LITERARY READER

SHORT STORIES

and

TRANSLATIONS FROM T. SHEVCHENKO

Collected by A. Stefan

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Rip Van Winkle

At the foot of the Kaatskill Mountains, west of the Hudson River in North America, Rip Van Winkle lived with his wife and children in a little cottage. In that time this country was a province of Great Britain, as indeed it remained until the American War of Independence. Being not very fond of work and having a wife, whose sharp tongue continually rang in his ears, Rip often strolled away into the woods. He was always willing to help other people, but he never kept his own farm in order. His wife therefore scolded him more and more as time went on, and so Rip was not happy at home.

He spent long hours sitting on a wooden seat outside the inn named in honour of King George the Third, and he went for long walks among the forests and mountains accompanied only by his faithful dog.

One day when he was out walking in the mountains, he thought he heard the sound of thunder, and soon afterwards someone shouted, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" Looking round, Rip saw a strange little man with thick bushy hair and a long beard. The man was carrying a large barrel on his back and he asked Rip to be so kind as to help him with it. Rip helped him gladly.

Soon they came to a deep hollow in the side of the mountain, overarched with tall trees. Here some funny old men, also with bushy hair, were playing at ninepins. As their balls rolled along the ground, they made a noise like thunder.

They ceased playing for a time, and began to drink the wine from the barrel. Rip also drank. He liked the wine very much and, tired and thirsty, drank to his heart's content. At length his senses were overpowered, his head declined, and he fell into a sound sleep.

When he awoke, it was a summer's morning and the sun's rays were very bright. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night!" He tried to remember what had happened. "Oh, that barrel! that wicked barrel! What excuse shall I make to Mrs Van Winkle?"

He called loudly for his dog, but no dog came. Had his dumb friend deserted him while he slept? Feeling very lonely, he resolved to go home without a moment's delay. He rose to walk, but all his limbs were stiff. "Sleeping in the mountains does not agree with me," he murmured.

After an hour's walk he came to the village. The children laughed at him, and stroked their chins. Rip placed his hand on his chin and found to his astonishment that his beard was a foot long!

The village seemed very much altered. It was larger and more populous and Rip noticed, that there were different names over the doors of the shops. Strange faces appeared at the windows of the cottages. When he came to his own house, expecting to meet his angry wife, he found it almost in ruins, neglected and empty. What could all this mean?

Sadly and slowly Rip walked along to the inn. That, too, was different. It was a large and ugly building, bearing the name of George Washington. Many noisy people were standig round. "What party do you belong to?" they shouted. "Are you Federal or Democrat?" — "Alas!" said Rip, "I am only a poor old man, a native of this place, and a loyal subject of the King's, God bless him!"

Here a great shout burst from the bystanders. "A royalist! A spy! A refugee! Give him a whipping! Give him it! He means no good to us!" — "What is your name?" asked an officer. "My name is Rip Van Winkle," answered the old man. — "How can it be?" shouted one of the women. "Rip Van Winkle disappeared in the mountains when I was a little girl, exactly twenty years ago."

This was a great problem. No one could solve it until Peter Vanderdonck, who knew all the wonderful traditions of the village, explained it to the astonished villagers. It was a fact, he said, that once every twenty years Hendrick Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, was allowed to return to the scenes of his former labours to play at ninepins with his companions.

To make a long story short, Rip's daughter took him home to live with her, because his wife had died a short time since. Rip now resumed his old walks and found many friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favour.

(After a story by W. Irving)

A Shark

In 1870 a young Englishman, whose name was Cecil Rhodes, came to Australia to look for a situation; but he knew no one and brought no recommendations, and the result was that he got no employment. In a short time, his money was all gone. He walked the streets all day, thinking; he walked them at night, thinking, and growing hungrier and hungrier.

At dawn he found himself walking aimlessly along the harbour-shore near Sydney. Now, Sydney harbour is swarming with the finest breed of man-eating sharks in the world. Some people make their living by catching them, for the Government pay a cash bounty on them and everything that is in the shark belongs to you.

Lounging along the harbour, Cecil Rhodes saw a sharkfisher who had been fishing for hours without catching anything. The fisher who at once knew the young man to be a greenhorn asked him to take his line for a moment. "I'll give you the shark, if you catch one," he added. "And I'll eat it, bones and all. Give me the line," replied the half-starved man.

He had no sooner taken the line into his hands than he caught an unusually long shark "a full nineteen footer", as the fisherman said. At once they proceeded to lay the creature's stomach open with a knife. And fancy what they found in it? A special number of the Times with the date of ten days before, conveying, in large type, the latest intelligence that France had declared war on Germany.

Now it must be borne in mind, that at that time, in 1870, Australia was not yet connected by a cable with Europe and that, on account of this, these news about the declaration of war were the first to reach Australia. The shark is the swiftest fish that swims and the speed of the fastest steamer afloat is poor compared to his. The one they had caught had made that pretty large trip from the shores of England to Sydney in no more than ten days.

With this latest intelligence in his pocket, Cecil Rhodes hurried to the richest wool-broker in Sydney. With some difficulty he gained access to this mighty man, who was just reading his copy of the Times, printed fifty days before in London. When, after a

few introductory words, Rhodes made the proposal to buy all the woolcrop deliverable in sixty days, the woolbroker declared him to be a lunatic. It was only in a very roundabout way that the young man succeeded in explaining him where he had found that most important intelligence of the declaration of war, by which the prices of wool in London Exchange had been driven up quite amazingly. The wool-broker, of course, did not hesitate to buy up all the crops available, having promised to divide the winnings with Rhodes, half and half. The profit of the speculation amounted to no less than two hundred thousand pounds and in 60 days Cecil Rhodes was a rich man.

(After a story by Mark Twain(

A Pair of Gloves

It's a singler story, Sir, said Inspector Wield, of the Detective Police, who, in company with Sergeant Dornton and Mith, paid us a twilight visit, one July evening; — and I've been thinking you might like to know it.

It's concerning the murder of the young woman, Eliza Grimwood, some years ago, over in the Waterloo Road. She was commonly called The Countess, because of her handsome appearance and her proud way of carrying of herself; and when I saw the poor Countess (I had known her well), lying dead, with her throat cut, on the floor of her bed-room, you believe me that a variety of reflections calculated to make a man rather low in his spirits, came into my head.

I went to the house the morning after the murder, and examined the body, and made a general observation of the bed-room where it was. Turning down the pillow of the bed with my hand, I found, underneath it, a pair of gloves. A pair of gentleman's gloves, very dirty; and inside the lining, the letters TR, and a cross.

Well, Sir, I took them gloves away, and I showed 'em to the magistrate, over at Union Hall, before whom the case was.

He says, "Wield", he says, "there's no doubt this is a discovery that may lead to something very important; and what you have got to do, Wield, is, to find out the owner of these gloves."

I was of the same opinion, of course, and I went at it immediately. I looked at the gloves pretty narrowly, and it was my opinion that they had been cleaned. There was a smell of sulphur and rosin about 'em, you know, which cleaned gloves usually have, more or less. I took 'em over to a friend of mine at Kennington, who was in that line, and I put it to him.

— What do you say now? Have these gloves been cleaned?

— These gloves have been cleaned, says he.

— Have you any idea who cleaned them? says I.

— Not at all, says he; I've a very distinct idea who didn't clean 'em, and that 's myself. But I'll tell you what, Wield, there ain't above eight or nine reg'lar glove cleaners in London, — and I think I can give you their addresses, and you may find out, by that means, who did clean 'em.

Accordingly, he gave me the directions, and I went here, and I looked up that man; but, though they all agreed that the gloves had been cleaned, I couldn't find the man, woman, or child, that had cleaned that aforesaid pair of gloves. What with this person not being at home, and that person being expected home in the afternoon, and so forth, the inquiry took me three days.

On the evening of the third day, coming over Waterloo Bridge, quite beat, and very much vexed and disappointed, I thought I'd have a shilling's worth of entertainment at the Lyceum Theatre to freshen myself up.

So I went into the Pit, at half-price, and I sat myself down next to a very quiet, modest young man. Seeing I was a stranger (which I thought it just as well to appear to be) he told me the names of the actors on the stage, and we got into conversation. When the play was over, we came out together, and I said.

— We 've been very companionable and agreeable, and perhaps you wouldn't object to a drain?

— Well, you're very good, says he; I shouldn't object to a drain.

Accordingly, we went to a public-house, near the Theatre, sat ourselves down in a quiet room upstairs on the first floor, and called for a pint of half-and-half, and a pipe. Well, Sir, we smoked and we drank our half-and-half, and sat a talking, very sociably, when the young man says.

— You must excuse me stopping very long, he says, because I'm forced to go home in good time. I must be at work all night.

— At work all night? says I. You ain't a baker?

— No, he says, laughing, I ain't a baker.

— I thought not, says I, you haven't the looks of a baker.

— No, says he, I 'm a glove-cleaner.

I never was more astonished in my life, than when I heard them words come out of his lips.

— You 're a glove-cleaner, are you? says I.

— Yes, he says, I am.

— Then, perhaps, says I, taking the gloves out of my pocket, you can tell me who cleaned this pair of gloves? It 's a rum story, I says. I was dining over at Lambeth, the other day, at a free-and-easy— quite promiscuous with a public company—when some gentleman, he left these gloves behind him! Another gentleman and me, you see, we laid a wager of a sovereign, that I wouldn't find out who they belonged to. I've spent as much as seven shillings already, in trying to discover; but, if you could help me, I'd stand another seven and welcome. You see there 's TR and a cross, inside.

— I see, he says. Bless you, I know these gloves very well! I 've seen dozens of pairs belonging to the same party.

— No? says I.

— Yes, says he.

— Then you know who cleaned 'em? says I.

— Rather so, says he. My father cleaned 'em.

— Where does your father live? says I.

— Just round the corner, says the young man, near Exeter Street, here. He 'll tell you who they belong to, directly.

— Would you come round with me now? says I.

— Certainly, says he, but you needn't tell my father that you found me at the play, you know, because he mightn't like it.

— All right! We went round to the place, and there we found an old man in a white apron, with two or three daughters, all rubbing and cleaning away at lots of gloves, in a front parlour.

— Oh, Father! says the young man, here 's a person been and made a bet about the ownership of a pair of gloves, and I 've told him you can settle it.

— Good evening, Sir, says I to the old gentleman. Here 's the gloves your son speaks of. Letters TR, you see, and a cross.

— Oh yes, he says, I know these gloves very well; I 've cleaned dozens of pairs of 'em. They belong to Mr. Trinkle, the great upholsterer in Cheapside.

— Did you get 'em from Mr. Trinkle, direct, says I, if you 'll excuse my asking the question?

— No, says he; Mr. Trinkle always sends 'em to Mr. Phibbs's the haberdashers's, opposite his shop, and the haberdasher sends 'em to me.

— Perhaps you wouldn't object to a drain? says I.

— Not in the least! says he.

So I took the old gentleman out, and had a little more talk with him and his son, over a glass, and we parted excellent friends. This was late on a Saturday night. First thing on the Monday morning, I went to the haberdasher's shop, opposite Mr. Trinkle's, the great upholsterer's in Cheapside.

— Mr. Phipps in the way?

— My name is Phipps.

— Oh! I believe you sent this pair of gloves to be cleaned?

— Yes, I did, for young Mr. Trinkle over the way. There he is, in the shop!

— Oh! that 's him in the shop, is it? Him in the green coat?

— The same individual.

— Well, Mr. Phipps, this is an unpleasant affair. But the fact is, I am Inspector Wield of the Detective Police, and I found these gloves under the pillow of the young woman that was murdered the other day, over in the Waterloo Road!

— Good Heaven! says he. He 's a most respectable young man, and if his father was to hear of it, it would be the ruin of him!

— I 'm very sorry for it, says I, but I must take him into custody.

— Good Heaven! says Mr. Phipps, again; can nothing be done?

— Nothing, says I.

— Will you allow me to call him over here, says he, that his father may not see it done?

— I don't object to that, says I; but unfortunately, Mr. Phipps, I can't allow of any communication between you. If any was attemp-

ted, I should have to interfere directly. Perhaps you 'll beckon him over here?

Mr. Phipps went to the door and beckoned, and the young fellow came across the street directly; a smart, brisk young fellow.

— Good morning, Sir, says I.

— Good morning, Sir, says he.

— Would you allow me to inquire, Sir, says I, if you ever had any acquaintance with a party of the name of Grimwood?

— Grimwood! Grimwood! says he. No!

— You know the Waterloo Road?

— Oh! of course I know the Waterlooo Road!

— Happen to have heard of a young woman being murdered there?

— Yes, I read it in the paper, and very sorry I was to read it.

— Here 's a pair of gloves belonging to you, that I found under her pillow the morning afterwards!

He was in a dreadful state, Sir; a dreadful state!

— Mr. Wield, he says, upon my solemn oath, I never was there. I never so much as saw her, to my knowledge, in my life!

— I am very sorry, says I. To tell you the truth, I don't think you are the murderer, but I must take you to Union Hall in a cab. However, I think it 's a case of that sort, that, at present, at all events, the magistrate will hear it in private.

A private examination took place, and then it came out that this young man was acquainted with a cousin of the unfortunate Eliza Grimwood, and that, calling to see this cousin a day or two before the murder, he left these gloves upon the table. Who should come in, shortly afterwards, but Eliza Grimwood!

— Whose gloves are these? she says, taking 'em up.

— Those are Mr. Trinkle's gloves, says her cousin.

— Oh! says she, they are very dirty, and of no use to him, I am sure. I shall take 'em away for my girl to clean the stoves with.

And she put 'em in her pocket. The girl had used 'em to clean the stoves, and, I have no doubt, had left 'em lying on the bed-room mantel-piece, or somewhere. Her mistress, looking round to see that the room was tidy, had caught 'em up and put 'em under the pillow where I found 'em.

That 's the story, Sir.

Charles Collins

The Selfish Giant

Every afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelfe peach-trees that in the springtime broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. "How happy we are here!" they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. After the seven years were over he had said all that he had to say, and he determined to return to his own castle. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

"What are you doing here?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

"My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself." So he built a high wall round it, and put up a notice-board: Tresspassers will be prosecuted.

He was a very selfish Giant.

The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high wall when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. "How happy we were there," they said to each other.

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still Winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that is slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep.

The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "so we will

live here all the year round." The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimey-pots down. „This is a delightful spot," he said; "we must ask the Hail on a visit." So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

"I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming?" said the Selfish Giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold white garden; "I hope there will be a change in the weather."

But the Spring never came, nor the Summer. The Autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the Giant's garden she gave none. "He is too selfish," she said. So it was always Winter there, and the North Wind, and the Hail, and the Frost, and the Snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird sing in his garden that it seemed to him the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement. "I believe the Spring has come at last," said the Giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

What did he see?

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene. only

in one corner it was still Winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still quite covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it.

"Climb up! little boy," said the Tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the frontdoor quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became Winter again. Only the little boy did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant coming. And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hand, and put him up into the tree. Annd the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant's neck, and kissed him. And the other children, when they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running back, and with them came the Spring. "It is your garden now, little children," said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o'clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the Giant to bid him good-bye.

"But where is your little companion?" he said; "the boy I put into the tree." The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

"We don't know," answered the children; "he has gone away."

"You must tell him to be sure and come here to-morrow," said the Giant. But the children said they did not know where he lived, and had never seen him before; and the Giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the Giant. But the little boy whom the Giant loved was never seen again. The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his first little friend, and often spoke of him. "How I would like to see him!" he used to say.

Years went over, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play any more, so hed sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games, and admired his garden. "I have many beautiful flowers," he said, "but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all."

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the Winter now, for he knew that it was merely the Spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder, and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner oft he garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were all golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.

Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger, and he said: "Who hath dared to wound thee?" For on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.

"Who hath dared to wound thee?" cried the Giant; "tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him."

"Nay!" answered the child; "but these are the wounds of Love."

"Who art thou?" said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him: "You let me play once in your garden; to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise."

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

Oscar Wilde

Ready for Sea

My friend B. called on me this morning and asked me if I would go to a theatre with him on Monday next.

"Oh, yes! certainly, old man," I replied. "Have you got an order, then?"

He said:

"No; they don't give orders. We shall have to pay."

"Pay! Pay to go into a theatre!" I answered, in astonishment. "Oh, nonsense! You are joking."

"My dear fellow," he rejoined, "do you think I should suggest paying if it were possible to get in by any other means? But the people who run this theatre would not even understand what was meant by a "free list", the uncivilised barbarians! It is of no use pretending to them that you are on the Press, because they don't want the Press; they don't think anything of the Press. It is no good writing to the acting manager, because there is no acting manager. It would be a waste of time offering to exhibit bills, because they don't have any bills—not of that sort. If you want to go in to see the show, you've got to pay. If you don't pay, you stop outside; that's their brutal rule."

"Dear me," I said, "what a very unpleasant arrangement! And whereabouts is this extraordinary theatre? I don't think I can ever have been inside it."

"I don't think you have," he replied; "it is at Ober-Ammergau — first turning on the left after you leave Ober railway-station, fifty miles from Munich."

"Um! rather out of the way for a theatre," I said. "I should not have thought an outlying house like that could have afforded to give itself airs."

"The house holds seven thousand people," answered my friend B., "and money is turned away at each performance. The first production is on Monday next. Will you come?"

I pondered for a moment, looked at my diary, and saw that Aunt Emma was coming to spend Saturday to Wednesday next with us, calculated that if I went I should miss her, and might not see her again for years, and decided that I would go.

To tell the truth, it was the journey more than the play that tempted me. To be a great traveller has always been one of my cherished ambitions. I yearn to be able to write in this sort of strain:

"I have smoked my fragrant Havanna in the sunny streets of old Madrid, and I have puffed the rude and not sweet-smelling calumet of peace in the draughty wigwam of the Wild West; I have sipped my evening coffee in the silent tent, while the tethered camel browsed without upon the desert grass, and I have quaffed the fiery brandy of the North while the rein-deer munched his fodder beside me in the hut, and the pale light of the midnight sun threw the shadows of the pines across the snow."

"I have felt the stab of lustrous eyes that, ghostlike, looked at me from out veil-covered faces in Byzantium's narrow ways, and I have laughed back (though it was wrong of me to do so) at the saucy, wanton glances of the black-eyed girls of Jedo; I have wandered where "good"—but not too good—Haroun Alraschid crept disguised at nightfall, with his faithful Mesrour by his side; I have stood upon the bridge where Dante watched the sainted Beatrice pass by; I have floated on the waters that once bore the barge of Cleopatra; I have stood where Caesar fell."

"I have heard the soft rustle of rich, rare robes in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair, and I have heard the teeth-necklaces rattle around the ebony throats of the belles of Tongataboo; I have panted beneath the sun's fierce rays in India, and frozen under the icy blasts of Greenland; I have mingled with the teeming hordes of old Cathay, and, deep in the great pine forests of the Western World, I have lain, wrapped in my blanket, a thousand miles beyond the shores of human life."

B., to whom I explained my leaning towards this style of diction, said that exactly the same effect could be produced by writing about places quite handy. He said:

"I could go on like that without having been outside England at all. I should say:

"I have smoked my fourpenny shag in the sanded bars of Fleet Street, and I have puffed my twopenny Manilla in the gilded halls of the Criterion; I have quaffed my foaming beer of Burton where Islington's famed Angel gathers the little thirsty ones beneath her shadowing wings, and I have sipped my tenpenny ordinaire in many a garlic-scented salon of Soho".

"On the back of the strangely-moving ass I have urged my wild career across the sandy heaths of Hampstead, and my canoe has startled the screaming wild-fowl from their lonely haunts amid the sub-tropical regions of Battersea. Adown the long, steep slope of One Tree Hill have I rolled from top to foot, while laughing maidens of the East stood round and clapped their hands and yelled; and, in the oldworld garden of that pleasant Court, where played the fair-haired children of the ill-starred Stuarts, have I wandered long through mazy paths, my arm entwined about the waist of one of Eve's sweet daughters, while her mother raged around indignantly on the other side of the hedge, and never seemed to get any nearer to us."

"I have chased the lodging-house Norfolk Howard to his watery death by the pale lamp's light; I have, shivering, followed the leaping flea o'er many a mile of pillow and sheet, by the great Atlantic's margin. Round and round, till the heart—and not only the heart—grows sick, and the mad brain whirls and reels, have I ridden the small, but extremely hard, horse, that may, for a penny, be mounted amid the plains of Peckham Rye; and high above the heads of the giddy throngs of Barnet (though it is doubtful if anyone among them was half so giddy as was I) have I swung in highly-coloured car, worked by a man with a rope."

"I have trod in stately measure the floor of Kensington's Town Hall (the tickets were a guinea each, and included refreshments—when you could get to them through the crowd), and on the green sward of the forest that borders eastern Anglia by the oftsung town of Epping; I have mingled with the teeming hordes of Drury Lane on Boxing Night, and, during the run of a high-class piece, I have sat in lonely grandeur in the front row of the gallery, and wished that I had spent my shilling instead in the Oriental halls of the Alhambra."

"There you are," said B., "that is just as good as yours; and you can write like that without going more than a few hours' journey from London."

"We will discuss the matter no further," I replied. "You cannot, I see, enter into my feelings. The wild heart of the traveller does not throb within your breast; you cannot understand his longings. No matter! Suffice it that I will come this journey with you. I will buy a German conversation book, and a check-suit, and a blue veil, and a white umbrella, and suchlike necessities of the English tourist in Germany, this very afternoon. When do you start?"

"Well," he said, "it is a good two days journey. I propose to start on Friday."

"Is not Friday rather an unlucky day to start on?" I suggested.

"Oh, good gracious!" he retorted quite sharply, "what rubbish next? As if the affairs of Europe were going to be arranged by Providence according to whether you and I start for an excursion on a Thursday or a Friday!"

He said he was surprised that a man who could be so sensible, occasionally, as myself, could have patience to even think of such old-womanish nonsense. He said that years ago, when he was a silly boy, he used to pay attention to this foolish superstition himself, and would never, upon any consideration, start for a trip upon a Friday.

But, one year, he was compelled to do so. It was a case of either starting on a Friday or not going at all, and he determined to change it.

He went, prepared for and expecting a series of accidents and misfortunes. To return home alive was the only bit of pleasure he hoped for from that trip.

As it turned out, however, he had never had a more enjoyable holiday in his life before. The whole event was a tremendous success.

And after that, he had made up his mind to always start on a Friday; and he always did, and always had a good time.

He said that he would never, upon any consideration, start for a trip upon any other day but a Friday now. It was so absurd, this superstition about Friday.

So we agreed to start on the Friday, and I am to meet him at Victoria Station at a quarter to eight in the evening.

II.

I have been a good deal worried about the question of what luggage to take with me. I met a man this morning, and he said:

"Oh, if you are going to Ober-Ammergau, mind you take plenty of warm clothing with you. You'll need all your winter things up there."

He said that a friend of his had gone up there some years ago, and had not taken enough warm things with him, and had caught a chill there, and had come and died. He said:

"You be guided by me, and take plenty of warm things with you."

I met another man later on, and he said:

"I hear you are going abroad. Now, tell me, what part of Europe are you going to?"

I replied that I thought it was somewhere about the middle. He said:

"Well, now, you take my advice, and get a calico suit and a sunshade. Never mind the look of the thing. You be comfortable. You've no idea of the heat on the Continent at this time of the year. English people will persist in travelling about the Continent in the same stuffy clothes that they wear at home. That's how so many of them get sunstrokes and are ruined for life."

I went into the club, and there I met a friend of mine—a newspaper correspondent—who has travelled a good deal, and knows Europe pretty well. I told him what my two other friends had said, and asked him which I was to believe. He said:

"Well, as a matter of fact, they are both right. You see, up in those hilly districts, the weather changes very quickly. In the morning it may be blazing hot, and you will be melting, and in the evening you may be very glad of a flannel shirt and a fur coat."

"Why, that is exactly the sort of weather we have in England!" I exclaimed. "If that's all these foreigners can manage in their own country, what right have they to come over here, as they do, and grumble about our weather?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," he replied, "they hav en't any right; but you can't stop them—they will do it. No, you take my advice, and be prepared for everything. Take a cool suit and some thin things, for if it's hot, and plenty of warm things in case it is cold."

When I got home I found Mrs. Briggs there, she having looked in to see how the baby was. She said:

"Oh! if you're going anywhere near Germany, you take a bit of soap with you."

She said that Mr. Briggs had been called over to Germany once in a hurry, on business, and had forgotten to take a piece of soap with him, and didn't know enough German to ask for any when he got over there, and didn't see any to ask for even if he had known, and was away for three weeks, and wasn't able to wash himself all the time, and came home so dirty that they didn't know him, and mistook him for the man that was to come to see what was the matter with the kitchen boiler.

Mrs. Briggs also advised me to take some towels with me, as they give you such small towels to wipe on.

I went out after lunch, and met our Vicar. He said:

"Take a blanket with you."

He said that not only did the German hotelkeepers never give you sufficient bedclothes to keep you warm, but they never properly aired their sheets. He said that a young friend of his had gone for a tour through Germany once, and had slept in a damp bed, and had caught rheumatic fever, and had come home and died.

His wife joined us at this point. (He was waiting for her outside a draper's shop when I met him.) He explained to her that I was going to Germany, and she said:

"Oh! take a pillow with you. They don't give you any pillows—not like our pillows—and it's so wretched, you'll never get a decent night's rest if you don't take a pillow."

She said:

"You can have a little bag made for it, and it doesn't look anything."

I met our doctor a few yards further on. He said:

"Don't forget to take a bottle of brandy with you. It doesn't take up much room, and, if you're not used to German cooking, you'll find it handy in the night."

He added that the brandy you got at foreign hotels was mere poison, and that it was really unsafe to travel abroad without a bottle of brandy. He said that a simple thing like a bottle of brandy in your bag might often save your life.

Coming home, I ran against a literary friend of mine. He said:

"You'll have a goodish time in the train, old fellow. Are you used to long railway journeys?"

I said:

"Well, I've travelled down from London into the very heart of Surrey by a South Eastern express."

"Oh! that's a mere nothing, compared with what you've got before you now," he answered. "Look here, I'll tell you a very good idea of how to pass the time. You take a chessboard with you and a set of men. You'll thank me for telling you that!"

George dropped in during the evening. He said:

"I'll tell you one thing you'll have to take with you, old man, and that's a box of cigars and some tobacco."

He said that the German cigar—the better class of German cigar—was of the brand that is technically known over here as the "Penny Pickwick — Spring Crop;" and he thought that I should not have time, during the short stay I contemplated making in the country, to acquire a taste for its flavour.

My sister-in-law came in later on in the evening (she is a thoughtful girl), and brought a box with her about the size of a tea-chest. She said:

"Now, you slip that in your bag; you'll be glad of that. There's everything there for making yourself a cup of tea."

She said that they did not understand tea in Germany, but that with that I should be independent of them.

She opened the case, and explained its contents to me. It certainly was a wonderfully complete arrangement. It contained a little caddy full of tea, a little bottle of milk, a box of sugar, a bottle of methylated spirit, a box of butter, and a tin of biscuits: also, a stove, a kettle, a teapot, two cups, two saucers, two plates, two knives, and two spoons. If there had only been a bed in it, one need not have bothered about hotels at all.

Young Smith, the Secretary of our Photographic Club, called at nine to ask me to take him a negative of the statue of the dying Gladiator in the Munich Sculpture Gallery. I told him that I should be delighted to oblige him, but that I did not intend to take my camera with me.

"Not take your camera!" he said. "You are going to Germany—to Rhineland! You are going to pass through some of the most picturesque scenery, and stay at some of the most ancient and famous towns of Europe, and are going to leave your photographic apparatus behind you, and you call yourself an artist!"

He said I should never regret a thing more in my life than going without that camera.

I think it is always right to take other people's advice in matters where they know more than you do. It is the experience of those who have gone before that makes the way smooth for those who follow. So, after supper, I got together the things I had been advised to take with me, and arranged them on the bed, adding a few articles I had thought of all by myself.

I put up plenty of writing paper and a bottle of ink, along with a dictionary and a few other books of reference, in case I should feel inclined to do any work while I was away. I always like to be prepared for work; one never knows when one may feel inclined for it. Sometimes, when I have been away, and have forgotten to bring any paper and pens and ink with me, I have felt so inclined for writing; and it has quite upset me that, in consequence of not having brought any paper and pens and ink with me, I have been unable to sit down and do a lot of work, but have been compelled, instead, to lounge about all day with my hands in my pockets.

Accordingly, I always take plenty of paper and pens and ink with me now, wherever I go, so that when the desire for work comes to me I need not check it.

That this craving for work should have troubled me so often, when I had no paper, pens, and ink by me, and that it never, by any chance, visits me now, when I am careful to be in a position to gratify it, is a matter over which I have often puzzled.

But when it does come I shall be ready for it.

I also put on the bed a few volumes of Goethe, because I thought it would be so pleasant to read him in his own country. And I decided to take a sponge, together with a small portable bath, because a cold bath is so refreshing in the morning.

B. came in just as I had got everything into a pile. He stared at the bed, and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was packing.

"Great Heavens!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were moving! What do you think we are going to do—camp out?"

"No!" I replied. "But these are the things I have been advised to take with me. What is the use of people giving you advice if you don't take it?"

He said:

"Oh! take as much advice as you like; that always comes in useful to give away. But, for goodness sake, don't get carrying all that stuff about with you. People will take us for Gipsies."

I said:

"Now, it's no use your talking nonsense. Half the things on this bed are life-preserving things. If people go into Germany without these things, they come home and die."

And I related to him what the doctor and the vicar and the other people had told me, and explained to him how my life depended upon my taking brandy and blankets and sunshades and plenty of warm clothing with me.

He is a man utterly indifferent to danger and risk—incurred by other people—is B. He said:

"Oh, rubbish! You're not the sort that catches a cold and dies young. You leave that co-operative stores of yours at home, and pack up a tooth-brush, a comb, a pair of socks, and a shirt. That's all you'll want."

Jerome K. Jerome

My Ninety Acres

I had a friend, a little old man, who lived over the hill in Possum Run Valley in a small white house on a farm which is known as "My Ninety Acres." The name is not painted on the red barn nor on a fancy sign hanging at the end of the lane leading up to the house; nevertheless throughout the Valley everybody always refers to Walter Oakes's farm as "My Ninety Acres."

It wasn't the conventional Currier and Ives farm one expects from the long tradition of American farming—a bright, new place, with new wire fences, and cattle standing like wooden animals in a pasture that was more like a lawn than a pasture. There was, in-

deed, a certain shagginess about it, a certain wild and beautiful look with that kind of ordered romantic beauty which was achieved by the landscape artists of the eighteenth century who fell under the influence of Jean Jacques Rousseau's romantic ideas regarding Nature. The white house was small but always well painted and prosperous in appearance, and there was no finer barn than Walter's with its fire-red paint, its big straw shed and its ornate shutters and cupolas painted white and there were no finer cattle in the whole county than those which stood behind the white-painted wooden fences of the barnyard staring at you, fat and sleek and contented, as you drove past "My Ninety Acres."

But despite the shagginess of the farm's appearance no fields in the Valley produced such big crops or pastured such fine cattle and hogs. At "My Ninety Acres" the shagginess didn't exist because Walter was lazy or a bad farmer—there was no more hard-working man in the whole Valley. They were that way because Walter wanted them like that — Walter and Nellie.

I never saw Nellie Oakes. She died before I was born, but my father told me about her. In his time she had been the prettiest girl in the Valley and she taught school at the Zion School house until when she was twenty-two she married Walter Oakes. People wondered why she chose him when she might have married Homer Drake whose father owned four hundred and fifty acres of the best land in the county or Jim Neilson whose family owned the bank and the feed mill in Darlingtown. She could have had her choice of any of the catches of the Valley and she chose Walter Oakes, who had no more than ninety acres of poor hill land he had just bought because he didn't have money enough for anything better.

Nellie, so far as I can discover, never told anybody why she chose to marry Walter instead of one of the catches of the Valley, but I know from all the long story that it was because she was in love with him. As it has turned out, she was right because the big four hundred and fifty acre Drake place which Homer inherited has gone downhill ever since Homer took possession of it and today, with its worn-out fields and decaying buildings, it wouldn't bring as much as "My Ninety Acres" and Jim Neilson died long ago as a drunkard, having lost both the bank and the feed mill. But "My Ninety Acres" is the richest, prettiest farm in all the county,

although Nellie isn't there to enjoy its beauty and prosperity. I say she isn't there because she died a very long time ago. But sometimes when I walked about the fields of "My Ninety Acres" with old Walter, I wasn't at all sure she wasn't there, enjoying its beauty and richness as much as old Walter himself.

I am forty-eight years old and Nellie died before I was born when she gave birth to her second son, Robert.

My father never went through the Valley without stopping at "My Ninety Acres" and usually I was with him. Sometimes I trudged behind my father and Walter Oakes and his two sheep dogs as they walked about "My Ninety Acress," and as I grew a little older I sometimes wondered that the two men could be together, walking side by side, perfectly happy, without talking at all. I did not know then what I came to know later that among men who were as close to each other as my father and Walter Oakes, conversation wasn't necessary.

And I was always a little surprised at how often Walter would say, "Nellie wanted me to put this field into pasture but we couldn't afford not to use it for row crops," or "Nellie was smart about such things," or "It's funny how many good ideas a woman can have about farming. Now, Nellie always said. . . .

People in the Valley couldn't see why Walter Oakes didn't get married again. They said, "He's still a young man and he's done a wonderful job with "My Ninety Acres," or "I dont see how a man like that can get on without a woman at his age. It ain't natural."

But Walter never showed any signs of marrying again. He was always polite and his eyes sometimes twinkled with humor when he saw what some of the good ladies were up to. He didn't leave "My Ninety Acres" save to go into town to buy or sell something or to go into town to buy or sell something or to go to the Valley church on Sunday. He'd come home from church and change his clothes and spend the rest of the day walking round the place. Sometimes, to the scandal of the old ladies of the Valley, he'd plow or make hay on a Sunday afternoon.

With all my family, I went away from the county when I was seventeen and I was gone for twenty-five years. Sometimes at first my father heard from Walter, rather brief, unsatisfactory and

inarticulate letters, written on lined paper torn out of a copybook, but neither Walter nor my father were very good letter writers, were both the kind of men who could not communicate without the warmth that came of physical presence. Writing letters didn't mean much. When they met again, even after years, the relationship would be exactly the same. They were that kind of men, and that kind of friends.

I know very little of the details of what happened during those years, only a fact or two and what little I have picked up from Walter as an old man in his implications regarding the past. The war came and in it John, the older son, whom Walter secretly loved best, was killed at St. Mihiel. He was twenty-one and just finished with agricultural college. Walter had counted on his returning to the farm, marrying and producing grandchildren to carry it on. Robert when he returned from the war, did not stay on the farm. He was very smart, like Nellie, but he didn't want to be a farmer.

Robert had ambitions. He had had them even as a small boy. Sometimes when the three of us, as kids, sat naked among the wild mint by the swimming hole, we talked about what we were going to do in life and Robert always said, "I'm going to be a great man and get rich and have an automobile with a man to drive it."

In the twenty-five years I was away from the Valley Robert had achieved exactly what he had planned. By the time I returned to the Valley Robert was president of the Consolidated Metals Corporation and he had made many millions of dollars. I think he must have had both Nellie's "smartness" and Walter's steadfastness.

In the first weeks after I came home I never thought about my father's friend, old Walter Oakes. Indeed, I had very nearly forgotten his existence. And then one day I heard Wayne, one of the boys on the farm, say something about "My Ninety Acres" and I remembered it all and asked, "Is Walter Oakes still alive?"

"Alive!" said Wayne, "I'll say he's alive. The livest old man in the county. You ought to see that place. Brother, that's the kind of farm I'd like to own. He raises as much on it as most fellows raise on five times that much land."

The next Sunday I walked over the hills to "My Ninety Acres." As I came down the long hill above the farm I saw that it hadn't changed much. The house still looked well-painted and neat with its white walls and green shutters and the barn was a bright new prosperous red. But the shrubs and flowers had grown so high that they almost hid the house. It was a day in June and as I walked down the long hill the herd of fat, white-faced cattle stood knee-deep in alfalfa watching me.

As I walked down the hill I thought, "This is the most beautiful rich farm in the world — "My Ninety Acres."

The corn stood waist-high and vigorous and green, the oats thick and strong, the wheat already turning a golden yellow. In the weadow the bumblebees were working on clover that rose almost as high as a man's thighs. In all that plenty there was something almost extravagant and voluptuous. The rich fields were like one of the opulent women painted by Rubens, like a woman well loved whose beauty thrives and increases by love-making.

I pushed open the little gate and walked into the dooryard with the neatly mown grass bordered by lilacs and peonies and day lilies. The door stood open but no one answered my knock and thinking the old man might be having a Sunday nap, I stepped into the house and called out, "Walter! Walter Oakes!" But no one answered me.

I hadn't been in the house for twenty-five years and I didn't remember very well my way about it so when I opened the door which I thought led into the long room that had once been used both for eating and living, I found that I was mistaken. I had stepped into the parlor instead.

It had that musty smell of country parlors and the shutters were closed but there was enough light for me to see an enlarged hand-colored portrait of Walter Oakes and his bride Nellie hanging on the wall above the fireplace. Out of the stiff old picture they looked at me young, vigorous, filled with courage and hope and love. It struck me again how pretty Nellie was.

I stood for a little time looking at it and then turned and closed the door behind me. I went out through the sitting room and the kitchen where everything looked clean and neat as in the dooryard, and I thought, " He must have a woman to look after him."

By now, of course, I remembered enough to know that I should find old Walter somewhere in the fields. Sunday afternoon he always spent walking over the place. As a small boy I had followed him and my father many times.

So I went down toward the creek and as I turned the corner by the barnyard I saw him down below moving along a fence row. There was something erratic in the progress of the old man. He would walk a little way and then stop and, parting the bushes, peer into the tangled fence row. Once he got down on his knees and for a long time disappeared completely in the thick clover.

Finally, as he started back along the far side of the field, I set off down the slope toward him. He stopped and peered in my direction shading his eyes with his big hands. He was still tall and strong, although he must have been well over seventy, and only a little stooped. He stood thus until I was quite near him and then I saw a twinkle come into the bright blue eyes.

"I know," he said, holding out his hand. "Youre Charley Bromfield's boy. I heard you'd come back."

Then suddenly he seemed to realize that I must have seen him for a long time, ducking and dodging in and out of the fence row. A faint tinge of color came into his face and he said shyly, "I was just snoopin' around my ninety acres. I like to see what goes on here and I don't get time during the week."

He looked down at his big hands and noticed, as I did, that some of the black damp loam of the fence row still clung to them. He brushed them awkwardly together. "I was just digging into the fence row to see what was going on there underground. A fellow can learn a lot by watching his own land and what goes on in it and on it. My son John — you remember the one that was killed in the war—he went to agricultural school but I don't think he learned more there than I've learned just out of studying my own ninety acres. Nellie always said a farm could teach you more than you could teach it, if you just kept your eyes open . . . Nellie . . . that was my wife."

"Of course," I said. "I remember."

Then he said, "Come with me and I'll show you something."

I followed him along the fence row and presently he knelt and parted the bushes and beckoned to me. I knelt beside him and he pointed, "Look!" he said, and his voice grew suddenly warm, "Look at the little devils."

I looked and could see nothing at all but dried brown leaves with a few delicate fern fronds thrusting through them. Old Walter chuckled and said, "Can't see em, can you? Look, over there just by that hole in the stump." I looked and then slowly I saw what he was pointing at. They sat in a little circle in a tiny nest, none of them much bigger than the end of one of old Walter's big thumbs—seven tiny quail. They sat very still not moving a feather, lost among the dry, brown leaves. I might not have seen them at all but for the brightness of their little eyes.

"Smart!" he said, with the same note of tenderness in his voice. "They know! They don't move!"

Then a cry of "Bob White!" came from the thick, fragrant clover behind us and Walter said, "The old man's somewhere around." The whistle was repeated, again and then again.

Old Walter stood up and said, "They used to laugh at me for letting the bushes grow up in my fence rows, but they don't any more. When the chinch bugs come along all ready to eat up my corn, these little fellows will take care of 'em." He chuckled, "There's nothing a quail likes as much as a chinch bug. Last year Talbot, down the road, lost ten acres of corn all taken by the bugs. Henry's a nut for clear fence rows. He doesn't leave enough cover along 'em for a grasshopper. He thinks that's good farming, the old fool!" and the old man chuckled again.

We were walking now up the slope from the creek toward the house, and he went on talking, "That fence row beside you," he said, "is just full of birds — quail and song sparrows and thrushes — the farmers' best protection. It was Nellie that had that idea about lettin' fence rows grow up. I didn't believe her at first. I was just as dumb as most other farmers. But I always found out that Nellie was pretty right about farmin'. She was hardly ever wrong . . . I guess never."

I went with him into the springhouse. It was built of stone with great troughs inside cut out of big blocks of sandstone and the water ran icy cold out of a tile that came through the wall.

Cream, milk and buttermilk, stood in crocks in the icy water, each covered by a lid held in place by an ancient brick with velvety green moss growing on its surface. Coming out of the heat into that damp cool spot was like coming into another world.

He picked up a pitcher with buttermilk in it and I asked, "Who does your churning for you?"

He grinned, "I do it myself," he said. "Of an evening, I kinda like it."

"You mean you're living here all alone?" I asked.

"Yes."

I started to say something and then held my tongue, but old Walter divined what it was I meant to ask and said, "No. It ain't lonely. It doesn't seem to me like a farm is a lonely place. There's too much goin' on. Nellie used to say she didn't understand the talk of these women who said they got lonely. Nellie said there was always calves and horses and dogs and lambs and pigs and that their company was about as good as most of them women who talked that way. And she always had her posy garden. Did you notice it coming in? It's mighty pretty right now. Nellie planted everything in it. . . . just the way they are today." He was about to say something else but checked himself and looked at me strangely. A secretive, almost sly look came into his eyes and he turned away to stare at the glass he held in his hand.

After an awkward pause I said, "Well, Robert did all right by himself. He always said he wanted a big automobile and a driver and a lot of money and he got it all right."

Then old Walter looked up at me and grinned, "Yes, I guess he got just about what he wanted. He's a good boy, but he's got some funny ideas." The old man chuckled. "He's been trying for years to get me to retire and live in the city where I could take it easy or go down and live in Florida. What'd I do with these big ugly hands in a place like that? I wouldn't know what to do with myself. And what would become of 'My Ninety Acres'? Or he's always wantin' to buy me a bigger place with a house full of gadgets or to buy me a lot of machinery. What would I want whit a bigger place? Ninety acres is enough for any man if he takes care of it right, like he should. And anyway it wouldn't be the same as 'My Ninety Acres'."

It wasn't the last time I saw old Walter. There was enough of my father in me to make the friendship between myself and the old man before long very nearly as warm as their friendship had been. And after all, between them, they had taught me many of the things I had come with experience to value most in life. The Sunday afternoon visits to "My Ninety Acres" became very nearly a habit, for I found gradually that old Walter was in himself an education. He knew more of the fundamentals of soil, of crops, of livestock than any man I hove ever known. Some of them he had read in books and in farm papers but he didn't trust the things he read until he tried them out and many of them he didn't even attempt to try out since out of his own wisdom he understood at once that they were rubbish. Instinctively and out of experience he rejected things which ran counter to the laws of Nature.

"Nellie," he would say, "always said that Nature and the land itself was the best answer to all these questions. If it wasn't natural it wasn't right, Nellie would say, and I've never found that there were two kinds of farms — the 'live' farms and the 'dead' ones and you could tell the difference by looking at them. A 'live' farm was the most beautiful place in the world and a 'dead' farm was the saddest. It depended on the man who worked them — whether he loved the place and saw what was going on or whether he just went on pushing implements through the ground to make money. Nellie was awful smart about a lot of things."

Sunday after Sunday we would make a round of the small empire while old Walter told me the history of each field and what had happened to it, what he had learned from this field or that one, and why his alfalfa and clover were thicker than those of his neighbors, his corn higher and sturdier, his Herefords bigger and fatter. And after a time I began to understand how old Walter and my father could walk side by side half the afternoon without speaking to each other, communicating by a smile or a nod or without any visible or audible sign. There are times when speech is a poor, inadequate business.

One brilliant day in October I saw a big, shiny black car coming up the long lane to our house. I knew at once who was in it. I knew by the size and importance of the car, as it drew nearer, by the

cut of the driver's uniform. It was Robert. He had come on his annual visit and had driven over to see me.

I went down the path to meet him and as he stepped out of the shiny car, it was hard for me to remember him as the boy I had seen the last time when he was sixteen, slim, muscular, towheaded and athletic. He still looked a little like old Walter, yet in a strange way he appeared older than the old man. He was plump and rather flabby with pouches beneath the eyes which looked through the shinning lenses of steel-rimmed spectacles. He stooped a little and there was a certain softness about his chin and throat.

He said, "I'm Robert Oakes. My father told me you had come back to live in the Valley."

"Yes, I know. I'm delighted to see you. Come in."

I found him rather as I had expected him to be, an intelligent fellow, with a good deal of dignity and authority. He was, after all, the child of old Walter and Nellie and their qualities could not be altogether lost in him. After thirty years the going was a little stiff at first but after a drink we got together again, mostly by talking about "My Ninety Acres" and the old swimming hole in the creek and maple sugar making time and the other boyhood experiences we had shared.

And presently he came round to what was clearly the object of his visit. "I really wanted to talk about my father," he said. "He's quite a problem and stubborn as a mule. I know your father was a great friend of his and that he accepts you nowadays exactly as if you were your father. And I thought you might have some influence with him. You see, I offered him almost everything — I've offered him a fruit ranch in Florida or Southern California, or a bigger farm, or a flat in New York. I've tried everything and he doesn't want any of it. He won't even let me hire him a couple or any machinery that might make life easier for him. This morning he was up at daylight and down husking corn in the bottom field by seven o'clock."

I grinned for I could see the whole picture and could understand how the old man's rich, famous, successful son got in his way.

"When I got up," said Robert, "I found some eggs and pancake batter laid out for me and coffee on the stove, with a note

to my driver about how to get breakfast for me. In the note he said to come down to the bottom when I'm finished breakfast. What can you do with a fellow like that?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to persuade him to let me do something for him. He's seventyfive years old and I'm afraid something will happen to him alone there in the house or barn."

"I'm afraid it's no good", I said. "I couldn't persuade him any more than you."

"I've tried everything even to saying 'What would it look like if it came out in the papers that my father had died suddenly alone on his farm in Ohio?' That's pretty cheap, but even that didn't move him. All he said was, 'You're rich enough to keep it out of the papers."

We were both silent for a time and then I said, "Honestly, Bob, I don't think there's anything to be done and to tell the truth I don't see why we should do anything. He's as happy as it's possible for a man to be. He's tough as nails and he loves that place like a woman." Then hesitantly, I said, "Besides, Nellie is always there looking after him."

A startled look came into the son's blue eyes and after a moment he asked, "Do you feel that way, too?" Nellie, who died when Robert was born, must have been as unknown and strange to Robert as she was to me.

I said, "I think Nellie is everywhere in that ninety acres. He's never lonely. She's in the garden and the fields and his famous fence rows. She's out there husking corn with him now in the bottom forty."

Robert lighted another cigar. "It's the damndest thing," he said. "Sometimes I've felt that he had some resentment because I killed my mother when I was born or that he liked John better because he looked like her, but I know that isn't true. That's not in the old gentleman's character. I think it's more because Nellie is always there and I just get in his way. It's funny," he added, "I always think of her as Nellie — somebody I would have liked knowing because she was so pretty and kind and gay and 'smart' as they say here in the Valley. Sometimes I think the old getleman gets Nellie and the ninety acres a little mixed up."

We talked some more and then Robert called his driver, got in the shiny car and drove off. We had agreed that there wasn't anything to be done about old Walter and Nellie. I said I'd keep my eye on him and go over myself or send somebody once every day to see that he was all right. And so every day for two years I, or somebody from the place, went over. Sometimes we'd have an excuse but more often we didn't even let him know that he was being watched. One of us would drive past at chore time, or I'd walk over the hills and watch until he appeared in the barnyard or the garden. I knew how much he'd resent it if he suspected that anyone was spying on him, and I didn't want to risk breaking our friendship.

I continued to go over every Sunday and each time I went over I learned something about soil, or crops or animals, for the knowledge and experience of the old man seemed inexhaustible. And then one Sunday afternoon in early September when we were walking alone through one of old Walter's cornfields, I made a discovery. It was fine corn, the whole field, the best in the whole county, and as we came near the end of a long row, he stopped before a mighty single stalk of corn which was beautiful in the special way that only corn can be beautiful. It was dark green and vigorous and from it hung two huge nearly ripened ears and a third smaller one. Old Walter stopped and regarded it with a glowing look in his blue eyes.

"Look at that," he said. "Ain't it beautiful? That's your hybrid stuff." His hands ran over the stalk, the leaves and the ears. "I wish Nellie could have seen this hybrid corn. She wouldn't have believed it."

As I watched the big work-worn hands caressing that stalk of corn, I understood suddenly the whole story of Walter and Nellie and the ninety acres. Walter was old now but he was vigorous and the rough hand that caressed that corn was the hand of a passionate lover. It was a hand that had caressed the body of a woman who had been loved as few women have ever been loved, so passionately and deeply and tenderly that there would never be another woman who could take her place. I felt again a sudden lump in my throat, for I knew that I had understood suddenly, forty years after the woman was dead, one of the most tragic but beautiful of all love stories. I knew now what Robert's strange remark about Nellie and the ninety acres getting mixed up had meant. Robert himself must once have seen something very like what I had just seen.

It happened at last. I went over one Sunday afternoon a few weeks later and when I could not find old Walter anywhere I returned to the house and went inside. On the bed of the ground floor bedroom lay old Walter. He had died quietly while he was asleep. I telegraphed to Robert and he came with his wife for the funeral.

He was buried beside Nellie in the Valley churchyard. Robert wouldn't sell "My Ninety Acres" but I undertook to farm it for him and one of our men went there to live. But it will never be farmed as old Walter farmed it. There isn't anybody who will ever farm that earth again as if it were the only woman he ever loved.

Louis Bromfield

Monsieur Margot, or the French Professor

When I first went to Paris, I took a French master, to perfect me in the Parisian pronunciation. This "Haberdasher of Pronouns, was a person of the name of Margot. He was a tall, solemn man, with a face of the most imperturbable gravity. He would have been inestimable as an undertaker. His hair was of a pale-yellow; you would have thought it had caught a bilious complaint from his complexion; the latter was, indeed, of so sombre a saffron, that it looked as if ten livers had been forced into a jaundice, in order to supply its colour. His forehead was high, bald, and very narrow. His cheekbones were extremely prominent, and his cheeks so thin, that they seemed happier than Pyramus and Thisbe, and kissed each other inside without any separation or division. His face was as sharp and almost as long as an inverted pyramid, and was garnished on either side by a miserable, half-starved whisker, which seemed scarcely able to maintain itself, amid the general symptoms of atrophy and decay. This charming countenance was supported by a figure so long, so straight, so shadowy, that you might have taken it for the monument in a consumption!

But the chief characteristic of the man was the utter and wonderful gravity I have before spoken of. You could no more have coaxed a smile out of his countenance, than you could out of the poker, and yet Monsieur Margot was by no means a melancholy man. He loved his joke, and his wine, and his dinner, just as much as if he had been of a fatter frame; and it was a fine specimen of the practical antithesis, to hear a good story, or a jovial expression, leap friskily out of that long, curved mouth; it was at once a paradox and a bathos — it was the mouse coming out of its hole in Ely Cathedral.

I said that this gravity was M. Margot's most especial characteristic. I forgot: — he had two others equally remarkable. The one was an ardent admiration for himself. Both of these are traits common enough in a Frenchman, but in M. Margot their excesses rendered them uncommon. He was a most ultra specimen of le chevalier amoureux — a mixture of Don Quixote and the Duc de Lauzun. Whenever he spoke of the present tense, even en professeur, he always gave a sigh to the preterite, and an anecdote of Bayard; whenever he conjugated a verb, he paused to tell me that the favourite one of his female pupils was je t'aime.

In short, he had tales of his own good fortune, and of other people's brave exploits, which, without much exaggeration, were almost as long, and had, perhaps, as little substance as himself; but the former was his favourite topic: to hear him, one would have imagined that his face, in borrowing the sharpness of the needle, had borrowed also its attraction: — and then the prettiness of Mons. Margot's modesty!

— It is very extraordinary, said he, very extraordinary, how much I am beloved by my fair pupils. I am not handsome, Monsieur, at least, not very; a certain air noble (my first cousin, Monsieur, is the chevalier de Margot), and, above all, de l'ame in my physiognomy; the fair sex love soul, Monsieur — something intellectual and spiritual always attracts them; but yet their predilection for me is singular. Even in the house where I lodge, Monsieur, there is an English lady en pension, who has taken a great fancy for me.

I expressed my envy at Monsieur Margot's good fortune, and when he had sufficiently dilated upon it, he withdrew. Shortly afterwards my friend Vincent entered.

— I have a dinner invitation for both of us today, said he; you will come?

— Most certainly, replied I: but who is the person we are to honour?

— A Madame Laurent, replied Vincent; one of those ladies only found at Paris, who live upon any thing rather than their income. She keeps a tolerable table, haunted with Poles, Russians, Austrians, and idle Frenchmen. As yet, she has not had the happiness to be acquainted with any Englishman (though she boards one of our countrywomen), and (as she is desirous of making her fortune as soon as possible) she is very anxious of having that honour. She has heard vast reports of our wealth and wisdom, and flatters herself that we are so many ambulatory Indies: in good truth, a Frenchwoman thinks she is never in want of a fortune as long as there is a rich fool in the world.

— Madame Laurent! repeated I, why surely that is the name of Mons. Margot's landlady.

— I hope not, cried Vincent, for the sake of our dinner; he reflects no credit on her good cheer' —

— At all events, said I, we can try the good lady for once. I am very anxious to see a countrywoman of ours, probably the very one you speak of, whom Mons. Margot eulogizes in glowing colours, and who has, moreover, taken a violent fancy for my solemn preceptor. What think you of that Vincent?

— Nothing extraordinary, replied Vincent; the lady only exclaims with the moralist —

„Love, virtue, valour, yea, all human charms, Are shrunk and centred in that heap of bones. O! there are wondrous beauties in the grave!!"

I made some punning rejoinder, and we sallied out to earn an appetite in the Tuileries for Madame Laurent's dinner.

At the hour of half-past five we repaired to our engagement. Madame Laurent received us with the most evident satisfaction, and introduced us forthwith to our countrywoman. She was a pretty, fair, shrewd looking person, with an eye and forehead which bespoke good sense, but at the same time gaiety of heart.

Presently Monsieur Margot made his appearance. Though very much surprised at seeing me, he did not appear the least jealous of my attentions to his inamorata. Indeed, the good gentleman was far too much pleased with himself to be susceptible of the suspicions common to less fortunate lovers. At dinner I sat next the pretty Englishwoman, whose name was Green.

— Monsieur Margot, said I, has often spoken to me of you before I had the happiness of being personally convinced how true and unexaggerated were his sentiments.

—Oh! cried Miss Grenn with an arch laugh, you are acquainted with Monsieur Margot, then?

— I have the honour, said I. I receive from him every morning lessons both in love and languages. He is perfect master in both.

Miss Green broke out into one of these peals so peculiarly British.

— Ah, le pauvre Professeur! cried she. He is too absurd!

— He tells me, said I gravely, that you are not quite indifferent to his merits both mental and bodily.

— Tell me, Mr. Pelham, said the fair Miss Green, can you pass by this street about half-past twelve tonight?

— I will make a point of doing so, replied I, not a little surprised by the remark.

— Do, said she, and now let us talk of England.

When we went away, I told Vincent of my appointment.

— What! said he, eclipse Monsieur Margot! impossible!

— You are right, replied I, nor is it my hope; there is some trick afloat of which we may as well be spectators.

— De tout mon coeur! answered Vincent; let us go till then to the Duchesse de G—.

I assented, and we drove to the Rue de —.

About the fixed time we took our way to the street in which Madame Laurent resided. Meanwhile suffer me to get rid of myself, and to introduce you, dear Reader, to my friend, Monsieur Margot, the whole of whose adventures were subsequently detailed to me by the garrulous Miss Green.

At the hour appointed, he knocked at the door of my fair countrywoman, and was carefully admitted. He was attired in a dressing-gown of seagreensilk, in which his long, lean, hungry body, looked more like a river pike than any thing human.

— Madame, said he, with a solemn air, I return you my best thanks for the honour you have done me — behold me at your feet! and so saying, the lean lover gravely knelt down on one knee.

— Rise, Sir, said Miss Green, I confess that you have won my heart; but that is not all — you have yet to show that you are worthy of the opinion I have formed of you. It is not, Monsieur Margot, your person that has won me — no! it is your chivalrous and noble sentiments — prove that these are genuine, and you may command my admiration.

— In what manner shall I prove it, Madame? said Monsieur Margot, rising, and gracefully drawing his sea-green gown more closely round him.

— By your courage, your devotion, and your gallantry! I ask but one proof — you can give it me on the spot. You remember, Monsieur, that in the days of romance, a lady threw her glove upon the stage on which a lion was exhibited, and told her lover to pick it up. Monsieur Margot, the trial to which I shall put you is less severe. Look (and Miss Green threw open the window) — look, I throw my glove out into the street — descend for it.

— Your commands are my law, said the romantic Margot. I will go forthwith, and so saying, he went to the door.

— Hold, Sir! said the lady, it is not by that simple manner that you are to descend — you must go the same way as my glove, out of the window.

— Out of the window, Madame! said Monsieur Margot, with astonished solemnity; that is impossible, because this apartment is three stories high, and consequently I shall be dashed to pieces.

— By no means, answered the dame; in that corner of the room there is a basket, to which (already foreseeing your determination) I have affixed a rope; by that basket you shall descend. See, Monsieur, what expedients a provident love can suggest.

— H—e—m! said! very slowly, Monsieur Margot, by no means liking the airy voyage imposed upon him; but the rope may break, or your hand may suffer it to slip.

— Feel the rope, cried the lady, to satisfy you as to your first doubt; and, as to the second, can you — can you imagine that my affections would not make me twice as careful of your person as of my own. Fie! ungrateful Monsieur Margot! fie!

The melancholy chevalier cast a rueful look at the basket.

— Madame, said he, I own that I am very averse to the plan you propose: suffer me to go down stairs in the ordinary way; your glove can be as easily picked up whether your adorer goes out of the door or the window. It is only, Madame, when ordinary means fail that we should have recourse to the extraordinary.

— Begone! Sir, exclaimed Miss Green; begone! I now perceive that your chivalry was only a pretence. Fool that I was to love you as I have done — fool that I was to imagine a hero where I now find a —

— Pause, Madame, I will obey you — my heart is firm — see that the rope is —

— Gallant Monsieur Margot! cried the lady: and going to her dressing-room, she called her woman to her assistance. The rope was of the most unquestionable thickness, the basket of the most capacious dimensions. The former was fastened to a strong hook — and the latter lowered.

— I go, Madame, said Monsieur Margot, feeling the rope; but it really is a most dangerous exploit.

— Go, Monsieur! and the God of St. Louis befriend you!

— Stop, said Monsieur Margot, let me fetch my coat: the night is cold, and my dressing-gown thin.

— Nay, nay, my Chevalier, returned the dame, I love you in that gown; it gives you an air of grace and dignity, quite enchanting.

— It will give me my death of cold, Madame, said Monsieur Margot, earnestly.

— Bah! said the Englishwoman: what knight ever feared cold? Besides you mistake; the night is warm, and you look so handsome in your gown.

— Do I! said the vain Monsieur Margot, with an iron expression of satisfaction: if that is the case, I will mind it less; but may I return by the door?

— Yes, replied the lady; you see that I do not require too much from your devotion — enter.

— Behold me! said the French master, inserting his body into the basket, which immediately began to descend.

The hour and the police of course made the street empty; the lady's handkerchief waved in token of encouragement and triumph.

When the basket was within five yards of the ground, Miss Green cried to her lover, who had hitherto been elevating his serious countenance towards her, in sober, yet gallant sadness —

— Look, look, Monsieur — straight before you.

The lover turned round, as rapidly as his habits would allow him, and at that instant the window was shut, the light extinguished, and the basket arrested. There stood Monsieur Margot, upright in the basket, and there stopped the basket, motionless in air!

What were the exact reflections of Monsieur Margot, in that position, I cannot pretend to determine, because he never favoured me with them; but about an hour afterwards, Vincent and I (who had been delayed on the road), strolling up the street, according to our appointment, perceived by the dim lamps, some opaque body leaning against the wall of Madame Laurent's house, at about the distance of fifteen feet from the ground.

We hastened our steps towards it; a measured and serious voice, which I well knew, accosted us —

— For God's sake, gentlemen, procure me assistance; I am the victim of a perfidious woman, and expect every moment to be precipitated to the earth.

— Good Heavens! said I, surely it is Monsieur Margot, whom I hear. What are you doing there?

— Shivering with cold, answered Monsieur Margot, in a tone tremulously slow.

— But what are you in? for I can see nothing but a dark substance.

— I am in a basket, replied Monsieur Margot, and I should be very much obliged to you to let me out of it.

— Well — indeed, said Vincent (for I was too much engaged in laughing to give a ready reply), Château-Margot has but a cool cellar. But there are some things in the world easier said than done. How are we to remove you to a more desirable place?

— Ah, returned Monsieur Margot, how indeed! There is, to be sure, a ladder in the porter's lodge long enough to deliver me; but then, think of the gibes and jeers of the porter — it will get wind — I shall be rediculed — and what is worse, I shall lose my pupils.

— My good friend, said I, you had better lose your pupils than your life; and the day-light will soon come, and then, instead of being ridiculed by the porter, you will be ridiculed by the whole street!

Monsieur Margot groaned.

— Go, then, my friend, said he, procure the ladder! Oh, those she-devils! — what could make me such a fool!

Whilst Monsieur Margot was venting his spleen in a scarcely articulate mutter, we repaired to the lodge, knocked up the porter, communicated the accident, and procured the ladder. However, an observant eye had been upon our proceedings, and the window above was re-opened, though so silently, that I only perceived the action.

The porter, a jolly, bluff, hearty-looking fellow, stood grinning below with a lantern, while we set the ladder (which only just reached the basket) against the wall.

The chevalier looked wistfully forth, and then, by the light of the lantern, we had a fair view of his ridiculous figure — his teeth, chattered wofully, and the united cold without, and anxiety within, threw a double sadness and solemnity upon his withered countenance; the night was very windy, every instant a rapid current seized the unhappy sea-green vesture, whirled it in the air, and threw it, as if in scorn, over the very face of the miserable professor. The constant recurrence of this sportive irreverence of the gales — the high sides of the basket, and the trembling agitation of the inmate, never too agile, rendered it a work of some time for Monsieur Margot to transfer himself from the basket to the ladder; at length he had fairly got out one thin, shivering leg.

— Thank God! said the pious professor — when at that instant the thanksgiving was checked, and, to Monsieur Margot's inexpressible astonishment and dismay, the basket roose five feet from the ladder, leaving its tenant with one leg dangling out, like a flag from a balloon.

The ascent was too rapid to allow Monsieur Margot even time for an exclamation, and it was not till he had had sufficient leisure in his present elevation to perceive all its consequences, that he found words to say, with the most earnest tone of thoughtful lamentation.

— One could not have foreseen this! — it is really extremely distressing — would to God that I could get my leg in, or my body out!

While we were yet too convulsed with laughter to make any comment upon the unlooked-for ascent of the luminous Monsieur Margot, the basket descended with such force as to dash the lantern out of the hand of the porter, and to bring the professor so precipitously to the ground, that all the bones in his skin rattled audibly!

— My God! said he, I am done for! — be witness how inhumanly I have been murdered.

We pulled him out of the basket, and carried him between us into the porter's lodge; but the woes of Monsieur Margot were not yet at their termination. The room was crowded. There was Madame Laurent, — there was the German count, whom the professor was teaching French; — there was the French viscount, whom he was teaching German; — there were all his fellow-lodgers — the ladies whom he had boasted of — the men he had boasted to: — Don Juan, in the infernal regions, could not have met with a more unwelcome set of old acquaintance than Monsieur Margot had the happiness of opening his bewildered eyes upon in the porter's lodge.

— What! cried they all, Monsieur Margot, is that you who have been frightening us so? We thought the house was attacked; the Russian general is at this very moment loading his pistols; lucky for you that you did not choose to stay longer in that situation. Pray, Monsieur, what could induce you, to exhibit yourself so, in your dressing-gown too, and the night so cold? Ar'n't you ashamed of yourself?

All this, and infinitely mor, was levelled against the miserable professor, who stood shivering with cold and fright: and turning his eyes first upon one, and then on another, as the exclamations circulated round the room.

— I do assure you, at length he began.

— No, no, cried one, it is of no use explaining now!

— Mais Messieurs, querulously recommenced the unhappy Margot.

— Hold your tongue, exclaimed Madame Laurent, you have been disgracing my house.

— Mais, Madame, écoutez-moi —

— No, no, cried the German, we saw you — we saw you.

— Mais, Monsieur le Comte —

— Fie, fie! cried the Frenchman.

— Mais, Monsieur le Vicomte —

At this, every mouth was opened, and the patience of Monsieur Margot being by this time exhausted, he flew into a violent rage; his tormentors pretended an equal indignation, and at lenght he fought his way out of the room, as fast as his shattered bones would allow him, followed by the whole body, screaming, and shouting, and scolding, and laughing after him.

The next morning passed without my usual lesson from Monsieur Margot; that was natural enough; but when the next day, and the next, rolled on, and brought neither Monsieur Margot nor his excuse, I began to be uneasy for the poor man. Accordingly I sent to Madame Laurent's too inquire after him: judge of my surprise at hearing that he had, early the day after taken his departure, left his lodgings with his small possession of books and clothes, leaving only a note to Madame Laurent, enclosing the amount of his debt to her, and that no one had since seen or heard of him.

From that day to this, I have never once beheld him. The poor professor lost even the little money due to him for his lessons — so true is it, that in a man of Monsieur Margot's temper, even interest is a subordinate passion to vanity.

Edward Bulwer

The Star

It was on the first day of the new year that the announcement was made, almost simultaneously from three observatories, that the motion of the planet Neptune had become very erratic. Ogilvy had already called attention to a suspected retardation in its velocity in December. Such a piece of news was scarcely calculated to interest a world the greater portion of whose inhabitants were unaware of the existence of the planet Neptune; nor outside the astronomical profession did the subsequent discovery of a faint remote speck of light in the region of the perturbed planet cause any very great

excitement. Scientific people, however, found the intelligence remarkable enough, even befoxe it became known that the new body was rapidly growing larger and brighter, that its motion was quite different from the orderly progress of the planets, and that the deflection of Neptune and its satellite was becoming now of an unprecedented kind.

Few people without a training in science can realise the huge isolation of the solar system. The sun with is planets swims in a vacant immensity that almost defeats the imagination. Beyond the orbit of Neptune there is space, vacant so far as human observation has penetrated, without warmth or light or sound, blank emptiness, for twenty million times a million miles. That is the smallest estimate of the distance to be traversed before the very nearest of the stars is attained. And, saving a few comets more unsubstantial than the thinnest flame, no matter had ever to human knowledge crossed this gulf of space, until early in the twentieth centurv this strange wanderer appeared. A vast mass of matter it was, bulky, heavy, rushing without warning out of the black mystery of the sky into the radiance of the sun. By the second day it was clearly visible to any decent instrument, as a speck with a barely sensible diameter, in the constellation Leo near Regulus. In a little while an opera glass could attain it.

On the third day of the new year the newspaperreaders of two hemispheres were made aware for the first time of the heavens. „A Planetary Collision", one London paper headed the news, and proclaimed Duchaine's opinion that this strange new planet would probably collide with Neptune. The leader-writers enlarged upon the topic. So that in most of the capitals of the world, on January 3rd, there was an expectation of some imminent phenomenon in the sky; and as the night followed the sunset round the globe, thousands of men turned their eyes skyward to see—the old familiar stars just as they had always been.

Until it was dawn in London and Pollux setting and the stars overhead grown pale. The Winter's dawn it was, a sickly filtering accumulation of daylight, and the light of gas and candles shone yellow in the windows to show where people were astir. But the yawning policeman saw the star, the busy crowds in the markets stopped agape, workmen going to their work betimes, milkmen,

dissipation going home jaded and pale, homeless wanderers, sentinels of their beats, and in the country, labourers trudging afield, poachers slinking home, all over the dusky quickening country it could be seen—and out at sea by seamen watching for the day—a great white star, come suddenly into the westward sky!

Brighter it was than any star in our skies; brighter than the evening star at its brightest. It still glowed out white and large, no mere twinkling spot of light, but a small round clear shining disc, an hour after the day had come. And where science has not reached, men stared and feared, telling one another of the wars and pestilences that are foreshadowed by these fiery signs in the Heavens. Sturdy Boers, dusky Hottentots, Gold Coast negroes, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Portuguese, stood in the warmth of the sunrise watching the setting of this strange new star.

And in a hundred observatories there had been suppressed excitement, rising almost to shouting pitch, as the two remote bodies had rushed together, and a hurrying to and fro, to gather photographic apparatus and spectroscope, and this appliance and that, to record this novel astonishing sight, the destruction of a world. For it was a world, a sister planet of our earth, far greater than our earth indeed, that had so suddenly flashed into flaming death.

Neptune it was, had been struck by the strange planet from outer space and the heat of the concussion had incontinently turned two solid globes into one vast mass of incandescence. Round the world that day, two hours before the dawn, went the pallid great white star, fading only as it sank westward and the sun mounted above it. Everywhere men marvelled at it, but of all those sailors, who far away at sea had heard nothing of its advent and saw it now rise like a pigmy moon and climb zenithward and hang over head and sink westward with the passing of the night.

And when next it rose over Europe everywhere were crowds of watchers on hilly slopes, on houseroofs, in open spaces, staring eastward for the rising of the great new star. It rose with a white glow in front of it, like the glare of a white fire, and those who had seen it come into existence the night before cried out at the sight of it. „It is larger", they cried. „It is brighter!"

„It is brighter!" cried the people clustering in the streets. But in the dim observatories the watchers held their breath and peered at one another. „It is nearer", they said. „Nearer!"

And voice after voice repeated: „It is nearer", and the clicking telegraph took that up, and it trembled along telephone wires, and in a thousand cities grimy compositors fingered the type. „It is nearer." Men writing in offices, struck with a strange realisation, flung down their pens, men talking in a thousand places suddenly came upon a grotesque possibility in those words: „It is nearer." It hurried along awakening streets, it was shouted down the froststilled ways of quiet villages, men who had read these things from the throbbing tape stood in yellow-lit doorways shouting the news to the passersby. „It is nearer." Pretty women, flushed and glittering, heard the news told jestingly between the dances, and feigned an intelligent interest they did not feel. „Nearer! Indeed. How curious! How very, very clever people must be to find out things like that!"

Lonely tramps faring through the wintry night murmured those words to comfort themselves—looking skyward. „It has need to be nearer, for the night's as cold as charity. Don't seem much warmth from it if it is nearer, all the same."

„What is a new star to me?" cried the weeping woman kneeling beside her dead.

The schoolboy, rising early for his examination work, puzzled it out for himself—with the great white star, shining broad and bright through the frost-flowers of his window. „Centrifugal, centripetal", he said, with his chin on his fist. „Stop a planet in its flight, rob it of its centrifugal force, what then? Centripetal has it, and down it falls into the sun! And this—!"

„Do we come in the way? I wonder—"

The light of that day went the way of its brethren, and with the later watches of the frosty darkness rose the strange star again. And it was now so bright that the waxing moon seemed but a pale yellow ghost of itself. In a South African city a great man had married, and the streets were alight to welcome his return with his bride. "Even the skies have illuminated", said the flatterer. Under Capricorn, two negro lovers, daring the wild beasts and

evil spirits, for love of one another, crouched together in a cane-brake where the fire-flies hovered. "That is our star", they whispered, and felt strangely comforted by the sweet brilliance of its light.

The master mathematician sat in his room and pushed the papers from him. His calculations were already finished. In a small white phial there still remained a little of the drug that had kept him awake and active for four long nights. Each day, serene, explicit, patient as ever, he had given his lecture to his students, and then had come back at once to this momentous calculation. His face was grave, a little drawn and hectic from his drugged activity. For some time he seemed lost in thought. Then he went to the window, and the blind went up with a click. Half way up the sky, over the clustering roofs, chimneys and steeples of the city, hung the star.

He looked at it as one might look into the eyes of a brave enemy. "You may kill me", he said after a silence. "But I can hold you — and all the universe for that matter — in the grip of this little brain. I would not change. Even now."

He looked at the little phial. "There will be no need of sleep again", he said. The next day at noon, punctual to the minute, he entered his lecture theatre, put his hat on the end of the table as his habit was, and carefully selected a large piece of chalk. It was a joke among his students that he could not lecture without that piece of chalk to fumble in his fingers, and once he had been stricken to impotence by their hiding his supply. He looked under his grey eyebrows at the rising tiers of young fresh faces, and spoke with his accustomed studied commonness of phrasing. "Circumstances have arisen—circumstances beyond my control", he said and paused, "which will debar me from completing the course I had designed. It would seem, gentlemen, if I may put the thing clearly and briefly, that—Man has lived in vain."

The students glanced at one another. Had they heard aright? Mad? Raised eyebrows and grinning lips there were, but one or two faces remained intent upon his calm grey-fringed face. "It will be interesting", he was saying, "to devote this morning to an exposition, so far as I can make it clear to you, of the calculations that have led me to this conclusion. Let us assume—"

He turned towards the blackboard, meditating a diagram in the way that was usual to him.

"What was that about: Man has lived in vain?" whispered one student to another. "Listen", said the other, nodding towards the lecturer.

And presently they began to understand.

That night the star rose later, and its brightness was so great that the sky became a luminous blue as it rose, and every star was hidden, save only Jupiter near the zenith, Capella, Aldebaran, Sirius and the pointers of the Bear. It was very white and beautiful. In many parts of the world that night a pallid halo encircled it about. It was perceptibly larger; in the clear refractive sky of the tropics it seemed as if it were nearly a quarter the size of the moon. The frost was still on the ground in England, but the world was as brightly lit as if it were midsummer moonlight. One could read quite ordinary print by that cold clear light, and in the cities the lamps burnt yellow and wan.

And everywhere the world was awake that night, and throughout Christendom a sombre murmur hung in the keen air over the country side like the belling of bees in the heather, and this murmurous tumult grew to a clangour in the cities. It was the tolling of the bells in a million steeples, summoning the people to sleep no more, to sin no more, but to gather in their churches and pray. And overhead, growing larger and brighter, as the earth rolled on its way and the night passed, rose the dazzling star.

And the streets and houses were alight in all the cities, the shipyards glared, and whatever roads led to high country were crowded all night long. And in all the seas about the civilised lands, ships with throbbing engines, and ships with bellying sails, crowded with men and living creatures, were standing out to ocean and the north.

For already the warning of the master mathematician had been telegraphed all over the world, and translated into a hundred tongues. The new planet and Neptune, locked in a fiery embrace, were whirling headlong, ever faster and faster towards the sun. Every second this blazing mass flew a hundred miles, and every second its terrific velocity increased. As it flew now, indeed, it must pass a hundred million of miles wide of the earth and scarcely

affect it. But near its destined path, as yet only slightly perturbed, spun the mighty planet Jupiter and his moons sweeping splendid round the sun.

Every moment now the attraction between the fiery star and the greatest of the planets grew stronger. And the result of that attraction? Inevitably Jupiter would be deflected from its orbit into an elliptical path, and the burning star, swung by his attraction wide of its sunward rush, would "describe a curved path" and perhaps collide with, and certainly pass very close to, our earth. "Earthquakes, volcanic outbreaks, cyclones, sea waves, floods, and a steady rise in temperature to I know not what limit"—so prophesied the master mathematician.

And overhead, to carry out his words, lonely and cold and livid, blazed the star of the coming doom.

To many who stared at it that night until their eyes ached, it seemed that it was visibly approaching. And that night, too, the weather changed, and the frost that had gripped all Central Europe and France and England softened towards a thaw.

But you must not imagine because I have spoken of people praying through the night and people going aboard ships and people fleeing towards mountainous country that the whole world was already in a terror because of the star. As a matter of fact, use and wont still ruled the world, and save for the talk of idle moments and the splendour of the night, nine human beings out of ten were still busy at their common occupations.

In all the cities the shops, save one here and there, opened and closed at their proper hours, the doctor and the undertaker plied their trades, the workers gathered in the factories, soldiers drilled, scholars studied, lovers sought one another, thieves lurked and fled, politicians planned their schemes. The presses of the newspapers roared through the nights, and many a priest of this church and that would not open his holy building to further what he considered a foolish panic. The newspapers insisted on the lesson of the year 1000—for then, too, people had anticipated the end. The star was no star—mere gas—a comet; and were it a star it could not possibly strike the earth. There was no precedent for such a thing. Commonsense was sturdy everywhere, scornful, jesting, a little inclined to persecute the obdurate fearful.

That night, at seven-fifteen by Greenwich time, the star would be at its nearest to Jupiter. Then the world would see the turn things would take. The master mathematician's grim warnings were treated by many as so much mere elaborate self-advertisement. Commonsense at last, a little heated by argument, signified its unalterable convictions by going to bed. So, too, barbarism and savagery, already tired of the novelty, went about their nightly business, and save for a howling dog here and there, the beast world left the star unheeded.

And yet, when at last the watchers in the European States saw the star rise, an hour later it is true, but no larger than it had been the night before, there were still plenty awake to laugh at the master mathematician—to take the danger as if it had passed.

But hereafter the laughter ceased. The star grew—it grew with a terrible steadiness hour after hour, a little larger each hour, a little nearer the midnight zenith, and brighter and brighter, until it had turned night into a second day. Had it come straight to the earth instead of in a curved path, had it lost no velocity to Jupiter, it must have leapt the intervening gulf in a day, but as it was it took five days altogether to come by our planet. The next night it had become a third the size of the moon before it set to English eyes, and the thaw was assured. It rose over America near the size of the moon, but blinding white to look at, and hot; and a breath of hot wind blew now with its rising and gathering strength, and in Virginia, and Brazil, and down the St. Lawrence valley, it shone intermittently through a driving reek of thunder-clouds, flickering violet lightning, and hail unprecedented. In Manitoba was a thaw and devastating floods.

And upon all the mountains of the earth the snow and ice began to melt that night, and all the rivers coming out of high country flowed thick and turbid, and soon—in their upper reaches—with swirling trees and the bodies of beasts and men. They rose steadily, steadily in the ghostly brilliance, and came trickling over their banks at last, behind the flying population of their valleys.

And along the coast of Argentina and up the South Atlantic the tides were higher than had ever been in the memory of man, and the storms drove the waters in many cases scores of miles inland, drowning whole cities. And so great grew the heat during

the night that the rising of the sun was like the coming of a shadow. The earthquakes began and grew until all down America from the Arctic Circle to Cape Horn, hillsides were sliding, fissures were opening, and houses and walls crumbling to destruction. The whole side of Cotopaxi slipped out in one vast convulsion, and a tumult of lava poured out so high and broad and swift and liquid that in one day it reached the sea.

So the star, with the wan moon in its wake, marched across the Pacific, trailed the thunderstorms like the hem of a robe, and the growing tidal wave that toiled behind it, frothing and eager, poured over island and island and swept them clear of men. Until that wave came at last—in a blinding light and with the breath of a furnace, swift and terrible it came—a wall of water, fifty feet high, roaring hungrily, upon the long coasts of Asia, and swept inland across the plains of China.

For a space the star, hotter now and larger and brighter than the sun in its strenghth, showed with pitiless brilliance the wide and populous country; towns and villages with their pagodas and trees, roads, wide cultivated fields, millions of sleepless people staring in helpless terror at the incandescent sky; and then, low and growing, came the murmur of the flood. And thus it was with millions of men that night—a flight nowhither, with limbs heavy with heat, and the flood like a wall swift and white behind. And then death.

China was lit glowing white, but over Japan and Java and all the islands of Eastern Asia the great star was a ball of dull red fire because of the steam and smoke and ashes the volcanoes were spouting forth to salute its coming. Above was the lava, hot gases and ash, and below the seething floods, and the whole earth swayed and rumbled with the earthquake shocks. Soon the immemorial snows of Thibet and the Himalaya were melting and pouring down by ten million deepening converging channels upon the plains of Burmah and Hindostan. The tangled summits of the Indian jungles were aflame in a thousand places, and below the hurrying waters around the stems reflected the blood-red tongues of fire. And in a rudderless confusion a multitude of men and women fled down the broad river-ways to that one last hope of men—the open sea.

Larger grew the star, and larger, hotter, and brighter with a terrible swiftness now. The tropical ocean had lost its phosphorescence, and the whirling steam rose in ghostly wreaths from the black waves, speckled with storm-tossed ships.

And then came a wonder. It seemed to those who in Europe watched for the rising of the star that the world must have ceased its rotation. In a thousand open spaces of down and upland the people who had fled thither from the floods and the falling houses and sliding slopes of hill watched for that rising in vain. Hour followed hour through a terrible suspense, and the star rose not. Once again men set their eyes upon the old constellations they had counted lost to them forever. In England it was hot and clear overhead, though the ground quivered perpetually, but in the tropics, Sirius and Capella and Aldebaran showed through a veil of steam. And when at last the great star rose near ten hours late, the sun rose close upon it, and in the centre of its white heart was a disc of black.

Over Asia it was the star had begun to fall behind the movement of the sky, and then suddenly, as it hung over India, its light had been veiled. All the plain of India from the mouth of the Indus to the mouths of the Ganges was a shallow waste of shining water that night, out of which rose temples and palaces, mounds and hills, black with people. Every minaret was a clustering mass of people, who fell one by one into the turbid waters, as heat and terror overcame them. The whole land seemed a-wailing, and suddenly there swept a shadow across that furnace of despair, and a breath of cold wind, and a gathering of clouds. Men looking up, near blinded, at the star, saw that a black disc was creeping across the light. It was the moon, coming between the star and the earth. And even as men cried to God at this respite, out of the East with a strange inexplicable swiftness sprang the sun. And then star, sun and moon rushed together across the heavens.

So it was that presently, to the European watchers, star and sun rose close upon each other, drove headlong for a space and then slower, and at last came to rest, star and sun merged into one glare of flame at the zenith of the sky. The moon no longer eclipsed the star but was lost to sight in the brilliance of the sky.

And though those who were still alive regarded it for the most part with that dull stupidity that hunger, fatigue, heat and despair engender, there were still men who could perceive the meaning of these signs. Star and earth had been at their nearest, had swung about one another, and the star had passed. Already it was receding, swifter and swifter, in the last stage of its headlong journey downward into the sun.

And then the clouds gathered, blotting out the vision of the sky, the thunder and lightning wove a garment round the world; all over the earth was such a downpour of rain as men had never before seen, and where the volcanoes flared red against the cloud canopy there descended torrents of mud. Everywhere the waters were pouring off the land, leaving mudsilted ruins, and the earth littered like a storm-worn beach with all that had floated, and the dead bodies of the men and brutes, its children. For days the water streamed off the land, sweeping away soil and trees and houses in the way, and piling huge dykes and scooping out Titanic gullies over the countryside. Those were the days of darkness that followed the star and the heat. All through them, and for many weeks and months, the earthquakes continued.

But the star had passed, and men, hunger-driven and gathering courage only slowly, might creep back to their ruined cities, buried granaries, and sodden fields. Such few ships as had escaped the storms came stunned and shattered and sounding their way cautiously through the new marks and shoals of once familiar ports. And as the storms subsided men perceived that everywhere the days were hotter than of yore, and the sun larger, and the moon, shrunk to a third of its former size, took now fourscore days between its new and new.

But of the new brotherhood that grew presently among men, of the saving of laws and books and machines, of the strange change that had come over Iceland and Greenland and the shores of Baffin's Bay, so that the sailors coming there presently found them green and gracious, and could scarce believe their eyes, this story does not tell. Nor of movement of mankind now that the earth was hotter, northward and southward towards the poles of the earth. This story concerns itself only with the coming and the passing of the Star.

The Martian astronomers—for there are astronomers on Mars, although they are very different beings from men—were naturally profoundly interested by these things. They saw them from their own standpoint of course. "Considering the mass and temperature of the missile that was flung through our solar system into the sun", one wrote, "it is astonishing what a little damage the earth, which it missed so narrowly, has sustained. All the familar continental markings and the masses of the seas remain intact, and indeed the only difference seems to be a shrinkage of the white discoloration (supposed to be frozen water) round either pole." Which only shows how small the vastest of human catastrophes may seem, at a distance of a few million miles.

H. G. Wells

Saturdays Only

A Farce in one Act

by A. Macdonald, M. A. and G. H. Sander, Ph. D.

Characters (In order of their appearance):

The Ticket Collector, The Porter, The Booking-Office Clerk, Mrs. Wilson, Miss Wilson — her daughter, The Stationmaster, Mr Hawkins — Landlord of the Red Lion, Mrs Hawkins, Mrs Bunn, Willy Bunn — her son, Mr Bunn — the Baker, George Timms, Fred Harris, Mr Tomkins (of Tomkins & Sons, London), Lord Kent, Lord Kent's Chauffeur.

Scene: The Entrance Hall and Waiting Room of the railway station at Little Slowton. A pile of luggage is in the middle of the stage, on which the Porter is sitting, looking very bored and reading a newspaper. The Ticket-Collector is leaninga against the door that leads on to the platform.

Ticket-Collector: Yes. There is no doubt about it. We lead a very busy life.

Porter: Busy? This is the dullest place I was ever in. Why, I've been here five days, and exactly four trains have stopped here all that time.

T.-C. : No trains stop here on Wednesdays, it is true.

P. : And only one train on each of the other days!

T.-C. : It must seem quiet to you after working so long at Waterloo Station.

P.: Quiet! I should think so indeed! Why, at Waterloo I never had a moment's rest from morning to night. More like the Battle of Waterloo than a railway station!

T.-C.: O, you mustn't think there is nothing to do here. Sometimes I collect as many as ten tickets a day. Of course Saturday is our really busy day.

P. (laughing): It looks like being a busy day!

T.-C.: You wait and see. Why, to-morrow we have —

P.: To-morrow? To-morrow is Sunday. To-day is Saturday.

T.-C.: No, no. It's Friday to-day.

P.: Saturday.

T.-C.: Friday!

P.: Saturday!

T.-C.: It must be Friday, because I remember it was Thursday yesterday.

P.: Well, look at my paper. It is dated Saturday.

T.-C.: Good Heavens! Is it really Saturday? How time does fly when you are busy, doesn't it? What is the time then? (He looks at his watch) I say, it's half past ten — the express is due!

P.: You don't mean to say we have an express stopping here?

T.-C. (proudly): I do! Every Saturday! Look at the time-table, there — The 9,50 from Waterloo to Portsmounth stops at Slowton at 10,31, Saturdays only. It's a great honour for Slowton, you know.

P.: O, it must be. But why does the express stop here?

T.-C.: Ah, you see, the Earl of Kent's castle is not far from here, and his Lordship is one of the Directors of the Company, so he was able to arrange it. He sometimes has visitors to stay from Saturday to Monday, and they find it useful.

P.: Well, I hope there will be some to-day. And I hope they have a lot of money. I haven't had a single tip since I came here.

(A bell rings in the Stationmaster's office.)

T.-C. (very excited): Heavens! The express is signalled!

P.: No, no. That is the telephone. Is the Stationmaster there?

T.-C.: I don't think he is. He usually goes to the Red Lion on Saturday morning, for a drink — in honour of the express, you know. Perhaps I had better answer it.

P.: It's all right. The booking-office clerk is there.

(The B. O. Clerk's voice is heard from the office.)

B. O. Clerk's voice: Hullo — yes — Slowton Station, yes — what? no, the Stationmaster isn't here just at present; he is very busy; this is Saturday morning you know — what? Yes, of course I can — Lord Kent? Yes, My Lord? O, I thought you said you were Lord Kent — What? O, a telegram for Lord Kent; yes?

T.-C. (to Porter): There isn't a post office at Slowton, you know, and they always telephone telegrams her. That's why we are so busy.

B. O. Clerk's voice: Prince? Prince did you say? — ten thirty-one — Arriving with Prince by 10,31 — very good, I'll have it sent up to the Castle at once — Good bye.

T.-C.: Did you hear that? The Prince is coming by the express!

P.: Prince?

T.-C.: Yes. The Prince, I suppose. A message from his secretary. I expect he is coming to stay the weekend with Lord Kent. I must go and fetch the Stationmaster at once.

(He runs away.)

(Enter Mrs Wilson and Miss Wilson.)

Mrs W. (Very much out of breath): O, we did have to run. I believe we are in time, though. The express hasn't gone through yet, has it?

P.: No, mum. You're just in time to see him.

Mrs W.: See him? Whom?

P.: Why, the Prince. He's coming by the express.

Miss W.: O, Mamma! How exciting! We shall see the Prince. I've always wanted to do that.

Mrs W.: The Prince coming here? Whatever for?

P.: To stay with Lord Kent.

Mrs W.: Nonsense. There must be some mistake. (She goes to the booking-office): Two third singles to Portsmouth, please.

B. O. Clerk: Seven and sixpence.

Miss W.: Mamma! Do hurry up! We must see the Prince. I wonder if he will take off his hat to me. What a pity that he is getting out of the train just as we are getting into it. We might have travelled in the same carriage.

Mrs. W.: My dear, he is sure to travel in a smoking compartment, and you know how impossible it is for me to bear smoke. We had better go on the platform at once. Will you bring the luggage, please?

(The porter, with the luggage, follows the ladies. Then the ticket-collector comes back, with the Stationmaster and Mr Hawkins. They are carrying a roll of red carpet.)

Hawkins: I don't think this will be long enough.

S. M.: Never mind. We must have some red carpet. I wish his Highness had told us earlier that he was coming.

T.-C.: I shall have the honour of collecting the ticket of His Royal Highness, the Prince!

S. M.: O no, you won't. When royalty travels, the Stationmaster collects the tickets.

T.-C.: Well, I never heard that before!

S. M.: O, it's always done. I daresay I shall be made a baronet or a lord.

Haw: Probably his Highness would care for some refreshment before he leaves the village.

S. M.: You may be sure I shall offer him something.

Haw: But surely he will want to visit my inn. The Red Lion, everyone knows, is a first-class establishment.

T.-C.: I expect he will drive straight up to the Castle. I wonder his Lordship isn't here to meet him.

S. M.: He'll be here soon, you may be sure. But if not, I have no doubt that I shall be able to receive his visitor with all possible respect. There, that is the best we can do, in such a short time.

(The carpet is spread. Enter Mrs Hawkins, Mrs Bunn, and Willy.)

Mrs H.: We are in time, aren't we? I had to change my clothes. I couldn't possibly come as I was, could I, Herbert?

Haw: You look very fine, my dear. I expect the Prince will take you for Lady Kent.

Mrs H.: Don't be so silly, Herbert. Come along, Mrs Bunn — we must be on the platform.

Mrs B.: No, I must wait for my husband. I can't think why he is so long. O, you've put a red carpet down. How grand!

S. M.: Of course. You must have red carpets for royalty. Do you think I ought to meet His Royal Highness at the carriage door, or here in the waiting-room?

T.-C.: Here, of course.

Haw: Of course, at the carriage door.

Mrs B.: Now, Willy, mind you take your cap off to the Prince.

Willy: Yes, Mamma.

S. M.: Heavens! Where is my cap? (Every body looks for it. The S. M. runs into his office and out again.) I've lost my cap! How can I possibly take my cap off to the Prince, if I haven't got it on? Mr. Hawkins, was I wearing my cap when I came into the Red Lion?

Haw: I don't remember, Mr. Burly.

Mrs B.: Yes, I saw you with it on. Willy, run as fast as you can to the Red Lion and see if you can find the Stationmaster's cap.

Willy: Then I shan't see the Prince.

Mrs B.: Yes, you will, if you're back quick. Run!

Willy (beginning to cry): I want to see the Prince.

S. M.: There's plenty of time. Ten minutes at least. Run, my boy, and I'll give you a penny, if you bring it back in time. (Willy goes.) I think I shall meet him at the carriage door, and show him the way out personally.

Haw: Show him the way to the Red Lion, Mr Burly.

T.-C. (by the platform door): I shall just stand here, and take his ticket as he goes out.

S. M.: No, no. I tell you I shall take his ticket.

Mrs H.: Do royalty have to have tickets?

S. M.: Well, of course, I shan't make him pay again, even if he hasn't got one.

(The Porter comes back.)

P.: This is a busy day! As exciting as Waterloo! Two passengers leaving and one arriving by the same train.

S. M.: Who is leaving?

P.: Mrs and Miss Wilson. I've just labelled their luggage to Portsmouth. They are on the platform.

S. M.: Why didn't you tell me? I must go and fetch them back. We can't have the platform filled with people, when we are expecting royalty. (He goes.)

Mrs B.: I wish my husband would come. I told him to shut up the shop for the morning. One doesn't get the chance of seeing the Prince every day.

(Enter Mr Bunn, George Timms, and Fred Harris.)

Bunn: I'm sorry we are so late. I've been trying to collect the village band together. Unfortunately a good many of them are at work, and not to be found. However, I have my trumpet, and George has his flute and Fred Harris says he'll play the drum.

Harris: I've never played the drum before, you know.

Timms: That's all right, Fred. It's very easy. You only have to hit it with the sticks. Anyone can play a drum.

(The Stationmaster comes back with Mrs and Miss Wilson.)

S. M.: Hasn't that boy found my cap yet? The train will be here in a minute. Ah, Mr Bunn, you've brought your trumpet — that's splendid. I think the band had better be outside the station.

P.: Yes, the farther away the better, I should say.

Bunn (annoyed): What do you mean by that, please?

P.: Unless the Prince is very unmusical.

Timms: Of course, if you think you can pay better yourself —

P.: Well —

S. M.: Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Please let us have no quarrelling at this moment! The band will be just outside the station door. I shall, of course, be on the platform. Everybody else will please wait quietly here.

Mrs W.: I never heard of such a thing! Why shouldn't we stay on the platform?

Miss W.: Mamma — I do hope the Prince will look at me.

(The Porter goes on to the platform.)

Mrs B.: Oughtn't someone to make a speech of welcome?

S. M.: Certainly. I think that should be my duty.

Haw: Wouldn't it be better for me to make a speech?

Mrs H.: Don't be silly, Herbert.

Haw: I'm not being silly. My speech at the Parish Council last Xmas was so good that it was reported in full in the Parish magazine. And the Vicar said —

(The Porter comes back.)

P.: The express is signalled.

(General excitement. Every body talks at once.)

S. M. (In a loud voice): Silence! Now remember what I said, please. Everyone is to wait here. When I have met His Royal Highness, and enquired if he has had a comfortable journey —

P. (aside): Twenty-five minutes!

S. M. (in a loud voice): I shall escort him here. Here I shall make a short speech, welcoming him in the name of the village of Slowton. After that, His Royal Highness will doubtless wish to reply, and thank us for the warmth of our welcome. As we leave the station, the band — (An engine whistle is heard.) She is coming — Quick!

He rushes to the door.

P.: You haven't got your cap.

S. M.: My cap! Good Heavens! My cap! Where is that boy?

Haw: Never mind, you've got no time to waste.

(Willy rushes in with the cap.)

S. M.: Thank Heavens! (Snatches it.)

Willy: Where's my penny, Sir?

S. M.: Afterwards, boy! Don't stop me now.

(He hurries on to the platform. The band goes out of the other door.)

Mrs W.: I must say I think it extraordinary of the Prince not to tell us earlier of his coming.

T.-C. (to himself): I've never had such a busy day in all my life.

Haw: Lord Kent ought to be here, I think.

(The noise of the train is heard — Everybody tells everybody else to keep quiet. Then the doors are flung open by the porter and the Ticket-Collector and the Stationmaster appear, backward bowing before a young man with a large parcel under his arm and a very puzzled expression on his face.)

Hawkins: Three cheers for the Prince! Hip — hip —

(The cheers are duly given. The Stationmaster mounts upon a seat. The young man, standing in the middle of the stage, looks more and more puzzled.)

S. M.: Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen! In the long history of our honourable village, none of us can remember a greater day than this. Today, for the first time in the long history of our honourable village, we have — er — (loud cheers) Today we have the honour of welcoming among us — er — in the honourable history of our long village — no

— (loud cheers). And I should not like to let this opportunity slip by without welcoming in the name of our honourable village —

(He is interrupted by the band, which breaks out into a discordant noise. At the height of the hubbub Lord Kent, followed by his chauffeur, walks in. Complete silence.)

Kent: What on earth is happening here. Mr Burly, what are you doing up there?

S. M.: My Lord, in your absence, I thought it my duty to offer our visitor a short speech of welcome.

Kent: Speech of welcome? Visitor? The man's mad. (To the young man.) Ah, Good morning, Tomkins. Very good of you to come yourself.

Tomkins: Not at all, my Lord. I thought they were rather too valuable to send without someone to look after them.

Kent: Quite so, quite so. (To his chauffeur): James, take that parcel from Mr Tomkins and put it in the car.

Chauffeur: Very good, my Lord.

T.-C.: (in a loud whisper): He's travelling incog!

Kent: Now, Mr Burly, what is the meaning of this crowd?

Hawkins: Well, my Lord, the honour of the village —

Kent: What do you mean? What has the arrival of a parcel of prints for me got to do with the honour of the village?

S. M.: A parcel of —

Haw: Prints! ? ! ? ! ?

Kent: Yes, Prints. P.R.I.N.T.S. Prints. Did you never hear the word?

S. M.: Yes, my Lord. There has been a slight mistake. We understood that the Prince —

T.-C.: The Prince, you know —

Tomkins: You thought I was the Prince, did you? Well, that is the first time that Joseph Tomkins, of Tomkins & Sons, Picture Dealers and Printsellers, has ever been mistaken for anyone so important.

T.-C.: But the telegram?

B. O. Clerk (Appearing from the S. M.'s office): You shouldn't listen to private conversations on the telephone, my friend.

Kent: Well, you have made fools of yourselves! Mr Tomkins sent me a telegram this morning to say that he was coming down by the express, to bring some very valuable old prints that I had ordered. As I happened to be passing the station in my car, I thought I would call for them myself. Perhaps your Royal Highness will honour me by coming up to the Castle for lunch.

Tomkins: Very kind of you, my Lord. Then I can show you the pictures at your leisure.

Kent (To his chauffeur): Home, James!

Chauffeur: Very good, my Lord.

(Kent and Tomkins go, followed by the chauffeur. There is a long silence.)

T.-C.: Blowed if I didn't forget to collect his ticket after all!

Mrs W.: And now of course we've missed our train.

P.: (Sitting down): O, we do have a busy life at Slowton!

Willy: Can I have my penny now?

The Nightingale and the Rose

"She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball to-morrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose se will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers: what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;" and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering about after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbour, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose!" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of Love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the centre of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sun-dial, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sun-dial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered, "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale, "only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?"

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own hearts's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins, and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the blue-bells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-coloured are his wings, and coloured like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frank-incense."

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove— "that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Nightingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper into her breast, and her life-blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the topmost spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvellous rose, petal following petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river —pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the Rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart, and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvellous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now;" but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name;" and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat, and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it to-night next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where a cart-wheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has;" and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is," said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

Oscar Wilde

From Day To Day . . .

From day to day, from night to night
My summer passes; autumn creeps
Nearer; before mine eyes the light
Fades out; my soul is blind and sleeps.
Everything sleeps; and I? I ponder:
Do I yet live, or do I wander,
A dead think, through my term of years,
A void of laugther as of tears?

Come to me, my fate! Where art thou?
Oh, I have no fate.
God, if Thou dost scorn to love me,
Grant me but thy hate!

Only let my heart not wither
Slowly, day by day,
Useless as a fallen tree-trunk
Rotting by the way.
Let me live, and live in spirit
Loving all mankind;
Or, if not, then let me curses
Strike the sunlight blind.
Wretched is the fettered captive,
Dying, and a slave;
But more wretched he that, living,
Sleeps, as in a grave,
Till he falls asleep for ever,
Living not a sign
That there faded into darkness
Something once divine.

Come to me, my fate! Where art thou?
Oh, I have no fate.
God, if Thou dost scorn to love me,
Grant me but thy hate!

Translated by Ethel Lilian Voynich Bull, 1911

My Last Will

When I die, then have me buried
On a Cossack's mound
Mid the rolling and far- reaching
Ukraina's ground,
So that I may see the wheat-lands
And the Dnieper's crags,
And may hear his mighty waters
Roaring o'er the snags.

When the streams of Ukraina,
Roaring angrily,
Bring the dying foeman's blood-drops
To the stormy sea,
I shall leave the hills and wheat-lands
Flying to the sky
To praise God, but till that moment
His reign I deny.

Leave alone my lofty barrow;
Rise and break your chain!
Water liberty with blood-drops
Of the foeman slain!
When you sing, my future brethren,
Praising liberty,
In the family of freemen
Kindly mention me.

Translated by Honore Ewach, 1933

I Care Not

I care not, shall I see my dear
Own land before I die, or no,
Nor who forgets me, buried here
In desert wastes of alien snow;
Though all forget me, better so.

A slave from my first bitter years,
Most surely I shall die a slave
Ungraced of any kinsmen's tears;
And carry with me to my grave
Everything; and leave no trace,
No little mark keep my place
In the dear lost Ukraina
Which is not ours, though our land.
And none shall ever understand;
No father to his son shall say:
— Kneel down, and fold your hands, and pray;
He died for our Ukraina.

I care no longer if the child
Shall pray for me, or pass me by.
One only thing I cannot bear:
To know my land, that was beguiled
Into a death-trap with a lie,
Trampled and ruined and defiled...
Ah, but I care, dear God; I care!

Translated by E. L. Voynich Bull, 1911

If, Lordlings, Ye Could Only Know

If, lordlings, ye could only know
How living creatures weep for woe,
Ye would not pen idyllic lays,
Nor unto God give empty praise,
While mocking at the tears we shed.

Yon cottage with the forest nigh
We call a paradise: yet why?
There once my heart with torment bled,
And it was there my tears I sned,
Earliest tears! Can e'er befall
At God's decree, a cruel teen
Which in that cottage ne'er was seen? —
And that a paradise they call!

No paradise in sooth, for me
That cottage by the grove can be,
By the clear pond, the village near
My mother swaddled me, and here
She sang to me those lullabies
That made her own despair arise
Within her babe; that grove, that cot,
That paradise, — it was the spot
Where I saw hell! 'Twas bondage there,
Most grievous slavery, and ne'er
Would they vouchsafe me e'en to pray.
Ere long my own good mother lay
In very youth beneath the ground:
Rest from her grief and toil she found.
My father with his children wept
(We little ones but scantly clad)
And bearing not the griefs he had,
He died in servitude; we crept

Away by strangers to be kept,
Like tiny beasts. At school oppressed,
I drew the water for the rest;
My brothers toiled as serfs, till they
With hair close-shorn were marched away.

But sisters! sisters! Hapless ye,
Young fledlings mine! What boots it you
Upon the earth your life to spend?
Hirelings in stranger's keep ye grew, —
Your hireling tresses shall grow white,
Hirelings, O sisters, ye will end...

Translated by Percy Paul Selver, 1919

Winter

Thy youth is over; time has brought
Winter upon thee; hope is grown
Chill as the north wind; thou art old.
Sit thou in thy dark house alone;
With no man converse shalt thou hold,
With no man shalt take counsel; nought.
Nought art thou, nought be thy desire.
Sit still alone by thy dead fire
Till hope shall mock thee fool, again,
Blinding thine eyes with frosty gleams,
Vexing thy soul with dreams, with dreams
Like snowflakes in the empty plain.
Sit thou alone, alone and dumb;
Cry not for Spring, it will not come.
It will not enter at thy door,
Nor make thy garden green once more,
Nor cheer with hope thy withered age,
Nor loose thy spirit from her cage...
Sit still, sit still! Thy life is spent;
Nought art thou, be with nought content.

Translated by E. L. Voynich Bull, 1911

Drowsy The Waves

Drowsy the waves and dim the sky,
Across the shore and far away,
Without a want. O God on high,
Is it decreed that longer yet
Within this lockless prison set,
Beside this sea that profits naught,
I am to languish? Answering not,
Like to a living thing, the grain
Sways mute and yellowing on the plain;
No tidings will it let me hear,
And none besides to give me ear.

Translated by Percy Paul Selver, 1919

The Haydamaki

(Prologue)

Sons of mine, O haydamaki!
Broad's the world, and freedom!
Sons of mine, go out to revel
And to try your fate!
Sons of mine, who still are youthful,
Children still untutored!
Who of you without your mother
In the world is practised?
Sons of mine! My little eagles!
Fly to Ukraina!
Though you grow adult and active,
Foreign land's hindrance.
There your spirit, gain more knowledge,
Keep itself untarnished;
There... O there... 'tis hard, my children!
When they let you in a cabin,
Jesting they will smile upon you;
Such, they say, are people;
All that's written and that's printed
Even blame the sunlight:
"Not from there they say light cometh.
Right it never shineth.
That is why it is so needed..."
What can you be doing?
You must listen, maybe truly
Shines the sun in error,
As the writers read their writings.
And the years have wisdom!
What can they to you be telling?
Yes, I know your glory!
They deceive you, ridicule you,
Throw you 'neath the benches.
„Let them feast, they all make answer,
Till the father rises
And will tell us in our language

Of our famous hetmans,
Or the fool will rise and tell us
In dead words that bore us.
That there was some strange Yarema
At the head of all our forces
In the raids! A fool and folly!
Beaten they can astmer nothing;
Of the Cossacks, of the hetmans,
Lofty tombs are with us.
Nothing else remains among us
And these too they ruin;
And he wishes us to hearken
To the elders chanting.
Vain the labor, O sir brother!
If you wish for money,
Praise that man and each great marvel!
Sing about Matryosha
Or Parasha, who's our pleasure,
Sultans, spurs, and parquet.
There is glory! If you're singing
'See the blue sea playing',
He is weeping; and together
All your group of hearers
In their coats of gray..."
True 'tis, wise men!
Thank you for the counsel!
Warms the leather, but I'm sorry
That it ill becomes me,
And your wise advice you're breaking
With a stubborn slander.
Pardon me and talk without me!
I will still not hearken,
Will not call you to my circle;
You are wise, good people,
I'm a fool and unattended,
In my little cabin,
I am singing, I am sobbing
Like the little children.

I am singing: „See the blue sea",
Hear the wind a-blowing,
Black's the steppe and with its breezes
Speaks the tomb forsaken.
I am singing; there are ruins,
Tombs that rise still higher,
Till a path the Zaporozhtsy
To the sea will open;
Atamans on swift black horses
Rob and plunder always
'Fore their hosts; the rivers flowing
'Mid the guns of heroes
Howl and groan in anger growing,
Till they sing more fiercely!
Yes, I hearken and I study,
Learning from the elders:
What, my Fathers, do you tell me?
„Son, it is not cheerful!
For the Dnieper's angry at us,
Ukraina's weeping."
And I weep. That self-same hour
In their shining squadrons
Atamans set out a-marching,
Captains with their nobles,
And the hetmans, gold-attired;
To my humble cabin
They have come to sit around me,
And of Ukraina
They will speak and tell me stories,
How the Sitch was founded,
How the Cossacks boldly traversed
Rapids, wafting downwards,
How they reveled on the waters,
Dashed into Scutari,
How they lit their pipes beloved
At the Polish fires;
Then came back to Ukraina,
How they nobly feasted...

„Play, kobzar! Pour out, O tapster!"
And the Cossacks reveled.
Tapster, pour and grow not weary
And the feast continues.
So he sang and all the Cossacks
As Khortitsya's bending,
Fill their cups and dream their praises
As the feast continues.
Pitchers come and pass around them,
Dry and empty leave them.
„Revel, sir, without a tunic!
Revel, wind, a-blowing!
Play, kobzar, pour out, O tapster,
While the humor strikes us!"
Standing side by side the stripling
Dances with his elders:
„Fine, O children! Good, O children!
You too will be heroes!"
Atamans at the high banquet
Stand not with the others;
They are walking, are conversing,
And the noble heroes
Stand not quiet but they enter
With their aged bodies;
And I marvel, I am looking,
Smiling, while I'm weeping.
I marvel, I'm smiling, I'm wiping my eyelids
I'm not all alone, but I live with those men!
In my little cabin, and on the steppes also,
The Cossacks are sporting, the thickets are rustling,
In my little cabin, the blue sea is playing,
The tomb is rejoicing, while rustle the trees.
The maiden is singing, „Hritsya", as she wanders,
I'm not all alone; may I live with those men!

Translated by Clarence Augustus Manning, 1928

I Am Lonesome And Sad

I am lonesome and sad,
Fading lonely in sadness,
Without favor of God,
May days bring me no gladness.

All that God gave to me
Are these eyes, bright and gleaming,
But they fade and grow dim
With the tears daily streaming.

All I had now are gone,
Father, sister and brother;
With no kin I grew up;
Without love of my mother.

And my love, where is he?
Who will bring me some gladness?
All are gone... Here alone
I shall wither in sadness.

Translated by Honore Ewach, 1933

See Fires Ablaze

See fires ablaze, hear music sound, —
The music weeps and nestles round.
E'en as a diamond, precious, fair,
The eyes of youth are bright, how bright!
Gladness and hope have set their light
In joyous eyes. They know not care,
Those youthful eyes, — no sin is there.
And all are filled with mirth and glee,
And all are dancing. I alone
Gaze, as there were a curse on me.
I weep, I weep to all unknown.
Why do I weep? Perchance to mourn,
How without hap, as tempest-borne,
The days of all my youth have flown.

Translated by Percy Paul Selver. 1919

A Spring Evening

Close by the house the cherries flower,
Above the orchard the beetles hum,
Still singing, the girls homeward come,
The tired plowmen's steps grow slower,
And dames with supper wait at home.

Close by the house they eat their supper;
Just then the evening-star appears;
As daughter serves, and mother fears
That she may serve in ways improper,
The nightingale's song stuns their ears.

Close to the wall on the clay-benches
The mother lulls her Nell and Bill,
And falls asleep against her will.
And fall asleep . . . But the sweet wenches
And nightingales are singing still.

Translated by Honore Ewach, 1933

The Reaper

Through the fields the reaper goes
Piling sheaves on sheaves in rows;
Hills, not sheaves, are these.
Where he passes howls the earth,
Howl the echoing seas.

All the night the reaper reaps,
Never stays his hand nor sleeps,
Reaping endlessly;
Whets his blade and passes on . . .
Hush, and let him be.

Hush, he cares not how men writhe
With naked hands against the scythe,
Wouldst thou hide in field or town?
Where thou art, there he will come;
He will reap thee down.

Serf and landlord, great and small;
Friendless wandering singer, — all,
All shall swell the sheaves that grow
To mountains; even the Tzar shall go.

And me too the scythe shall find
Cowering alone behind
Bars of iron; swift and blind,
Strike, and pass, and leave me, stark
And forgotten in the dark.

Translated by E. L. Voynich Bull, 1911

The Sun Goes Down

The sun goes down beyond the hill,
The shadows darken, birds are still;
From fields no more come toiler's voices
In blissful rest the world rejoices.
With lifted heart I, gazing stand,
Seek shady grove in Ukraine's land.
Uplifted thus, 'mid memories fond
My heart finds rest, o'er the hills beyond.
On fields and woods the darkness falls
From heaven blue a bright star calls,
The tears fall down. Oh, evening star!
Hast thou appeared in Ukraine far?
In that fair land do sweet eyes seek thee
Dear eyes that once were wont to greet me?
Have eyes forgotten their tryst to keep?
Oh then, in slumber let them sleep
No longer o'er my fate to weep.

Translated by Alexander Jardin Hunter, 1922

Only Friend

Only friend, clear evening twilight,
Come and talk to me!
Cross the hills to share my prison
Very secretly.
Tell me how the sun in splendour
Sets behind the hill;
How the Dnieper lasses carry
Pitchers down to fill;
How the broad-leaved sycamore
Flings his branches wide;
How the willow kneels to pray
By the river-side;
How her green boughs kiss the water
Trailing, half asleep,
And unchristened ghosts of babies
Swing from them and weep;
How lost souls at lonely cross-roads
Cower, wild and dumb,
When the owl shrieks from the alder
Of the wrath to come;
How the magic flowers open
At the moonbeam's touch ...
But of men, what would you tell me, —
Me, who know so much?
Far too much! And you know nothing;
Why, you understand
Nothing of what men are doing
Now, in my dear land.
But I know, and I will tell you,
Tell you, without end . . .
When you speak with God to-morrow,
Look you tell Him, friend.

Translated by E. L. Voynich Bull, 1911

The Monk

At Kiev, in the low countrie,
Things happened once that you'll never see,
For evermore, 'twas done;
Nevermore, 'twill come.
Yet I, my brother,
Will with hope foregather,
That this again I'll see,
Though grief it brings to me.

To Kiev in the low countrie
Came our brotherhood so free.
Nor slave nor lord have they,
But all in noble garb so gay
Came splashing forth in mood full glad
With velvet coats the streets are clad.
They swagger in silken garments pride
And they for no one turn aside.

In Kiev, in the low countrie,
All the Cossacks dance in glee,
Just like water in pails and tubs
Wine pours out 'mid great hubbubs.
Wine cellars and bars
with all the barmaids
The Cossacks have bought
with their wines and meads.
With their heels they stamp
And dancing tramp,
While the music roars
And joyously soars.
The people gaze
with gladsome eyes,
While scholars of the cloister schools
All in silence bred by rules,
Look on with wondering surprise.
Unhappy scholars! Were they free,
They would Cossacks dancing be.

Who is this musicians surrounded
To whom the people give fame unbounded?
In trousers of velvet red,
Whit a coat that sweeps the road
A Cossack comes. Let's weep o'er his years
For what they've done is cause for tears.
But there's life in the old man yet I trust,
For with dancing kicks
he spurns the dust.
In his short time left with men to mingle
The Cossack sings,
this tipsy jingle.
„On the road is a crab, crab, crab.
Let us catch it grab, grab, grab.
Girls are sewing jab, jab, jab.
Let's dance on trouble,
Dance on it double
Then on we'll bubble.
Already this trouble
We've danced on double
So let's dance on trouble,
Dance on it double,
Then on we'll bubble."

To the Cloister of our Saviour
Old gray-hair dancing goes.
After him his joyous crowd
And all the folk of Kiev so proud.
Dances he up to the doors
„Hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo!" he roars.
Ye holy monks give greeting
A comrade from the prairie meeting.
Opens the sacred door,
The Cossack enters in.
Again the portal closes
To open no more for him.
What a man was there
this old gray-hair,
Who said to the world farewall?

'Twas Semon Palee,
a Cossack free
Whom trouble could not quell.
On in the East the sun climbs high
And sets again in the western sky.
In narrow cell in monkish gown
Tramps an old man up and down,
Then climbs the highest turret there
To feast his eyes on Kiev so fair,
And sitting on the parapet
He yields a while to fond regret.
Anon he goes to the woodland spring,
The belfry near, where sweet bells ring.
The cooling draught to his mind recalls
How hard was life without the walls.
Again the monk his cell floor paces
'Mid the silent walls his life retraces.
The sacred book he holds in hand
And loudly reads,
The old man's mind to Cossack land
Swiftly speeds.
Now holy words do fade away,
The monkish cell turns Cossack den,
The glorious brotherhood lives again.
The gray old captain, like an owl
Peers beneath the monkish cowl.
Music, dances, the city's calls,
Rattling fetters, Moscow's walls,
O'er woods and snows
his eyes can see
The banks of distant Yenisee.
Upon his soul deep gloom has crept
And thus the munk in sadness wept.

Down, down! Bow thy head;
On thy fleshly cravings tread.
In the sacred writings read.
Read, read, to the bell give heed,

Thy heart too long has ruled thee,
All thy life it's fooled thee.
Thy heart to exile led thee,
Now let it silent be.
As all things pass away
So thou shalt pass away.
Thus may'st thou know thy lot,
Mankind remembers not.
Though groans the old man's sadness tell,
Upon his book he quickly fell,
And tramped and tramped about his cell.
He sits again in mood forlorn
Wonders why he e'er was born.
One thing alone he fain would tell,
He loves his Ukraina well.
For Matins now
the great bell booms,
The aged monk
his cowl resumes.
For Ukraina now to pray
My good old Palee limps away.

Translated by Alexander Jardin Hunter, 1922

Christmas Day

(To F. M. Lazarevsky)

When you're not going home at night
From one place or another,
And sleep has gone from you in flight
Remember me, dear brother!
And when your lonesomeness and grief
Won't leave you for a price,
Why, then, just think of me friend
And call me for advice.
It's then that you should think of how
Beside a distant sea,
Your friend of friends, so happy once,
Fights with his destiny;
How he, with just his hidden thoughts
And with his humble heart,
Walks aimlessly and prays to God
To lighten, some his lot;
Whose thoughts drift often to Ukraine,
Who thinks of you, my friend,
And sometimes worries for a while —
Not much — you understand.
You see, it's but a day away
When Christmas will be hail'd —
How hard it is to meet this day
When you're alone and jailed
In the desert.
Bright and early
Tomorrow, in Ukraine,
The bells will ring and people'll sing
To God a sweet refrain.
And tomorrow, bright and early,
Somewhere along the plain,
A hungry beast will introduce
A chilling hurricane;
To bring and blow the sand and snow
Around my hut of clay.

That is the way that I shall meet
The Holy Christmas Day!
So what is there to do? Life's here
In which we all must grope
And struggle to the end. My friend,
If you should ever mope,
Just know what's written on the sheet:
That on this earthly isle
The only life that's hard to meet
Is desert-bound exile' . . .
And man, though poorly, lives there, too.
What else is there to do?
Unless to die — but hope, good man,
Refuses to comply!

(Written in exile at Kos-Aral near the Aral Sea, Asia, in 1848)

Translated by Waldimir Semenyna, 1933

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