boy?"

What all do not people say! Old Markus breaks his head thinking over things he knows nothing about, is what they say.

Just then a shepherd from the Riegelberg jumped into the door. He was so excited he could hardly speak. He pointed through the window with both forefingers, toward the crest of the Filnbaum Forest. The old servant followed the direction and clasped his hands in fear. There, behind the summit, whirled upward a circling column of red smoke, which spread out and blackened the sky.

"That may be very serious," declared Markus. He seized an axe and hurried away. The smoke rose thicker and thicker, and spread out faster and faster. I began to cry. Old Markus paid no attention to me; he had other work to do.

On the sunny slopes of the Filnbaum Forest it had begun, where there was a space overgrown with withered briars and bushes. Near the growth of dry larch trees the fire began, no one knows how. First it skipped along lightly from twig to twig, then upward from great bough to bough, with wide fluttering wings. Soon the conflagration unchained its wild powers, and set floating its red, victorious banners. Here the forest becomes thicker and loftier; long braids of moss swing from the branches, and the great trees which were wounded by a hail storm some years ago, are bare and resinous to the summit. With what relish the fiery tongues lick these great trunks, and then flare

up into space! And down upon the ground a brood of little red serpents begin to crawl in all directions, and to develop a hideous life. The few wood choppers run around and around in confusion, and come and cry for help. But the great forest and all its huts are empty.

The people have gone to the village to pray for rain. When, hours later, they start to return, the great forest is in flames. There is a feverish trembling in the air, a cracking and rattling; twigs break, trunks crash down and send up a multitude of sparks, and waves of smoke. Fresh breaths of burning air float over the woodland; the flames give birth to a storm-wind which they ride.

Men worked and worked; some, half burned, had to be carried out. The servant, Markus, saw the heart-breaking result, but he did not complain nor was he discouraged, he worked quietly and persistently. His clothing began to catch fire. He ran down to the river bed and rolled in the sand until it clung to and covered his rough clothing. Now he owned a coat of mail. He hewed off branches; he cut down trees, but that did not help. The glowing river rolled on; dead trees, bare branches waited eagerly for the devouring flame, and burned at the first breath.

Now the workmen tried to get ahead of the fire by cutting down great spaces of trees, and thus by making a clearing, set a limit to its power. Then the conflagration divided itself and spread out resplendent arms in other directions. When evening came the wind rose; it tore into shreds the gorgeous and

triumphant flame-banners, and scattered the fragments over the forest land. There was a monotonous and uncanny moaning in the heavens, and a marvelous, unnatural light flung far and wide over all the darkly wooded country.

Exhausted and helpless, the workmen rested; the women carried their belongings out of their cottages without knowing what to do with them.

In the deep valleys there was peace and quiet. There one heard only the whispering of the tall pine trees. But the night sky was rose-colored, and occasionally a fire-dragon sped overhead. Sometimes twittering birds came, and homeless animals. The deer came up to the dwellings of men.

"Our fate will be that of the deer," complained the old women. "There is no hope of saving the forest now. It will all be burned! Oh! Holy Savior—this is the Last Judgment."

For days the conflagration lasted.

From our house—high among the woodlands—we could look down upon the trees of the Filnbaum Forest, and watch the flames climb up. The land was covered with a sad veil, and smoke choked us. Above, in the sky, hung a huge, tragic, red wheel which the smoke whirled about but could not destroy. That was the sun. We watched the flames draw nearer and nearer to us. They swept over the heights, down into the valleys, and at length climbed the hillside toward our house. We needed no burning pine cones in the evenings, we had light enough, because ten minutes walk from our door the beautiful forest was flaming.

Long ago we had driven the cattle to the Alm Meadow and carried the furniture out into the field. People came running by who were half mad. Old Martin kept his senses better than the rest, although his hut was burned, he picked cranberries at midnight by the light of the flames. My father went upon the roof of our cottage, carrying a pole on the end of which was a rag which was wet. With this he put out the falling sparks. On the fifth night, when we were sleeping in a corner of our empty rooms, we were awakened by a great roaring. Old Markus, who was keeping watch upon the roof, called to us. *"That's good! That's good!"*

A storm had arisen and now it was raging over the burning woodland, with a power that was splendid and terrifying. It roared and thundered like a cataract turned loose among the trees. The fire was turned away from our direction, and that was what caused the words of old Markus. The flames were in wild flight. They leaped over entire stretches of forest and set fire to fresh woodlands far away.

"It is over! We are saved!" exclaimed the helpless people in surprise. Some, indeed, when the smoke cleared away and they saw the bald mountain sides, regained their normal mind and said: "Surely there is going to be a great festival for the mountains have shaved themselves."

When the storm was over, the rain came. For days the rain fell and the heavy clouds hung low. At last the fire was extinguished. Over the forest spread a frosty fog, for fall had come.

The burning of the forests was so huge a thing that it could be painted only by a powerful imagination. Such an imagination is not mine, therefore there was nothing left for me to do but to sketch it roughly with the worn pencil of memory.

After the cold mists of autumn came the snow. That winter from our windows we saw more white spaces than black. When spring came, then we realized what the great fire had done. Every where black ground, rust hued stones, roots that looked like coals, and tall, black trunks towering over all.

Workmen came. They plowed the blackened soil. They sowed grain. The early fall brought splendor. No one in all our forest land had ever seen such a magnificent harvest as covered the mountain sides. I recall what the village pastor said: "The Lord God strikes wounds, but he sends the balsam that heals. Praised be His name!"

From the Filnbaum Forest to our very door were fields, and for thirty years the burned woodland gave our people bread. Since then our people are scattered; they have moved away, and a fresh, new, forest is beginning to grow upon the mountain sides.

THE POINT OF VIEW

By ALEXANDER L. KIELLAND

KIELLAND

ALEXANDER L. Kielland is the Norwegian writer of whom it has been said that he has given to his northern tongue the flexibility and the grace of the French tongue. He is *par excellence* a writer of the short story and is renowned for the skill of his technique.

One volume of his stories has been published in America. The story we give—*The Point of View*, is new, however, to American readers.

THE POINT OF VIEW

In front of the garden gate of the villa of Lawyer Abel a small, elegant trap drew up, to which two handsome, well groomed horses were attached.

Upon the harness was neither silver nor any shining metal; it was dull black, and even the buckles were covered with leather. The shining wood of the trap showed just a trace of dark green in its color. The upholstery was a dark and modest grey, and only when one examined it closely, did one discover that it was made of heavy silk. The coachman was as correct as an English coachman; all in black, the coat tightly buttoned, showing a space of white at the neck.

Mrs. Warden, who sat alone in the trap, bent forward and placed her hand upon the ivory handle. Slowly she got out, her long gown trailing behind her, and carefully closed the door of the trap.

Mrs. Warden walked through the little garden, and entered. She looked through the open door into the adjoining room, and saw the lady of the house standing beside a table littered with bright colored cloth, and with several copies of "The Bazaar."

"Ah—you have come just in time—dear Emilie!" declared Mrs. Abel. "I am in despair about my seamstress. She can not design anything new, so here I sit turning the leaves of "The Bazaar." Take off

your wraps and help me. I am trying to design a street dress."

"I am not capable of helping you when it is a question of dress," replied Mrs. Warden.

Mrs. Abel stared at her in astonishment. There was something unusual in the tone of voice, and she had great respect for the opinion of her wealthy friend.

"Don't you remember that I told you that just a little while ago Mr. Warden insisted upon my buying a new silk gown?"

"Yes—yes—of Madame Labiche. Of course I remember," interrupted Mrs. Abel. "And now I suppose you are on the way to purchase it. Take me with you! That will be pleasant."

"I am not going to see Madame Labiche," replied Mrs. Warden with solemn dignity.

"For goodness sake, why not?" questioned her friend, opening her pretty brown eyes with astonishment.

"Well—I will tell you," replied Mrs. Warden. "I am convinced that we can not spend so much money and keep a good conscience—when we know how much poverty there is in this city in which we live. There are hundreds of families who are suffering—the direst need!"

"Yes—but—," objected Mrs. Abel, casting a deprecating glance toward the table. "It is so everywhere. There can not help but be inequality—"

"We must be careful not to increase the inequality. We must do everything in our power to lessen it," insisted Mrs. Warden. Mrs. Abel felt that her friend

gave a glance of disapproval at the table covered with cloth, where the copies of "The Bazaar" lay.

"It is only alpaca," she ventured timidly.

"Don't think, dear Caroline, that I reproach you Things of this kind depend wholly upon the individual. Every one must act as he thinks · he is answerable to his own conscience."

The conversation continued in this manner, and Mrs. Warden explained that she was now on her way to visit one of the poorest quarters of the city, in order to see conditions with her own eyes, and to convince herself of the way in which the poor really live.

A few days before, she had read the yearly statement of a private institution for the poor, of whose board of managers her husband was a member. She had purposely avoided asking the police, or the Superintendent of the Poor, for statements, because it was her intention to see for herself, and to form her own opinion. The good-by of the friends was a little cooler than usual. Both were in serious mood. Mrs. Abel remained in the garden room. She did not feel inclined to proceed further with the design for the street dress, although the material was unusually attractive. She heard the sound of the wagon wheels upon the level roadway of the residence quarter as it rolled away.

"What a good heart Emilie has!" she sighed.

Nothing was further from this young woman's disposition than envy and ill will, and yet it was with a feeling akin to this that to-day she watched the trap

drive away. Whether it was the good heart or the elegant trap it would be hard to say.

The coachman had taken his orders without a change of expression He drove farther and farther along the strange streets of the poor quarter, just as if he were going to a court ball.

At last he received command to stop, and it was high time. The streets became narrower and narrower, it was almost as if the well fed horses and the elegant trap would be caught like a stopper in the neck of a bottle.

The correct coachman gave no sign of anxiety although the situation was really becoming acute. An impudent voice called from a garret window and advised him to kill the horses because they would never get out alive.

Mrs. Warden climbed down and turned into a still narrower street. She had made up her mind to see the worst. In a door stood a half grown girl. "Do poor people live in this house?"

The girl laughed and answered something then darted ahead of her through the door. Mrs. Warden did not catch the words, but she had the feeling that she said something insulting.

She entered the first room she came to. The air was so thick it made her dizzy, and she was glad to find a place to sit down by the stove. In the gesture with which the woman swept the clothing from the seat to the floor, and in the smile with which she greeted the elegant lady, there was something that offended her. She received likewise the impression

that the woman had seen better days, although her manner was rather bold than gentle, and the smile certainly was not pleasant. The long train of the pale, grey street dress floated out over the dirty floor, and when she seated herself she could not help remembering a witticism of Heine's: "You look like a bonbon that has been lying in the sun."

The conversation began and progressed as is the custom with such conversations. If each of these women had kept to the usual tone of her conversation, neither would have understood a word of what the other said.

But since the poor know the rich so much better than the rich know the poor, they hit upon a form of speech, which experience had taught, and which is so far successful that the rich are at once put in mood to give. Better than this they can not know each other.

This speech the poor woman understood to perfection, and soon Mrs. Warden began to comprehend their miserable life. She had two children, one a boy of four or five who lay on the floor, and a baby.

Mrs. Warden looked attentively at the little colorless creatures and could not believe that the baby was thirteen months old. She had a baby at home of seven months who was twice as large.

"You ought to feed the baby something strengthening," she said. Then she said something that floated through her head about prepared foods. At the words *"something strengthening,"* an unkempt head rose from the straw bed. It was the pale, hollow-eyed face of a man, with a cloth tied tightly about his forehead.

Mrs. Warden was afraid. "Your husband?" she inquired.

"Yes," was the reply. He did not go back to work to-day because he had the toothache.

Mrs. Warden had had toothache. She knew how painful it was. She at once said something sympathetic. The man murmured something and fell back upon the straw. At this moment Mrs. Warden discovered another person whom she had not seen before—a young girl, who sat in the opposite corner by the stove. She stared at the elegant lady a moment, and then turned her back upon her. Mrs. Warden thought the young girl had some sort of work in her lap which she wished to conceal. Perhaps it was an old dress which she was trying to mend.

"Why does the boy lie there on the floor?" she inquired.

"He is lame," answered the mother. Now followed a pitiful tale and a description of what had happened after the scarlet fever.

"You should buy him a wheeled chair," Mrs. Warden was on the point of remarking, when it occurred to her it would be better for her to buy it. It is not wise to give poor people money, she remembered. But she would give the poor woman something, of course. She felt in her pocket for her purse. It was not there. She must have left it in the trap. Just as she was about to explain to the poor woman what had happened, a well dressed man opened the door and entered. His face was round and of a peculiar dry pallor.

"Mrs. Warden, I believe," said the stranger. "I saw your trap up here in the street, and I suppose this is your pocket book which I am bringing you,"

It belonged to her. Upon the smooth ivory was E.W. engraved in black.

"Just as I turned the corner, I saw it in the hands of a girl—one of the worst in the quarter. I am Superintendent of the Poor for this district."

Mrs. Warden thanked him. When she turned toward the occupants of the room again, she was terrified at the change that had taken place. The man was sitting up in bed and staring at the stranger. The woman's face wore a hateful expression, and the lame child on the floor, propped up upon its arms, bristled like a wild animal. In all the eyes lay the same hate, the same warlike defiance.

"What a sight you are to-day, Martin!" declared the stranger. "I thought to myself that you were one of them last night. I was right you see. They'll come after you this afternoon. You'll get at least two months in prison."

Then the deluge descended upon them. The man and woman shrieked at each other. The girl came from behind the stove and joined them. No one could distinguish words they were so busy with hands and eyes. It seemed as if the little stuffy room must explode with the pressure of unchained passions.

Mrs. Warden turned pale and arose. The stranger opened the door and they went out. In the corridor she heard the frightful laughter of the woman. And the woman who laughed like that was the same woman

who had spoken so gently and pitifully of the sick children. Almost unwillingly she followed the man who had brought about this amazing change. At first she listened to him with a proud indifferent air. Gradually, however, her attitude changed, there was so much truth in his words. He was glad to meet a woman like Mrs. Warden who had heart for the poor who suffered. Although—usually—the best intentioned help fell in the wrong place. Good heartedness was something praiseworthy anyway.

"But does not this family need help? I received the impression that the woman had seen better days. Perhaps she could be helped out of this life."

"I am sorry to tell you, Madam, that she has been a very bad—public character."

Mrs. Warden trembled.

She had spoken with a woman like that!—*about children.*

"And the young girl?" she asked timidly.

"Did you not look at her Madam, and observe her condition?"

"No—you mean—?"

The Superintendent of the Poor murmured a few words. Mrs. Warden shuddered "—and that man? *The man of the house!*"

"Yes, Madam. I am sorry to tell you this," and he whispered again.

This was too much for the elegant lady. She became faint and dizzy. They were walking toward her trap, which was somewhat farther on than the place where she had left it.

The correct coachman had played a trick upon the street urchins. After he had sat for a time as straight and impassive as a taper of wax, he guided the fat horses, step by step, to a wider place in the street which could not have been noticed by any one except the trained eye of the correct coachman. A crowd of ragged gamins surrounded him and tried to frighten the fat horses, but the spirit of the correct coachman had become their spirit.

After he had sat there calmly for a while, he saw a little irregular space, made by two opposing stairways. Slowly he guided the horses here and made a turn, so sharp, so crisp, that it seemed as if the frail trap must be crushed between the masonry, but so accurately, that scarcely an inch intervened on either side. Now he was sitting again as straight as a taper of wax. But he was treasuring in his mind the number of the policeman, who had seen him make the turn, so he could have some one to refer to when he told the incident at home in the stable.

The Superintendent helped Mrs. Warden into the trap. She begged him to call the next day.

"Lawyer Abel," she called to the coachman, and the carriage rolled on. The farther she went from the poor quarter, the smoother and swifter the carriage moved. When they entered the residence section, the fat horses lifted their heads gladly to breathe the good air, that came across the gardens. And the correct coachman, without any visible reason cracked his whip three times.

How could one expect that such degenerate people

could ever rise to any height of intelligence! What condition must exist in their miserable conscience—how could they be expected to withstand the temptations of life! She herself knew what temptation was. Did she not have to fight against one all the time—against wealth! She shuddered to think what these beasts of men, and these wretched women would do, if wealth were suddenly given to them. Wealth was no slight test of character. Just day before yesterday her husband had led her into temptation. He insisted upon hiring an English groom. And she had resisted the temptation and replied:

"No—it is not right. I will have no groom upon the box. Perhaps we are rich enough, but we must guard against pride. I can get out and in without help, thank God."

Mrs. Abel, who was clearing the table of the cloth and the copies of "The Bazaar," was glad to see her.

"You are back so soon, Emilie? I have just told the seamstress to go. What you said to me took away all desire for the new dress," declared kind, little Mrs. Abel.

"Every one must follow his own conscience," answered Mrs. Warden gently.

Mrs. Abel looked up. She had not expected this answer.

"Let me tell you what I have experienced," continued Mrs. Warden. She repeated what the Superintendent of the Poor had told her. When she had finished describing the condition of the young girl, Mrs. Abel became so ill, the maid had to bring her a

glass of port wine. When the costly, cut crystal decanter and glasses were brought in, Mrs. Abel whispered to her.

"What—all in one bed? You can't mean it!" exclaimed Mrs. Abel clasping her hands tragically.

"I would not have believed it an hour ago," replied Mrs. Warden.

"How lucky you were to get safely out of the place, Emilie!"

"Yes—and when we consider," continued Mrs. Warden, "that not even the heathen—who have nothing—not even an excuse to keep them from wrong—nor any conscience—"

"This surely speaks loudly for all who listen to the teachings of the church," interrupted Mrs. Abel sympathetically.

"Yes—God knows that—who does it," replied Mrs. Warden, looking straight ahead, a smile upon her lips. The two friends separated after embracing each other warmly.

Mrs. Warden took hold of the ivory handle and stepped into the trap, the long, grey, train floating behind her. She closed the trap door carefully, without making any noise.

"To Madame Labiche!" she directed. She looked toward Mrs. Abel and said: "Now, Heaven be praised, I can order that silk dress with a clear conscience."

"Yes, indeed, you can!" was the answer.

Then she hastened into the house.

MY TRAVELING COMPANION

By PIETARI PÄIVÄRINTA

PÄIVÄRINTA

PÄIVÄRINTA—who belongs to the new school of Finnish writers—although he was born much earlier—is the prose poet of the peasant and one of his strongest equipments for this aesthetic role which he was to play so well, is the greatness of his heart—a sort of tragic pity—which is found in everything he writes. He sees with his heart and nothing escapes this seeing. Sometimes it lifts him to just such dramatic heights as the "Homeric laughter" of Gógol, which, by the way, too, was full of tears. It is an x-ray vision that lays bare the soul. He lived the life of a peasant, so he knows at first hand the things of which he writes. He left the plowshare after he was forty to picture the humble companions among whom he had spent his days. Like Burns, he did manual labor with one hand while he held a book in the other. The date of his birth—1827—seems long ago for him to be of that new school of story tellers of Finnland, among whom are Frosterus, Pakkala, Raijonen, Aho. His parents were poor, day laborers. He was brought up to work, and to the observance of stern discipline. There were a number of other children. Pietari was the eldest. The parents fell ill, and he was obliged to go out begging as a child in order to procure bread enough for the others. When he was scarcely out of his teens he married a poor peasant girl and bought himself a little piece of forest land. Unable to make a living by farming he traveled from parish to parish and sang; he had a voice of great beauty and power which won him his first fame. At length he settled down as clerk of a parish. Later he represented his peasant community in the Finnish Parliament. His first book was *Episodes of the Great War,* and it was published with success the year he wrote it. This was followed by others among which was an account of his own life. The subjects were always the same, pictures of peasant life. Päivärinta is a Joseph Israel of the pen.

MY TRAVELING COMPANION

IT WAS the last of March. The weather was fair and here and there one could see signs of approaching Spring. Birds were beginning to twitter in the branches. Sleighing, if not completely broken up, was bad; the roads were rough and muddy, and in several places the bare ground showed through. Brooks and rivers were filled with floating snow and ice and dirt, and only the sharp freezing at night kept them from overflowing their banks. In favored places many a little brook had burst through to freedom and was joyfully leaping down the declivities, and rushing noisily away to the breast of its mother—the ancient sea.

Such was the season and condition of traveling, when business forced me to take a journey outside my own parish.

Early that morning I came across a man, who like myself was forced to travel on business. He had one emaciated old horse and a heavy sleigh; indeed he went on foot and pushed the sleigh. When I overtook him I jumped out and trudged along beside him.

"Good morning, old man," I began, as I reached his side.

"Good morning," was the reply, without looking in my direction.

I had now opportunity to observe my companion at close range. His horse was really little more than a skeleton, and the load was two barrels of tar. In the sleigh I saw reeds and swamp-grass, evidently the horse's food, and very likely for the same purpose was a sack filled with straw, which was placed on top of the tar barrels and stuck out over the front. In addition, in the sleigh, there was á small birch-bark basket which probably held food for the man. He wore an old and ragged coat, which was held tight at the hips by a worn leather strap. The coat had no buttons, and it was not provided with any means of fastening at the top. The strap about his hips had no effect upon holding the old coat together at the neck, so the man's chest was bare.

His shoes were likewise old and they had been mended time and again. Now they were torn and wisps of straw which he had used to try to stuff the holes, stuck through. On his hands he wore tattered, often mended mittens, and on his head an ancient sheep skin cap.

As I said, the old man was trudging along behind the sleigh. He did not seem to have planned upon riding, because the two barrels of tar and the food for the old mare filled it completely.

When he came to a place in the road where the snow was gone, the old man pushed the sleigh with all his strength, in attempt to help the feeble horse. Holes in the road, and furrows cut by sleighs, were filled with water, and this ice water went in through the holes in the old man's shoes.

"Where are you going?" I inquired, in order to begin a conversation, after making the above observations.

"To the city!" was the curt and melancholy reply.

"You have chosen a bad time for your journey, because now sleighing is uncertain."

He answered: "True; the road is bad but I couldn't wait for a better one."

"What could force you to make the journey now when it is so difficult to get along?"

"Threat of execution for debt. That doesn't wait for weather," said the old man sadly, looking up at me for the first time, with shy, grief-shadowed eyes.

This was my first glimpse of his face. It was wrinkled, and eaten out by misfortune, and made old before years had done so. Both his body and his manner indicated fewer years than his face.

"Who is such a cruel creditor as to drive you to the city in weather like this?"

"The parson!" said the old man sharply.

"The parson? You owe him so much then?" I inquired in astonishment.

"Only last year's interest."

"Only last year's interest? Haven't you been to him and asked him to wait?"

"Yes—several times."

"Well, what does he say?"

"He was very angry and exclaimed: You're stealing from me—you vagabond." He didn't have any pity when I begged him with tears in my eyes.

"I must say that you have a hard hearted parson. It wouldn't hurt him to wait a little—anyway until

the roads are dry," I explained in ill temper, without knowing why I was so agitated.

"That's just what I think—that he could wait. But I'm so ignorant I don't suppose I know anything about such things—of course the pastor knows better than I do. He has great responsibility for all our souls, and I suppose that's why he has to look after his interest. He's a good preacher—though—does everything just right. Of course, I don't like to blame the pastor—but I wouldn't steal however much good it would do me. Some say the pastor is *tight* and thinks only of his share. But how could he carry such great responsibility—looking after our souls—if he didn't get all that was coming to him?" observed the old man innocently.

This simplicity threw light upon the old man's nature. Surely he had been tried severely by the hardships of life—far more than the pastor—about whose material welfare he was so concerned. All his life he had struggled with want, with suffering—with the bitter climate of our Finnland. And still he felt it his duty to give to others what was coming to them, no matter whether or not he had anything to live upon. The only thing that grieved him was his inability to meet his obligations punctually.

"I don't think it was right for the pastor to call me a thief. I wouldn't steal— but still I can't pay," continued the old man.

This utterance came from a heart that was honest —if worn out in the struggle.

"If I can haul these two barrels of tar to the city I

can pay the pastor—and then there'll be no danger of the execution," he went on. He seemed to become more confidential. I was interested to know something more about the life of the old man, and observed indifferently:

"That mare of yours is pretty thin. How can you expect her to haul those two barrels of tar to the city?"

"Yes, true it is. The mare is lean. But how could the poor creature be fat, when fed upon swamp-grass and water?" confessed the old man.

"But the creature ought to be provided for first," I suggested.

"So anyone would say, who observed from a distance and did not know. But when the cold has killed everything, you'd take what little you could get and put into the pot, to keep the family from starving. There's very little difference between what we get to eat and the old mare. I guess you'd find the old mare fares just as well as we do," the old man explained, looking up in surprise at my way of judging.

"At least you should have had these boots of yours mended. Your feet are wet."

"Anyone would say so—who didn't know. But if you had six hungry, naked children, and a wife, you wouldn't have time to think about mending shoes. Besides, these shoes have been mended and mended—and now they can't be mended any more. Of course I'd like to wear respectable clothes—but there's no way,"—declared the old man with a peculiar intonation of melancholy.

"Where's your home?"

"Just outside a village on the edge of this parish."

"What's your name?"

"Svältbacka Matti—they call me, and I've suffered hunger all my life on my "hunger field."

"How's that?"

"Well it's true anyway. My hut is at the far end of a lonely village, between swamps on one side and marsh land on the other. I live there because it is not good enough for anyone else. My father built the place, but now every year the cold starves us out."

"Can't you get away from such a place? You could earn a better living somewhere else."

"It is not so easy to get away as you think. If we tried to get away no one would buy the place, so how could we buy another? We've got to stay there. And it's better there than tramping—and begging. If I could only get away from these payments!"

"Is it last year's tar you are taking to the city?"

"No. How could I keep that so long? Everything goes from hand to mouth. That was used up long ago. Hardly was it in the barrels before away it went to the city."

While we talked on we reached a farm, which at the same time was a rest-house, and the old man said he would stop and feed his horse. This was my intention, too, I had traveled so far that my horse needed food and rest. The sleigh of the old man began to grate on the harsh, bare ground in front of the farm, and the two of us then helped the old mare as best we could.

When we had unharnessed the horses and given

them fodder, we took our food bags and started toward the house. We, too, felt need of breakfast. The old man picked up the little birch basket, took something from it and sat down upon a bench in the corner near the stove. I wanted to know what he had to eat and made believe that I had business in the same corner. Poor and needy was his lunch. It was only black bread and salt.

I turned away and took up my food box. I tried to appear calm and indifferent, although my heart was moved by strange emotions. When, outwardly, I had regained composure, I said to him:

"Come over here and eat with me!" The old man looked up in my face and did not answer. He did not seem to comprehend. Perhaps he did not hear or perhaps he wished to hold out on what he had to eat.

"Come! Come over and eat with me," I asked again.

"Why should you be so good to me?" replied the old fellow, carefully packing away again his own food in the birch basket. He came across with slow steps, giving a hasty, searching glance at my face, in order to convince himself that the offer was genuine.

"We know each other so well now that we ought to be good to each other," I answered.

"Sit down now and eat."

Our roads separated. The old man went on toward the city. And while I jogged on again alone, I could not get the poor old fellow out of my mind. His lean mare, his scanty food, his ragged insufficient clothes,

and his face which had grown old before its time, were constantly in my mind. And I kept on hearing his words: "Anyone would think so if he didn't know!"

I travelled on one day, two days. Ahead now I saw a good sized, well built village and a church. The village extended considerable distance and the fields that stretched between the buildings, were extensive, too. This was no new village, the work of pioneers. The farms were old and well developed. Upon this land many struggles for existence had taken place, many a life had been sacrificed. Upon these unpromising fields even in ancient times the same struggle had been going on, for generations and generations, in order that people of today might enjoy the result. They who lived here now were reaping reward from the suffering, the tears, the want, the oppression of them who had struggled and died. Perhaps none of these who had died had paid their interest to the pastor.

The prosperous looking church stood upon a hill, on a thread of land, bordering a long, indented arm of the sea. Pine woods shadowed it on all sides. A little farther ahead, upon a piece of land projecting into the water stood the elegant home of the pastor, in the midst of a park. My business led me to call upon the pastor. He was a stately figure. And in his home there was every luxury that modern civilization can provide.

The pastor was sitting in an expensive, richly upholstered chair. He was tall, well built. No one could say that he had grown old before his time. He was

pastor of the parish to which Matti's "hunger-field" belonged, and it was because of him that Matti was trying to get to the city with two barrels of tar.

When I arrived the pastor was having a set-to with the clerk.

"You act like an honest man according to your own reckoning, and you have never once told me how many cows each person owns, and I know perfectly well that you have the number on most of the farms," declared the pastor.

"Who? I?" answered the clerk.

"Of course—you," was the reply, looking sharply at the clerk.

"How could I know just how many cows each one has?" objected the clerk. He seemed to wish to escape a violent attack of temper on the part of the pastor.

"You know well enough; and I know you do. But you try to conceal it from me. The wretches are all stealing from me—and who shields them shares the sin. Do you know clerk, what the punishment for theft is?" shrieked the pastor in a rage.

Red, of indignation and wounded honor dyed his cheeks, and he replied to this accusation, which according to my opinion had gone too far.

"I don't think it my duty to run about the village, and count the cows, in order to report to the pastor. Neither do I think it my duty—to God or man—to report cows that do not exist. To be sure, upon earth there are two kinds of people; they who make their incomes as large as possible, and they who make it as small a possible. Who has visited the homes of the

poor—and had dealings with them—he knows the conditions. The pastor—according to my opinion, has said things he has no right to say."

Now it was the pastor's turn to become red. Then he let all his anger loose upon the clerk.

"Do you know, clerk, whom you address?"

"I know very well. I speak with my lord, the pastor, but not with a gracious lord."

With these words he went away. They did not take leave of each other. I now had opportunity to introduce my own business. The pastor was in a bad temper. The just reproach of the clerk had done its work.

"This ignorant clown is loud mouthed, and doesn't know better than to attack his superiors. He has always been obstinate and self-willed. Many a pastor has said to me: 'If I had him, I'd send him going.'"

I had no answer to make to this, because it seemed to me the pastor had been the cause of what happened. I politely brought my own business to his attention. The pastor thought he understood the peasants and their customs better than anyone else. He cherished the belief, and gave expression of it to everyone, that the peasants did not show any gratitude toward their benefactors. He did not happen to mention just who their benefactors were, but he let it be understood that he, himself, was the most prominent among them. This speech of his sounded to me very like a preachment upon the subject of martyrdom.

I concluded my business as speedily as possible and went my way.

As it happened I still kept thinking of Svåltbacka Matti and his two barrels of tar. I couldn't get him out of my head. I compared his life and surroundings with that of the pastor. There was a great difference between them. But as human beings they were equal.

Business kept me several days in the little village. When I traveled on again, I went into a more remote part of the parish. Here the roads were so poor and confusing that I was forced to hire a guide. He was a young man and wholly untouched by the responsibilities and cares of this world. We scarcely exchanged two words on the trip.

About a mile and a half from the church, on the left at a little distance there was a farm, where a lot of people were assembled.

"What sort of farm is that?" I inquired of my guide.

"That is Svåltbacka," replied the young man carelessly. I started.

"What are all those people doing there?" I ventured, confused.

"O—that's an auction sale—an execution. It's because of a debt to the pastor," he explained indifferently.

"Is the owner's name Matti?" I asked.

"Yes, that's it," replied the young man with increasing indifference.

"I met him on the way to your village. He was going to the city. We went along together. How is this sale possible? I surely should have met him again."

"That's easy enough to understand. Matti took another road. There's a detour here."

"I suppose he is not back from the city, because he was going to the city to sell two barrels of tar to pay the interest," I ventured.

"Probably so."

Here the road turned toward Svältbacka.*

"Drive up to the house," I ordered.

The guide obeyed.

When we came near I saw that the auction was all over. There hadn't been much to sell. One or two lean cows was all! Besides the cows there were a few half naked, hungry little children, and a worn looking woman. But a creditor hasn't any use for creatures of this kind.

The cows were outside the yard, tied together with willow twigs. The new owner held one end of the twigs. They were just in the act of being driven away. The woman, white and trembling, stood in the midst of the hungry children. She did not weep. She had wept all she could long ago, as her eyes bore witness. I went up to her and said:

"Did your husband not get back from the city? Is that the cause of the auction?"

"How do you know that Matti went to the city?" was the reply, looking at me searchingly.

"I went part of the way with him."

"No, he hasn't come back. And he said he was going to hasten all he could. I'm afraid something has

* Svältbacka means Hunger Field.

happened. The road is bad. The old mare is so lean, too. But when Matti comes now it won't do any good. Now everything's gone. It's all over. Even if the cows were not good for much, they gave a few drops for the children. They were sold for nothing, too. Who would pay for them when they were so lean? They didn't bring enough to pay the pastor, let alone the costs of the auction." Thus spoke the woman.

Yes, yes, the misfortune had come. Things had gone their way, and no one could say that a wrong had been done, for law is changeless and power is holy.

I had seen enough. I sought out my guide in the crowd, betook myself to my conveyance and again we set out. Traveling across the untenanted land that had just been cleared strange thoughts came to me, and we did not talk, my guide and I.

"What sort of man is the pastor? What do the villagers think of him?" at length I inquired of my guide.

"Oh, the pastor is a fine *preacher*. But he's so mean and niggardly that he steals the very ashes from the hearths," replied the young man indifferently, beginning to hum a song.

That day I reached the end of the journey. Here I tarried several days. Then again one Saturday I set out with my guide on the return. Sunday morning I was in the village. I put my horse up at a farm, and determined to go to church, since the opportunity presented itself. The church bells rang solemnly. They were summoning the people to listen to a message of love and peace.

When I reached the church they were carrying a dead man upon a bier. The pall bearers put their burden down, to wait for the pastor and the clerk. It looked as though the pastor was still quarreling with the clerk, and he said: "I tell you the rascals are stealing from me."

"Whom are they burying?" I asked of some one near.

"Svältbacka Matti. He died driving to the city."

Now I understood. A shudder ran over me. My old traveling companion was dead. He had put forth too great an effort to make the journey. That was the reason he could not return and prevent the auction.

The clerk read the psalm:

"Great suffering and sorrow in the valley of tears," etc.—

Probably Matti's pastor chose this psalm. His sharp eyes and instinct had told him that it was appropriate.

When we reached the grave and the pastor began to bless the last place of rest, he took the shovel, stuck it in the ground, lifted up earth three times and threw it upon the coffin of the dead man. With great pathos then he exclaimed: "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." When he had thrown the wet and frozen earth upon Matti's coffin, it seemed to me I could hear a voice saying: "He's a fine *preacher*. I don't blame the pastor—I wouldn't steal—but I couldn't pay."

Among the mourners I looked for Matti's wife. This woman who had been tried in sorrow was

tragically white. With tearless, reddened eyes and hollow cheeks, she stood in the midst of the half naked children, who were shivering and looked at one point —the coffin. I went up to speak to her.

When the burial was over I asked some of the people about Matti. He was taken ill with pneumonia before he reached the city. He was ill-clothed, wet, underfed, and he could not struggle against it.

Now the bell summoned to church service. With others I entered the building. After the singing and the altar service, the pastor went to the pulpit. He chose for text: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." "Love," he said, "was the fulfilling of the law." With pathos and display of genuine ability he explained to his hearers this high and noble command.

During the most zealous part of his speech I heard again the words: "He is a good *preacher*." The lengthy sermon seemed not to be lacking in effect. Here and there women wept.

After service he spoke of the dead man. "God in his mercy has taken from this vale of tears, the farmer Matti Antinporka of Svåltbacka, aged forty-two years, three months and eight days.

What is wealth and what is gold?
Trash—that melt to dust and mold.
Care and sorrow here below
Both the rich and poor must know.

Thus the pastor bestowed the last earthly service upon Matti. And he did not do it in the cheap manner

of a hireling, but with oratorical eloquence and fervor. When he read the hymn above, it seemed to his hearers that he scorned gold and riches, and that he really suffered for the companions in suffering of poor Matti.

But while he was reading the hymn in a loud and impressive voice, I heard another voice saying:

"I'm so stupid that of course I don't understand such things. The Pastor—he knows more about it than I!"