new writing

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NEW WRITING

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EDITED BY JOHN LEHMANN

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SEVEN ENGLISH STORIES

[continued overleaf

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NEW WRITING asks prospective contributors to remember that it is devoted to imaginative writing, and can therefore have no place for literary theory or the criticism of contemporaries; that it exists particularly to further the work of new and young authors, from colonial and foreign countries as well as the British Isles, whose aims are in any way in sympathy with its declared character; and that contributions, which will be paid for, may be anything in length up to 15,000 words.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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E. M. FORSTER is the author of *Howard's End, A Passage to India, Abinger Harvest* and many other books. His novels have deeply influenced many of the most promising younger English writers. His generous sympathy towards popular movements of liberation has been all the more telling because quietly expressed and scrupulously honest.

LOUIS MACNEICE, poet and part-author with W. H. Auden of the recently published *Letters from Iceland*, was born in 1907 in Belfast, though his family comes from the West of Ireland. He now works as a Lecturer in the University of London.

ANDRE CHAMSON, author of two stories, *My Enemy* and *The White Beastie*, which have appeared in previous numbers of *New Writing*, is the guiding spirit of the Parisian weekly review *Vendredi*, to which all the writers who support the Front Populaire contribute.

IGNAZIO SILONE is the well-known young Italian writer, who lives in exile in Switzerland, author of the two novels of peasant life under Mussolini's régime, *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine*, and of the story *Journey to Paris* which was published in *New Writing* No. 2.

JOHN CORNFORD was the brilliant young Cambridge poet killed fighting for the Spanish Republic last winter. The poems printed here, and the two from Spain which appeared in *Left Review* some months ago, are among his last writings and indicate what he might have achieved if he had lived. They will be reproduced in a book on his life and work which Gollancz hopes to publish in December.

ALFRED KANTOROWICZ, a German living till recently in exile in Paris, but now working in Republican Spain, was the author of *To the Western Front* in *New Writing* No. 1.

MARGOT HEINEMANN was born in 1913, and the poems printed here are her first works to be published. After leaving Cambridge she taught in Birmingham for a time.

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV, a Soviet Russian author from Leningrad, was born in 1896 and fought in both the Great War and the Civil

War. Afterwards he began to write poetry and achieved considerable success, but since 1927 has devoted himself chiefly to prose. He is a great traveller, and the remoter parts of the Soviet Union form the favourite background of his stories, two of which, *The Tea-Khan* and *Nights in a Persian Garden*, have appeared in previous numbers of *New Writing*.

AHMED ALI was born in Delhi, and grew up during the historic mass-movements of 1920–23. He started writing when still a boy, and has contributed short stories and sketches to the leading Urdu magazines. The story printed here was translated from the original Urdu by the author himself.

H. MALLALIEU is 22 years old, lives at Croydon, and works as a journalist. He has contributed poems to various English periodicals.

V. S. PRITCHETT is the well-known young critic and novelist, author of *Sense of Humour* published in *New Writing* No. 2. He left board school at the age of sixteen during the War, and first earned his living in the leather and photography businesses. He then went to France where he sold feathers and theatre tickets. He turned to writing at the age of twenty-three.

TOM BURNS was born in Bethnal Green in 1913, last of a family of nine. He has worked in London shops, in the Post Office, on farms in the south and east of England, and as a private-school teacher. The two stories here printed are his first to be published.

WILLY GOLDMAN, born in Stepney twenty-seven years ago, left school at the age of fourteen, to earn his living in the docks, in the engineering and clothing industries. He now devotes himself to writing. He was the author of *A Start in Life* in *New Writing* No. 2, and his first novel will soon be published.

LESLIE HALWARD, author of *Boss* in *New Writing* No. 2, was born in Birmingham thirty-two years ago. He started work at the age of fifteen, and has been die-sinker, toolmaker, labourer, and plasterer. He began to write seriously in 1932 when on the dole, and published his first collection of short stories, *To Tea on Sunday*, early last year.

J. BRIAN HARVEY was born in Birmingham in 1914. He has edited a magazine at Oxford, has contributed poems to various publications, and is now working as a journalist.

T. C. WORSLEY is 29, has been a schoolmaster, and drove an ambulance in Republican Spain during the spring of this year. Two or three of his stories have been published recently in *New Stories* and *The Adelphi*.

W. H. AUDEN, poet and dramatist, achieved immediate success with his first book, *Poems*, in 1930, and recently wrote a travel book, *Letters from Iceland*, in collaboration with Louis MacNeice. He contributed *Alfred*, a cabaret sketch, to *New Writing* No. 2, and a poem to No. 3.

SAM ROSS is twenty-five years old and has worked as a journalist in New York and Chicago. He is a first-class swimmer and has been a life-guard for eight years. He is now beginning to write novels.

F. G. LORCA is the famous Spanish poet, a translation of whose latest poems has just been published in English under the title of *Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter*. He was deliberately murdered by the fascists soon after the outbreak of the Civil War.

MORTON FREEDGOOD is the young American writer who contributed *Good Nigger* to *New Writing* No. 2.

MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV, famous Soviet Russian author of *Quiet Flows the Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned*, is a Don Cossack and fought in both the Great War and the Civil War. He began publishing in 1925. He lives in the Don region, and in addition to writing takes an active interest in local politics and local harvests.

ALFRED KURELLA, translator, essayist, editor, and more recently novelist, was born in 1895 near Breslau and grew up in the Rhineland. He took an active part in revolutionary events in Germany at the end of the War. He is at present living in exile in Moscow.

TIZIAN TABIDZE, one of the leading poets of Soviet Georgia, lives in Tiflis. His work has been very much influenced by Verhaerens and the French Symbolists, and he was at one time a prominent member of the Georgian Symbolist group, *The Blue Horn*.

M. DJAVAKHISHVILI is the most outstanding Soviet Georgian novelist and story-writer. He now takes a prominent part in the cultural activities of Tiflis, but he was not always in sympathy with Bolshevik policy; and the story printed here, which has been slightly shortened, contains much that is autobiographical.

REX WARNER is the young poet who has just published his first book of poems, and is about to publish a remarkable novel, *The Wild Goose Chase*, a section of which appeared in *New Writing* No. 2.

RAFAEL DIESTE is a young Spanish author, who contributes to *Hora Espana*, the literary magazine, published by the Valencia Government.

STEPHEN SPENDER is the well-known young poet, story-writer, and critic who contributed poems to *New Writing* Nos. 1 and 3, and has taken an active part as a writer in supporting the cause of Republican Spain, both inside and outside the country.

NEW WRITING

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E. M. FORSTER

THE LAST PARADE

PARIS Exhibition, Palace of Discovery, Astronomical Section: model of the Earth in space. Yes, here is a model of this intimate object. It is a tidy size—so large that Europe or even France should be visible on it—and it revolves at a suitable rate. It does not take twenty-four hours to go round as in fact, nor does it whizz as in poetry. It considers the convenience of the observer, as an exhibit should. Staged in a solemn alcove, against a background of lamp-super-black, it preens its contours eternally, that is to say from opening to closing time, and allows us to see our home as others would see it, were there others who could see. Its colouring, its general appearance, accord with the latest deductions. The result is surprising. For not France, not even Europe, is visible. There are great marks on the surface of the model, but they represent clouds and snows, not continents and seas. No doubt the skilled observer could detect some underlying fussiness, and infer our civilization, but the average voyager through space would only notice our clouds and our snows; they strike the eye best. Natural boundaries, guns in action, beautiful women, pipelines—at a little distance they all wear the same veil. Sir Malcolm Campbell beats his own records till he sees his own back, Mr. Jack Hulbert cracks still cleaner jokes, the body of Mr. Justice Avory continues to decay, forty thousand monkeys are born in Brazil and fifty thousand Italians in Abyssinia, the Palace of the Soviets rises even higher than had been planned, Lord Baden-Powell holds a yet larger jamboree, but all these exercises and the areas where they occur remain hidden away under an external shimmer. The moon—she shows her face. Throned in an adjacent room, the moon exhibits her pockmarks nakedly. But the Earth, because she still has atmosphere and life, is a blur.

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Paris Exhibition: the Spanish Pavilion, the Italian Pavilion. The other pavilions. The Palaces of Glass and of Peace. The Eiffel Tower. The last named occasionally sings. Moved by an emission of Roman Candles from its flanks, it will break of an evening into a dulcet and commanding melody. When this happens the pavilions fold their hands to listen, and are steeped for a little in shadow, so that the aniline fountains may play more brightly in the Seine. The melody swells,

inciting the fireworks as they the melody, and both of them swell the crowd. O synchronization! O splendour unequalled! Splendour ever to be surpassed? Probably never to be surpassed. The German and Russian Pavilions, the Chinese and Japanese Pavilions, the British and Italian Pavilions, any and all of the pavilions, will see to that. The Eiffel Tower sings louder, a scientific swan. Rosy chemicals stimulate her spine, she can scarcely bear the voltage, the joy, the pain. . . . The emotion goes to her tiny head, it turns crimson and vomits fiery serpents. All Paris sees them. They astonish the Pantheon and Montmartre. Even the Institut de France notices, heavy browed, dreaming of cardinals, laurels, and réclame in the past. O inspired giraffe! Whatever will the old thing turn into next? Listen and see. The crisis is coming. The melody rises by slight and sure gradations, à la César Franck, spiralling easily upward upon the celestial roundabout. Bell pop popple crack, is the crisis, bell pop popple crack, the senses reel, music and light, lusic and might, the Eiffel Tower becomes a pleisiosauros, flings out her arms in flame, and brings them back smartly to her vibrating sides, as one who should say 'là!' Bell pop crack pop popple bell. The carillon dies away, the rockets fall, the senses disentangle. There is silence, there are various types of silences, and during one of them the Angel of the Laboratory speaks. 'Au revoir, mes enfants,' she says. 'I hope you have enjoyed yourselves. We shall meet again shortly, and in different conditions.' The children applaud these well-chosen words. The German Pavilion, the Russian Pavilion, confront one another again, and a small star shines out on the top of the Column of Peace.

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Paris Exhibition: Van Gogh. When the day breaks, Van Gogh can be found if wanted. He is housed in the corner of another palace between maps of Paris and intellectual hopes for the future, and the space suffices him. Well content with his half-dozen rooms, he displays his oddness and his misery to tired feet. 'Sorrow is better than joy,' he writes up upon the white walls of his cell. Here are pictures of potatoes and of miners who have eaten potatoes until their faces are tuberous and dented and their skins grimed and unpeeled. They are hopeless and humble, so he loves them. He has his little say, and he understands what he is saying, and he cuts off his own ear with a knife. The gaily painted boats of Saintes Maries sail away into the Mediterranean at last, and the Alpilles rise over St. Rémy for ever, but nevertheless 'Sorrow is better than joy,' for Van Gogh. What would the

Eiffel Tower make of such a conclusion? Spinning in its alcove for millions of years, the earth brings a great artist to this. Is he just dotty, or is he failing to put across what is in his mind? Neither, if we may accept historical parallels. Every now and then people have preferred sorrow to joy, and asserted that wisdom and creation can only result from suffering. Half a mile off, Picasso has done a terrifying fresco in the Spanish Pavilion, a huge black and white thing called 'Guernica.' Bombs split bull's skull, woman's trunk, man's shins. The fresco is indignant, and so it is less disquieting than the potato feeders of Van Gogh. Picasso is grotesquely angry, and those who are angry still hope. He is not yet wise, and perhaps he is not yet a creator. Nevertheless, he too succeeds in saying something about injustice and pain. Can one look through pain or get round it? And can anything be done against money? On the subject of money, Van Gogh becomes comprehensible and sound. He has got round money because he has sought suffering and renounced happiness. In the sizzle surrounding him, his voice stays uncommercial, unscientific, pure. He sees the colour 'blue,' observes that the colour 'yellow' always occurs in it, and writes this preposterous postulate up upon the white walls. He has a home beyond comfort and common sense with the saints, and perhaps he sees God.

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The Soviet Pavilion. This, bold and gleaming, hopes to solve such problems for the ordinary man. And for the ordinary woman too, who, of enormous size, leans forward on the roof beside her gigantic mate. Seen from the side, they and the building upon which they stand describe a hyperbola. They shoot into space, following their hammer and sickle, and followed by the workers' world state. The conception is satisfying, but a hyperbola is a mathematical line, not necessarily an æsthetic one, and the solid and ardent pair do not group well when viewed from the banks of the bourgeois Seine. Challenging injustice, they ignore good taste, indeed they declare in their sterner moments that injustice and good taste are inseparable. Their aims are moral, their methods disciplinary. Passing beneath their sealed up petticoats and trousers we enter a realm which is earnest cheerful instructive constructive and consistent, but which has had to blunt some of the vagrant sensibilities of mankind and is consequently not wholly alive. Statistics, maps and graphs preach a numerical triumph, but the art-stuff on the walls might just as well hang on the walls of the German Pavilion opposite: the incidents and the uniforms in the pictures are

different but the mentality of the artists is the same, and is as tame. Only after a little thinking does one get over one's disappointment and see the matter in perspective. For the Soviet Pavilion is a nudge to the blind. It is trying, like Van Gogh, to dodge money and to wipe away the film of coins and notes which keeps forming on the human retina. One of the evils of money is that it tempts us to look at it rather than at the things it buys. They are dimmed because of the metal and the paper through which we receive them. That is the fundamental deceitfulness of riches, which kept worrying Christ. That is the treachery of the purse, the wallet and the bank-balance, even from the capitalist point of view. They were invented as a convenience to the flesh, they have become a chain for the spirit. Surely they can be cut out, like some sorts of pain. Though deprived of them the human mind might surely still keep its delicacy unimpaired, and the human body eat drink and make love. And that is why every bourgeois ought to reverence the Soviet Pavilion. Even if he is scared at Marxism he ought to realize that Russia has tried to put men into touch with things. She has come along with a handkerchief and wiped. And she has wiped close to the exhibition turnstiles and amid the chaos and carnage of international finance.

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Park of Attractions. I did enjoy myself here, I must say. That is the difficulty of considering the Exhibition: it is in so many pieces and so is oneself. After seeing the German Pavilion, which presents Valhalla as a telephone box, and the Belgian Pavilion, which is very lovely, and many other sacred and serious objects, I sought the Park of Attractions and went up to space in a pretence-balloon. A crane lifted me into the void while another crane lowered another balloon which filled with people when my balloon was up. Then my balloon came down and the other balloon went up. So I got out and walked over the surface of the earth to the Dervish Theatre. Then I watched other people play a game called 'Deshabillez vos vedettes.' I thought a vedette was a boat. Here it was a tin lady, naked except for a cincture of green feathers which the entrants tried to shoot off. Then I went to a booth advertising 'Perversités. Images Troublantes.' The entrance fee was a franc, which helped me to keep my head. Inside were some distorting mirrors, a little black savage who kept lashing herself or himself with a bunch of boot-laces, and some holes through which improper photographs should have been seen, but I got muddled and missed them. Oh, the French, the French! Well pleased, I came

out. It was a lovely evening. The moon, which had been trying various styles from Neon to Pantheon, now imitated a pretence-balloon. The Park of Attractions, which is extremely clever and pretty, was girt with a scenic railway, and at intervals the shrieks of voyagers through space rent the night. There was plenty to spend money on. Money, money, money! The crowd was what journalists call 'good humoured'; and I, a journalist, was part of it. Tunisians and Moroccans strolled about and sometimes kissed one another. Oh the French! Why are they so good at organizing these lighter happinesses? The English admire them; and themselves produce the suety dreariness, the puffed pretentiousness, of Wembley.

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Satan. Unexpected but unmistakable, he appears in the great entrance court of the Italian Pavilion, amongst the fragments of the lovely Italian past. These fragments are bent to his service—Garibaldi, St. Francis, Ravenna mosaics, Pompeian doves. He is to the left as one comes in, clothed all in black, and he dominates a large feeble picture of carnage. He is weakness triumphant—that is his rôle in the modern world. He presses a button and a bull bursts. He sprays savages with scent. He tilts his head back till his chin sticks out like a tongue and his eyeballs stare into his brain. Decent people take no notice of him or make fun of him, but presently something goes wrong with their lives; certain islands are inaccessible, a letter is unanswered, bonds confiscated, a friend takes a trip over the frontier and never returns. Elsewhere in this same pavilion are his instruments: things easily let off. He has only one remark to make: 'I, I, I,' He uses the symbols of the sacred and solemn past, but they only mean 'I.' Here, among superficial splendours of marble, he holds his court, and no one can withstand him except Van Gogh, and Van Gogh has nothing to lose. The rest of us are vulnerable, science is doing us in, the Angel of the Laboratory switches off the fireworks, and burns up the crowd without flame.

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Meanwhile and all the while, the Earth revolves in her alcove, veiled in wool. She has sent samples of her hopes and lusts to Paris; that they will again be collected there, or anywhere, is unlikely, but she herself will look much the same as soon as one stands a little back in space. Even if the Mediterranean empties into the Sahara it will not make much difference. It is our clouds and our snows that show.

LOUIS MACNEICE

JUNE THUNDER

THE Junes were free and full, driving through tiny
Roads, the mudguards brushing the cow-parsley,
Through fields of mustard and under boldly-embattled
Mays and chestnuts.

Or between beeches verdurous and voluptuous
Or where broom and gorse beflagged the chalkland—
All the flare and gusto of the unenduring
Joys of a season

Now returned but I note as more appropriate
To the maturer moods impending thunder
With an indigo sky and the garden hushed except for
The treetops moving.

Then the curtains in my room blow suddenly inward,
The shrubbery rustles, birds fly heavily homeward,
The white flowers fade to nothing on the trees and rain comes
Down like a drop scene.

Now there comes the catharsis, the cleansing downpour
Breaking the blossoms of our overdated fancies
Our old sentimentality and whimsicality
Loves of the morning.

Blackness at half-past eight, the night's precursor,
Clouds like falling masonry and lightning's lavish
Annunciation, the sword of the mad archangel
Flashed from the scabbard.

If only you would come and dare the crystal
Rampart of rain and the bottomless moat of thunder,
If only now you would come I should be happy
Now if now only.

ANDRE CHAMSON

THE POWER OF WORDS

Translated from the French by John Rodker

'TALK French!' my grandmother would shout. 'Where do you learn such words? Not from me, or your mother, that I'm sure. Now say it the right way!'

And I, standing at the foot of the steps, looking up at where she leaned over the balcony railing, would answer furiously:

'I'm going to get some water in the pitcher.'

'There you see . . . you *can* talk like other people. . . . Then try not to do it again.' And as I crossed the little garden with its box hedges and dark earthy beds, I would hear her muttering the few words of dialect I had used, just as she would have done if repeating some bit of village scandal to herself.

And I too went my way, muttering the words she had forbidden. That was how I revenged myself. But then I would forget all about them, as I listened to the water fill my pitcher. It was sheer enchantment to hear the solemn music, that, climbing up the scale, rose to a sharp whistling sigh in the narrow spout, and as the water spilled, began to splash in solemn music again. There was no need any longer to pin a name to things, or find a language to express them. This sensual contact said everything and more, that I had to say.

Afterwards, bemused and carrying my slopping pitcher, I would go back across the garden, my nostrils full of the teeming smell of rank decomposition, the acrid exhalations of foliage and box. But when, out of breath, I reached the kitchen, my scolding was forgotten, and I was ready to commit the fault again.

Every object in my environment seemed to conspire to bewilder me. When I picked something up, the first thing I thought was its local name, and my impetuosity left me no time for translation. The forbidden word escaped, even as my hand closed on the thing.

'Talk French!' my grandmother would repeat, and raise her voice in despair. 'But why can't you talk French? Always this *patois*. A lot of good it will do you! Why, people will laugh at you when you get to Paris.'

And yet, though Grandmother forbade me to speak the *patois*, she often made mistakes herself, and often unwittingly taught it to me. Why, merely in her little dark kitchen, lit only from an inside staircase that rose straight between its massive pillars, what quantities of things there were, for which the only names she had were *patois*. Strive as she might to use but French, the ancient Roman forms recurred perpetually in her speech. Sometimes her sentences sounded like something from the scriptures or the psalms, as though straight out of the fifteenth century, simple and grand; at other times, it was the very music of that tongue she so strenuously forbade.

Now, seeking to retrace the essential elements that shaped my infancy, I can find nothing earlier than those memories, which I linked with words, far more intensely than with things. Yet, it is true that for each of us, the links with speech are ancient as the links with things. Earlier, there is but the mystery of our initiation into existence. All I know of an earlier time is what my relatives have told me: apocryphal moments, golden legends, in which events from various periods appear through the illusions of different people. I do not seek to recapture these myths,or those earliest contacts that were merely silence and mute astonishments. Save by the word, nothing is born, and what I am attempting to recapture here are my earliest reminiscences, and how, in that manner, I was born.

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'Talk French!' repeated my grandmother. 'You'll soon have forgotten how to speak! Didn't we all talk enough *patois* when we were young? That was all we knew, sorrow on us. Soon no one will know the right names of things any more.'

She was absolutely fanatical about the way she tried to discipline me. She made perpetual efforts to force me into talking French, at a time when I had no idea of using any other language. I merely wanted to use certain words, which were all I knew, for naming certain objects. They were the first words I had learnt, and though French was my mother-tongue, they belonged already, in my soul, to a level that was older and more venerable, that seemed closer to the reality of things.

These isolated words forged the first links between my thoughts and the world. By them each object was endowed with its specific shape, its basic attributes. And every reprimand with which my grandmother sought to prevent me using them, merely succeeded in defining the object in some different fashion. It was the French word itself that threw new light on it, seeming to add a new dimension to

the object, invest it with a hidden meaning. Nevertheless, despite these sudden metamorphoses, the Roman word continued to retain all its potent imagery and prestige, even while the French helped me to gain a richer understanding of what it designated. Thus, behind the words, I began to sense the very reality of things.

Every name of a place, every word which describes the diversities of the earth, or the elements which make them, suffered the same mutation in my mind. A double vocabulary helped me to name all the eye sees, all the hand takes. These words I mutually compared. How could I help but sense their differences. Some had more precision, others more strength, and others again contained a deeper mystery.

That was why, far from adding confusion to each other, or losing their definition, as my grandmother seemed to fear, all these words but widened the images I could make of things. They added perspective to the picture. The only danger that I ran, was from my ignorance of the bounds where each language began and ended, but every day that passed could only teach me better to recognize them, since everyone around me, having revealed the words' two faces, was busily engaged, though all unthinkingly, in helping me to plot the very frontiers that divided them.

At school, at home, it was French that was taught me, but away, in the fields or on the mountainside, everything combined to complete my teaching in that other tongue, of which only some scattered words were yet known to me.

But here I sense that, in order to discover the sources of speech again, the first images a child succeeds in making of the universe, one must begin by retrieving the memory of the voices, the faces, that were round him as a child.

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That my grandmother should have tried to make me talk only French, seems understandable to-day, when I think that to her it was the only speech in which mankind could hold converse with God. This was the way in which these ancient protestants of the Cevennes submitted to one of the deepest laws of humanism. They had need of a learned tongue, and yet one they would understand. A tongue to aid their spiritual aspirations, and refine their natures. They found it in the speech of Clement Marot, and Calvin, which was not their mother tongue. Never, I swear, did scholar rejoice in his Hebrew, Greek, or Latin as these poor people rejoiced in their French Bible. . . .

Every Wednesday, when night fell, my grandmother would throw

back the two wings of the wide door, that opened into her rooms. Then she would open the inside door of the ante-room, and that of the dining-room that faced it. There was no need then for anyone to knock to be admitted, the house belonged to whoever cared to sit around our table.

Because of the occasion, my grandmother would don her large flat beads and black lace bonnet, as though about to pay a visit. At half-past seven, she would start to place chairs and arm-chairs round the table, would trim the lamp, and then open the windows on the garden or draw the curtains, according to weather or season. When all was in order, she sat down. Facing the row of open doors and shutting her eyes, she would wait in utter stillness.

As she waited, her face would seem to pale, and her brow go tense under the curve of the black bonnet edging her dark hair. At moments, shadows would encroach on the immobile mask, till all I could see was the fine delicate nose, so youthful in appearance that we seemed to detect it in all the babies of our family.

Sitting upright on her straight rush chair—'arm-chairs interfere with one's meditations,' she would say— she seemed hardly to notice those who softly entered and took chairs as though in their own homes. To each was given the same welcome. In a low voice, grandmother would say:

'God be with you, Eva. God be with you, Aline.'

And on a sigh, the newcomers would answer:

'And you, Sarah?'

Then, following a short silence, they would add, turning to me:

'And this child?'

Silence fell, for no reply was expected. Other women would arrive, and say exactly the same words. In the midst of these whisperings, I lost all sense of being at home, or in our house. And yet I did not feel a stranger either, for I was absorbed by a sort of communal feeling, in which no one could lay claim to greater rights than his neighbours. There was a restraint, an equality, a silence that the more completely prepared us for submission to the omnipotence of the Word we were about to hear.

By degrees, expectation began to impart a certain tension to the faces, but when the final lingerer arrived and pushed the door back behind him, though leaving it still somewhat ajar, grandmother would turn, and making a sign with her hand, indicate it was time for me to open the sacred book.

'It is all good,' she would say.

I felt she was ordering me to make my fingers stop at the place

necessary for that day's meditation. Chance she took as inspiration. Holding the book, I would slip a finger into the leaves, then point to a paragraph with my nail, and wait, as though my breast were suddenly oppressed by being asked some abrupt question.

Not many men came to these gatherings. But the one nearest me would glance at the passage, pull up his chair, push the book forward into the light, and begin to read. And I, as I gazed at him, would think:

'He's the drunkard who repented. They found him in the gutter. All the children used to run shouting after him.'

And then it seemed as though the old man began to change as he went on reading. There, at my very side, he seemed to go on getting younger, and every word he read seemed helping to bring it about.

Every word? No. For now, words no longer counted. They had no separate entity, like words that serve to designate some object. If they had any value at all, it was because they were caught in the flow of the sentences. This current that bore them along, invested them with new power, and seemed at times to throw them up, as though they had struck some obstacle. Why, at such moments, did these words reverberate with unsuspected potencies, whereas others fled away, overwhelmed in the vast majestic current. I would hear muffled, separate thuds, from which a cascade of scattering images then spurted. Mountains! Succour! The Grass! The Flower! The Word! The Life! But most significant of all, what finally held me spellbound, and drowned everything in its flood, was the current that swept the sentences along. If a new significance now seemed to glow behind each word, it was this current alone that made it possible. That held their very essence. That was what took possession of my spirit, in agony lest it might fail to understand, or lag behind, or even reach too far, as though swept off its feet by all this tumult of the soul.

Then, the reading of the inspired words would seem to soar to the very peaks of its power. Nothing existed now, save through them. And when the reader stopped, a silence formed that seemed to make a circle of solemn isolation round us, and I would breathe a crystal air like that of our high hills.

'He is in our midst,' someone would say in an undertone, and one after another, those present began to pray. The text they had heard seemed to endow each of them with the power of words. A vital inspiration that had lost nothing of its strength or vigour, once more possessed each tongue.

Who were these speakers? On whom had such grace descended? Poor folk, whose painful existences I knew well, housewives with chapped hands. The woman to whom I listened, spent her days before

a window which looked down on three cropped trees, swept by rain and harried by wind. Beyond was a maze of lanes, outlined by garden walls with never a door or house. Still, a peak loomed in the sky, and there were clouds that seemed to pass more swiftly because of the narrow strip of sky. When we visited her, it seemed to me that no existence could be humbler. Her living-room and kitchen looked like two monastery cells. Everything smelt of bees-wax and glittering brass. It all seemed vowed to poverty, mean tasks, and resignation. And yet, it was this shrunken old dame who lived alone, called Aline by my grandmother, who now, in prayer, recaptured the very rhythm of the scriptures, the mighty cry of inspired speech.

Older and wiser in the secrets of men's hearts, I ask myself whether to-day, that heartfelt eloquence would conquer me in the same way. Perhaps I should realize too clearly how much she owed to the memory of the text just read, but in my childhood it did not occur to me to separate out these influences. That which each one said about his life, seemed to well up freely as though under the urge of some subterranean force. Every heart's cry, every confession, was a new travail, and every speech poured freely forth, solely inspired by the music of that tongue whose power was first revealed to me in these meetings.

After the wives in dark bodices, after the ancient dames who never left their homes, but talked of the hills and sea as though they had known them well, the man who had read began to pray too. If my memory holds good, if my childish judgment have any truth in it, he was the humblest of them all, the clumsiest to recapture that vital inspiration in which the words assumed new power.

But stammer as he might, correct himself, and for long intervals of silence stand panting there, I had no difficulty in reading miraculous meanings into the testimony he bore. And yet, even as a child, even in the midst of these Wednesday prayer meetings, I could not, without inner resistances, give myself up to the emotion of religion. It was not faith that exalted me. But I seemed to realize what mankind can win by means of noble language. The repenting sinner whom I gazed at so surreptitiously, dazzled me like some supernatural apparition. He had escaped from the degradation that left him at the mercy of the street urchins, and that he had been able to do by allowing himself to be borne on the words that I now followed on his lips. They reverberated deep in my very soul, and it seemed to me that that power, that was part and parcel of his speech, could also help me to become a man.

* * * * *

When our existence resumed its usual course, when we were away from this exaltation, this enchantment, I established contact again with things and creatures, and therewith fell immediately into the old confusion of tongues.

'Talk French!' my grandmother would repeat. 'You don't even know the *patois*. Not even a goat on the mountainside would manage to understand you.'

And it is true that for a very long time, I did not succeed in talking our mountain speech. Until I was twelve I could not manage to do so without larding it with French. But that mattered little to me, and nothing urged me to make the effort.

Nor do I know at what moment exactly I managed to learn it. It must have been between twelve and fourteen that I acquired it slowly, like a second mother-tongue. For me, it was a new triumph over speech, as natural as the first. I needed to devote no study to it, and it came about simply in the give and take of existence.

For a long time, the words that made up that tongue, seemed to stand in isolation like objects scattered over the earth. But to learn to link them one with another, it was enough to hear the conversation of the men to whom it was their natural tongue, the only medium in which they naturally expressed themselves. If, in our valleys, the speech of prayer and meditation was French, the speech of labour remained 'langue d'oc.' I heard it spoken wherever a wall was being raised, wherever a plumb-line swung, wherever silk glinted in the loom, wherever the steel of a pick resounded, or hobnailed boots crunched, or the voices of men arose.

In our ancient land we have remained faithful to the antique tongue. Let some traveller pass by, and only French will be spoken in his presence. But let him go on a little, and the old tune will immediately sound forth. He alone will have been deaf to it. Some shame, politeness, and perhaps scorn, create a sort of secret life around our dialects. But no one will strive to hide that secret from the child that grows among the hills. It would not occur to a man at work to change his speech in front of a child. The infant listens, and by degrees time reveals the secret of this tongue.

Among all the simple masters from whom I learnt this lesson, stronger than all stands out the memory of the man who worked my grandmother's garden and vineyard. Not only did he etch upon my mind one of the forms of speech, but also the image of a type of being which continues to obsess me. In every creative effort I make, he always reappears as one of the beings that rise in front of me. Willy-nilly I must make room for him, and give him pride of place through-

out the book. Always he seems to reveal some new aspect of his nature, to become a new-made being. And yet the man is always the same, the peasant, the worker who has entered into conjunction with the earth.

Yet once again I find him here before me, with open shirt and stubbly cheeks, his face oblivious of the seasons, his hands clenched on the handles of his tools. It was thus he talked with me, in the intervals of resting from his labours. He would go on talking as he worked, words that on his tongue seemed to be implements like those with which he ravished a fruitfulness from the earth.

If the Wednesday meetings revealed to me that there existed a Power mightier even than speech, the conversation of that ancient digger, taught me that everything that touches the life of man, may find expression in harsh rhythms that correspond to the rhythms of existence, and be creative in a similar manner.

Three great themes kept recurring in his discourse: the war of '70, the Republic, and our Mountains. He would begin by talking to me in French, searching a little for words, and with an unusual cadence in his speech. It was not merely the presence of that southern accent that bears so strong an impress of another tongue, but a rougher and more sing-song way of placing and accentuating the words. It was as though he were attempting to recite a poem. But then, as he reached the point where the Volunteers from the Department of Gard began to deploy over the plains of the Loire, he would suddenly and without transition break into 'langue d'oc,' as though the change provided the natural transition for what he was telling.

The change served as a warning that we were entering into the thick of the fray, during that icy dawn when first the helmets of the enemy began to gleam. But then, as suddenly as he had changed his speech, he would look at me, stop in the very heat of the battle, and in imagination, standing before the first low houses of Beaune-la-Rolande, taking aim with his rifle, he would ask:

'You understand what I'm saying . . . I began talking *patois* without noticing. . . . Do you really understand?'

I nodded yes, tensing everything in me. I could not bring myself to utter a single word for fear of breaking the thread of what he was telling. The old man gazed at me a moment, and then continued in his own speech. I understood everything he was saying. I was carried away by the story, I marched to the sound of the cannon, and it was in that advance from height to height, at the peril of both our lives, linked in the comradeship of battle, that I understood the meaning of everything he told me.

Thus we spent hours, reliving again our tiny moments in history, moments that bind man to the flesh, and make him play his part in vast catastrophes. The pride of overcoming our fear made us oblivious of defeat. Two days without bread, three nights without fire, gave us the right to call quits to history and return to our countryside again. We would suddenly find ourselves there, facing each other, in the midst of the fresh-dug clods, and the story would lead naturally to other tales, which he had not yet made his own. It was no longer a question of discovering how it had all happened, or what had been thrust upon men by events, but of what man wanted to be.

Then the old peasant would talk of destiny as though one could control it like earth. How could I not have understood what he said? Even when he talked of man and his governments, I seemed to see furrows being marked out with a cord, earth dug, sown, stakes planted and wires stretched taut upon them to aid and sustain the future leaves and branches. He said:

'And so we made the Republic. . . . But it's a thing that's never finished, it's like the earth. . . .'

He had a way of moving his hand, that seemed to include all the uneven beds he had planted himself, and whose fruits he gathered to plant afresh. Turning a spit of earth, he began to talk again. The speech he used no longer made me think of vast waters heaving onward with irresistible might. No longer was it an element unleashed. It subjugated me like the rhythm of marching or of labour. It established an exact connection between speech and action. It was like a call to action, something willed and firmly executed.

'You understand?' he asked me yet again. 'Yes! But who taught you our language? It wasn't at home you could have learnt it, and not at school, either. . . . After all, I myself never learnt it anywhere in particular. But then we were always labourers.'

What he meant to convey was, that work was the surest means of learning to express oneself. There was no thought of laying down a philological principle. And I replied:

'Of course! I too learnt it in the mountains.'

We had finished with the Prussians and the Republic. I had uttered a word of power, and the old man would talk of nothing but the mountains. It was the whole world to him.

'The road to the top, it was us made that. . . . Not the old way up, but the good road, the one you see winding towards Puéchagut. What muck we shifted, what walls we built.'

And again he began to talk the *patois*, to communicate some idea of this vast undertaking of his young days. I sat on the step facing

him, while standing among the turned-up spits that steamed in the sun as though yielding their very blood, he talked as he worked. And as he talked, trees rolled crashing into the mountain torrents, dynamite charges split open the rocks, the roller crushed the dug earth, men sang, and as they moved slowly onwards, the road unwound behind them like something sown in the earth that shoots vigorously sunwards.

It was the saga of my childhood, peopled with heroes, and set in a legendary land. And yet the story continued to be human, and always remained within the bounds of an effort one might devote one's life to.

'You still understand?'

I understood that words had the power to govern action, that with them one could mark out and dig foundations, build, and render the work of man more enduring than the usury of the seasons. If it were possible to exceed one's limitations by a sort of fury and exaltation, it was possible also to live in measured fashion. Speech was the exact measure of what was achievable to man. Was it not now building before me that fabulous road up which I marched to meet the clouds?

Wherein lay the power of words? Wherein lay the power of speech? The same power was inherent in all the members of my body. It was the power of drawing me into activity.

* * * * *

The battle of tongues still went on at home. For the slightest fault grandmother would scold me, and sometimes add, in a lower key, as if she had opened her arms and let the words drop to earth:

'Will you never get better? What a child!'

All the same I was growing. I was really getting to be a man. Things intimidated me no longer. They seemed at last to be built to the same scale as myself. Along the river, in the fields, under the mountain, I no longer felt among giants.

In the meantime grandmother was ageing, and seemed to shrink still more. Familiar things became too heavy for her. She could no longer pick up the wash-tub, or move the copper saucepans to make jam. Fatigued, she sat long hours in an arm-chair in front of her bedroom window. In those days she seemed like a sad little wrinkled girl, but somnolent or thoughtful as she might be, her spirit retained all its vivacity, and if I forgot myself, her shrill voice would cry:

'Talk French!'

By degrees, and under her watchful eye, I at length entered the kingdom of all that surrounded me. Absorbed in subjugating the

mountains and forests, I failed to realize how her strength declined. As far as I was concerned, she seemed unchanging, but the fact that she scolded me seemed to keep me still a child.

And yet a day came, when—it seems to me now vastly important, something that somehow might have got into the newspapers—as I entered the room, and before I could say anything, my grandmother suddenly began to talk the forbidden tongue. Not some mere expression, as sometimes happened, slipping carelessly into a phrase, but a whole sentence of purest construction, dense with local words.

I gazed at her. She sat in her arm-chair all but motionless, wedged hard against the back of it. Only her open hand beat unsteady time on the red plush arm-rest. More than ever, she seemed a little girl. Her restless eyes and delicate nose, called up a picture of what she must have looked like when she was ten, and all she knew was our mountain speech, speaking those words she must have talked to my great-grandfather, and the father of him whom I never managed to visualize in relation to myself, as though with him began that long anonymous line of all from whom I draw my existence.

And still grandmother went on talking, slowly beating the chair with her hand the while. The rhythm of this beating made an accompaniment to the words. Their rise and fall filled me through and through with a sort of sensuous intoxication. It was so solid and charged with natural warmth, that I stood there with my head spinning, as though something had been said that was changing the whole course of my existence. In talking to me thus, grandmother released me from every bond that had till then tied me, and gave me the right to choose my own language. The battle of the two languages was over at last.

Grandmother saw nothing of my bewilderment: she seemed to have no notion of the immense change she had brought into my life. All she had done was to recover the speech of her childhood, but therewith, for the very first time, she was treating me like a man.

IGNAZIO SILONE

THE FOX

Translated from the Italian by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher

DANIELE was in the pig-sty, helping the sow to litter, when he heard Filomena, his wife, calling him from the house, which was about thirty yards away. 'Daniele! Someone wants to talk to you,' she said. He was very busy and had given explicit instructions that under no circumstances was he to be disturbed, so he paid no attention, though his wife called him two or three times more. In the end, as he did not answer, she gave it up.

Daniele had taken every precaution to see that the birth should take place as smoothly as possible, but it is a thing you can never be absolutely sure about. He had put the sow on a strict diet the day before, and, as an extra precaution, given her a stiff dose of castor oil. He was afraid of a stoppage that might result in an injury to the hindquarters, which might be followed by a lack of milk. Daniele had called in Agostino to help him. Agostino was from Bergamo, but he had lived in the Ticino for several years. He was a builder by trade, but was available for any kind of odd job in the off-season.

The birth had started well. Three little pigs, as small as mice, had already appeared. There had been practically nothing for Agostino to do, except to find a suitable name for each little pig. But the fourth little pig did not want to appear. Agostino had to hold the sow by the snout while Daniele put his oily hand up to fetch it and leave the way clear for the rest.

'This one,' Agostino announced, pointing to the little pig which had not wanted to be born, 'we shall call Benito.'

'Impossible,' Daniele replied. 'The litter is sold to a firm in Italy.'

'You calculating beast!' Agostino observed.

At that moment Luisa, Daniele's younger daughter, was heard calling out 'Papa! there's someone here who wants to talk to you.'

Daniele quietly continued attending to his pigs. It was essential to prevent any possibility of infection. He had already told his family that while he was working he was working, and that on no account must he be disturbed. So he did not answer Luisa either, but went on with his job. He carefully placed the little creatures in a big box lined with straw and covered it with a woollen blanket, while Agostino

removed the afterbirth and cleared up the sty. Then Silvia, Daniele's elder daughter, was heard calling out 'Papa! there's someone here who wants to talk to you!' She was coming down the path towards the pig-sty.

A moment later she appeared, accompanied by Caterina, the dressmaker, an elderly spinster from Florence, who had been earning her living at Minusio for many years. She earned it less by dressmaking than by doing alterations and mending.

'Do you mean to tell me it was for that woman that you've been bothering me for a whole hour?' Daniele burst out when his eyes fell on Caterina.

Caterina did not have the reputation of saying what she had to say quickly.

'Caterina wants to talk to you,' Silvia replied, disregarding the reproof.

Agostino and Silvia made off towards the house, leaving Caterina alone with Daniele.

'You know that I'm a person who has always minded my own business,' Caterina began.

'I'm not interested in your business,' Daniele replied in a not very encouraging tone of voice.

'But you do know that during all these long years that I've lived in the Ticino I've never meddled in other people's affairs.'

'That's no affair of mine,' Daniele replied and turned towards the house.

As soon as it became clear to Caterina that Daniele was determined not to give her a hearing she abandoned her preamble and came to the point.

'An Italian gentleman came to see me,' she said, 'and asked me to become a spy.'

Daniele stopped in his tracks.

Caterina took a deep breath and started telling him about this Italian gentleman, whom she had once met by chance in some office at Locarno, and what he had told her.

'"You've lived in the Ticino for years," he said to me, "and you know everybody. Your job takes you everywhere. You go into hundreds of houses and hear hundreds of conversations. You're old and by yourself, and no one's afraid of talking in front of you." "That's right," I answered, "everybody respects me because I've always minded my own business." He went on talking in the same way, and then he said: "If you're prepared to gather information about the activities of certain Italian anti-Fascists living in the Ticino

between Ascona and Bellinzona, you can look forward to making something to lay aside for your old age."'

Daniele had by now recovered from his astonishment, and looked searchingly at Caterina, who had been trembling and sobbing throughout the recital.

'Why did you come to me with this story?'

'What do you mean?'

'I'm a Ticinese,' Daniele said, 'and I'm not interested in your Italian affairs. Why did you come to me? Who sent you?'

'But you've known me for thirty years,' the woman said, sobbing. 'You know that I've always earned my living respectably. You know that I've always minded my own business . . .'

'What I want to know,' Daniele interrupted, raising his voice, 'is who sent you to me.'

'No one!' Caterina replied, and then added more quietly, 'I'm sorry I disturbed you, I shan't detain you any longer.'

She turned her back on him and started walking away down the road leading to Gordola and Minusio. Daniele followed her and after a while resumed the conversation.

'If no one sent you, why did you come to me?' he asked her.

'I wanted advice,' Caterina said, looking straight ahead and walking on.

'What kind of advice?'

'Whether to accept the gentleman's offer or not,' the woman said, stopping still. 'I don't know what to do. I have never been so upset and worried in all my life. If I accept I shall earn a little money, but by doing evil to people who have never done any harm to me. If I refuse I'll be put down as an anti-Fascist and persecuted in all sorts of ways. You've known me for thirty years, and you know that I'm neither a Fascist nor an anti-Fascist; you know that I've always earned my living respectably and minded my own business.'

Daniele remained deep in thought.

Caterina walked on, sobbing, and Daniele followed her again.

Agostino was waiting at the end of the road.

'Listen,' Daniele said to the woman. 'Don't be afraid, but tell Agostino what you've just told me, and do what he tells you.'

Daniele watched them walking away towards Gordola and then went back to the pig-sty to look after his pigs.

One day he was working with his daughter Silvia on the vines

in his pergola when Agostino appeared. This was the first time Daniele had seen him since his sow had littered.

Daniele was using a free morning to save his vines from ruin by the phylloxera. He was looking for the affected places with a small metal brush while Silvia followed him with a water-can containing boiling water, which she sprinkled over the affected places. Agostino was driving a lorry loaded with bricks. He slowed down and called out:

'Hi! that business is going ahead!'

'What business?' Daniele replied, not immediately realizing what he was talking about.

'You know what I mean,' said Agostino with a wave of his hand, driving on again. Daniele shook his head.

'The Italians are fine people,' he said to his daughter. 'They're generous and impulsive and brave, but they talk too much.'

Silvia made up her mind to say something she had wanted to say for a long time. 'Father,' she said, 'I know you're doing a great deal for the freedom of Italy, though you don't talk about it. I'd so much like to help you.'

'Gather those twigs and burn them,' her father answered. 'That's all there is for you to do at the moment.'

Silvia obeyed. Daniele watched her walking back between the vines, bending down and carefully gathering the twigs in little heaps. Silvia had had her twentieth birthday in November, and Daniele watched her, full of pride and fear, for she was his most precious and most uncertain possession.

The next time Daniele saw Agostino was on a Sunday morning, a few days later. Daniele and Filomena were talking about a fox that had raided several chicken-runs at Cadenazzo and Robasacco during the night.

'Nearly fifty chickens were found with their necks broken,' the woman said.

'If it broke their necks and sucked their blood it wasn't a fox but a marten,' Daniele remarked.

A chauffeur from Cadenazzo came up and his opinion was asked. 'It was a fox all right,' he said, 'and probably more than one fox. In one of the chicken-runs nothing was left but the tail feathers.'

'We shall have to be careful about our chickens,' Filomena said to Daniele. 'Last year it was illness that emptied our hen-house, and a fox would be the last straw.'

'We'll set the trap,' said Daniele. At that moment Agostino arrived.

He took Daniele aside and told him that things were going on well. 'Caterina took my advice and did what I told her,' he said. 'The spy will fall for the bait. Now we must look out.'

'What's your idea?' Daniele asked, excited.

'We must lay a trap,' Agostino replied.

Daniele could not help laughing at the word 'trap.' It was the only word in his conversation with Agostino that Filomena overheard, and she pounced on it.

'A trap is not enough,' she said to Agostino. 'A fox is very sly and looks carefully all round before touching the bait, and even then doesn't bite at it at once but tries to draw it towards itself with its foot. It's all very well setting a steel trap, but it's just as well to leave some poisoned food lying about as well.'

Agostino did not immediately see the point of this parable.

'There's no certainty about poisoned food either,' Daniele said, turning to his wife. 'If a fox is starving, more often than not it won't bother to eat stray bits of food. And even if it does swallow a bit of poisoned meat or poisoned chestnut it isn't certain that the poison will work. Nobody knows the right amount of strychnine to kill an unknown fox. If it's a strong fox and the strychnine is weak, all it gets is a passing belly-ache that doesn't prevent it from eating the chickens. And if the strychnine is too strong it merely vomits and empties its belly, and its appetite for chickens is bigger than ever.'

'In other words it's impossible to catch a fox!' said Agostino, having at last realized what the conversation had been about before he arrived.

'It's not impossible, but it's very difficult,' Daniele answered, and then added, 'and there's never yet been a fox who's been caught by talk.'

Filomena went back into the house, where her younger daughter was calling her, and the two men went into the orchard to continue their conversation.

'After a great deal of sobbing and sighing Caterina agreed to do the work,' Agostino told him. 'The Italian spy went to see her again yesterday and left her an address in Pallanza for her to write to when she has any information.'

'Didn't he give her the names of any people for her to spy on in particular?'

'So far apparently not,' Agostino replied. 'But he told her to find out the names of all the Italian workers who cross the frontier every day and come into contact with any political suspects or refugees. He also told her that it would be worth a considerable sum of money

to her if she could help him to discover who are the people who are smuggling revolutionary books and pamphlets into Italy from Switzerland.'

'Didn't he tell her whether anyone in particular was suspected?' Daniele asked.

'So far apparently not,' Agostino replied, and added: 'He promised Caterina that means would be found to settle her in Zurich if she became involved in anything and were compromised. She's lived in the Ticino for thirty years, and naturally she has always dreamed of living in a big town again.'

'Does Caterina believe that I have any connection with the Italian revolutionaries?' Daniele asked.

'Certainly not,' Agostino assured him. 'Every time she talks to me she keeps sighing and telling me that she always has minded her own business and always will, and that Signor Daniele is a real gentleman and a Ticinese into the bargain, and that he has never had anything to do with politics and could prove . . .'

Silvia had seen her father talking to Agostino from upstairs in her little room.

'Can I come down?' she called out.

'Of course you can.'

The girl came out into the orchard. When she approached the two men changed the subject and started talking about the weather.

Every evening Daniele set the steel trap outside the hen-house and scattered poisoned scraps of food, but the fox failed to put in an appearance. Likewise Agostino's fox seemed to be in no hurry to fall into the trap that was laid for him. At any rate Daniele heard no more about it.

'A countryman's life is a continual struggle,' he often said, 'a struggle with bad weather, pests and birds, but the worst of them all is the fox.'

The campaign against the vine pest was over, so Daniele devoted himself to the extermination of the fruit-tree pest. He freed the trees from withered branches, dead bark and moss, and Silvia killed the wood-worms in the holes he found with a piece of wire. When all the tree-trunks had been cleaned Filomena came and whitewashed them.

'Now the trees are protected from the ground upwards,' Daniele said to his daughter, 'but how can we protect them from above, from the sky?'

He saw Agostino at the front door. Agostino joked with Silvia while waiting for him.

'What's the latest?' Daniele asked him.

'The trap is set,' the man from Bergamo answered.

'And the fox?'

'He'll be caught to-night,' Agostino announced.

'If only one could be so sure of all foxes,' said Daniele.

Agostino then explained how the fox was going to be caught.

'Caterina has written and told him that she has some important information for him. She has arranged to meet him at nine o'clock this evening at Riva Piana, near the lake, outside the old San Quirico chapel. I and two others are going to keep the appointment too.'

'Don't you think the police ought to be told?' Daniele said.

'That would be very stupid. The consulate would get wind of it at once, and the fox wouldn't turn up.'

Daniele had no reply to this, because it was known that there were some uncertain elements among the police. But Daniele was worried, because of the difficulties and dangers that might ensue for the Italian refugees. 'It ought to be done by Ticinese,' he said. But Agostino objected to that.

'That would mean involving too many people,' he said. 'Besides, for an Italian fox an Italian trap.'

That evening Daniele took the train to Locarno. Towards ten o'clock he strolled along by the lake in the direction of Saleggi, to wait for Agostino, who was going to come and tell him how the affair had passed off. At about half-past ten not Agostino but Luca, the Italian joiner from Minusio, turned up.

'Agostino has slightly injured his hand,' he said. 'He didn't come, as he didn't want to attract attention with his bandage.'

Daniele was on tenterhooks. 'And the other fellow?' he asked.

'He was left lying there. He turned up at the meeting-place with two others. They left him alone with Caterina, promising to come back an hour later. We waited behind the chapel until they disappeared in the direction of Navegna. In the meantime Caterina started sobbing and sighing and telling the spy a lot of absolute rubbish. In between she kept on telling him that she never had and never would meddle in anyone else's business, but one thing that she did know was that the revolutionary books and papers being smuggled into Italy came from the Franciscan monastery of Madonna del Sasso at Locarno.'

This brilliant piece of fiction caused Daniele to laugh heartily.

'Agostino went over to him alone and left us behind the church,'

Luca went on. 'It was decided that he should only draw his revolver if the man showed any sign of using his own revolver first. Agostino walked up to him as though he were passing that way by chance. As it was dark he lit a cigarette and recognized him by the light of the match. "Ha!" he called out. "Here's a familiar face! You're an Italian spy!" He threw his cigarette away and the fight started. We left our hiding-place and Caterina took to her heels.'

'Did you join in too?'

'It wasn't necessary. We only kept a look-out to make sure no one was coming. Agostino soon had the best of it. He got the man down and punched his head so hard it would have broken a stone. We always knew how strong Agostino was, but we had no idea he had so much hate in him.'

'Don't forget the Fascists killed his brother', Daniele said. 'How did he hurt his hand?'

'The spy bit it. He got Agostino's left hand between his teeth and wouldn't let go. Agostino punched his jaw like a maniac with the other hand, but he wouldn't let go. So Agostino took him by the throat and throttled him.'

'Did he finish him off?' Daniele asked, horrified.

'It looked like it.'

'Then he must disappear. Perhaps he had better go to France.'

In view of this turn of events Daniele decided to stay at Locarno for the night and go to Bellinzona in the morning. To prevent his family from worrying he went into a café to telephone them.

'What luck that you've 'phoned,' Silvia said at once. 'I've been trying to get you everywhere for the last hour.'

'What's the matter?' Daniele asked, startled.

'Nothing's happened to us,' Silvia said. 'But two cars collided quite near here, on the road to Gordola, and a man was badly injured. The doctor said he was too badly injured to be moved far, so they made inquiries and all the neighbours said that ours was the only house in which he could be put up temporarily. Mother said we couldn't possibly take a stranger into the house while you were away, but I said that you'd certainly agree.'

'Of course,' said Daniele. 'Where have you put him?'

'On the first floor, in my room,' Silvia replied. 'I'll sleep with Luisa.'

'Is the man in danger?'

'The doctor wouldn't say. He's sending a nurse along to-night, although I offered to do everything myself.'

'Where does the man come from? What is his name?'

'He's still unconscious,' his daughter explained. 'He must belong to a rich family, because the doctor wanted to give mother money in advance.'

'Listen,' Daniele said. 'I'm sorry I can't come home to-night to help. I've got to stay the night in Locarno and go to Bellinzona early in the morning on urgent business. But you know I trust you, so do everything that the doctor tells you, and do it gladly.'

Next morning Daniele telephoned home again to find out whether the injured man were still alive. Luisa answered, as Silvia had gone out to do some shopping.

'The poor man's a little better,' she said. 'A nurse came last night, but Silvia wouldn't go to bed. . . . The doctor's just come now.'

The doctor came to the telephone.

'Doctor,' Daniele said. 'Please make free of my house. I'm very sorry not to be at home at such a time.'

'We can say that the man will definitely recover,' the doctor said. 'He received very bad head injuries, but we can now say that there won't be any complications. I'll see that all expenses that may be involved are met.'

'Who is the man? Where do his people live?' Daniele asked.

'He's an Italian engineer from Bologna, named Umberto Stella, perhaps you may have heard of him,' the doctor said. 'He came to Switzerland to study electric power production.'

'Whoever he is, make use of my house and my family,' Daniele said.

At Bellinzona Daniele immediately tried to find out how far the police had got with their inquiries into the attempted murder at Riva Piana the night before. He was far too clever to start talking about it himself, but waited for others to begin. He therefore went to see his lawyer and went with him to the court to settle some formalities for which there was not the slightest hurry. He stopped in the street and talked to all the acquaintances he met and bought two morning papers, but there was not a word about the incident of the night before. It was obvious that no one in Bellinzona knew anything about it.

Daniele finally plucked up courage and broached the subject to his lawyer. 'I've heard there was some sort of political scuffle between Italians last night outside Locarno,' he said.

'Well, if there was, nothing is known about it here,' the lawyer replied. 'It can't have been much of an affair, because if it had been serious we should certainly have heard all about it. Relations between the Fascists and anti-Fascists here are very strained.'

Daniele had been extremely worried, but this answer put his mind

at rest. No doubt Luca's imagination had exaggerated the affair enormously.

These Italians, Daniele said to himself, are fine, generous, impulsive people, but they talk too much. It's just as well as it is, he reflected, otherwise Agostino and Caterina would have to leave Switzerland.

All the same he felt annoyed at having spent a night away from home and lost a day's work for nothing. In the train on the way home some peasants were discussing the fox that had raided the chickens at Magadino.

'Foxes are very sly,' one of them said. 'They're much slyer than human beings with their traps.'

'There's a new kind of trap, an Italian invention,' another one said.

'It makes a lot of noise, but it isn't any good,' the first man replied.

'That's just about right,' said Daniele. 'It makes a great deal of noise but it isn't any good. It only makes a terrible row.'

As soon as he reached home Daniele went up to the first floor to see the injured man. At the door of the room he found Silvia barring the way. She put her finger to her mouth to impose silence.

'He must be kept absolutely quiet,' she whispered in his ear. 'He must have no visitors and there must be no talking. The doctor said there must be nothing that would excite him in any way.'

'So there's nothing I can do?' said Daniele, disappointed.

'You can take your boots off before you go downstairs, so as not to make any noise,' Silvia whispered.

Daniele took his boots off and went downstairs and out into the garden. He started working in the woodshed, chopping wood for palings with his axe. No sooner had he started than Silvia came running along in her slippers.

'Have you gone mad, father? There's a seriously injured man in the house and you make all that noise!'

Daniele put his axe away.

'Can I dig at least?' he asked his daughter in a whisper.

Silvia nodded and went back to the first floor again.

Daniele took his spade and started digging in a corner of the orchard.

Not long afterwards he saw his elder daughter leaving the house with a basket. He immediately went back to the house, took his boots off and went upstairs. The nurse came out of the sickroom and let him go inside. 'But only for a moment,' she said.

All he could see in Silvia's narrow bed was an enormous head,

completely covered in bandages. Although it was nothing to laugh at, he could not help being reminded of a snow-man. It was nothing but a great big white ball with a little hole for one eye and a slightly bigger one for the mouth.

'That's quite long enough,' the nurse said, showing him out. As he crept downstairs with his boots in his hands he met Silvia, who had just returned.

'Where have you been?' she asked him reproachfully.

'Is that the way to talk to your father?' he said, and went back to his digging in the orchard.

While he was digging his wife Filomena came out to talk to him.

'Silvia's completely lost her senses,' she started complaining. 'She hasn't closed her eyes or eaten a mouthful since yesterday.'

'She's found her real senses,' Daniele replied. 'She's got a good heart.'

'Too good a heart,' her mother said.

'Too good? How can anybody have too good a heart?'

Daniele was pleased with his daughter. He watched her, full of pride and fear. Some primroses were growing by the low wall behind the orchard. Silvia came and picked some for the sickroom.

'But he can't see them. His eyes are bandaged,' Filomena quietly objected.

'But, mother,' Silvia said, 'you can see flowers even with your eyes shut.'

Daniele spent the best part of the day working in his vineyard on the hill. When he came back in the evening he asked after the invalid, and Silvia told him he was making a rapid recovery. The nurse was dismissed and Silvia looked after him by herself. Daniele went in to see him once or twice, but for a few moments only. The patient seemed a decent fellow. Daniele had plenty of other things to worry about, but he could not help noticing the change in Silvia.

'You might pay a little less attention to other things and a little more to your daughter,' his wife said to him one evening reproachfully.

'Silvia isn't a child any longer, and she's a sensible girl,' Daniele answered.

'She's sensible but inexperienced,' his wife replied. She had been feeling worried for some time, and had made up her mind to get it off her chest.

Daniele grew thoughtful.

'Do you think I ought to talk to her?' he asked a few moments later.

'Yes, and before it's too late,' his wife answered.

Next day Daniele had to take a sack of pea-seeds to a friend at Comma in the Val Verzasca, and he took Silvia with him. His busi-

ness there was only an excuse, and he finished it quickly and refused all the hospitality that was offered him.

'I'd rather walk home with my daughter,' he said to the friends he met. 'She's been looking rather pale lately and needs some fresh air, and her mind wants taking off things a bit.'

Father and daughter started walking towards Gordola in silence. The road wound its way high above the stream, which foamed its way through the valley below.

'Can't we walk beside the stream?' Silvia asked.

'I don't think so,' Daniele answered, but as he liked doing what his daughter wanted he added that as they were in no hurry they could try.

They found a little path, as steep as a ladder. It wound and twisted and finally brought them down beside the stream, where it flung itself foaming against a wall of rock. Near at hand the stream formed a pool of still, clear water, so clear that you could see every stone at the bottom. So far father and daughter had only exchanged short and trivial phrases. This more than anything else made Daniele realize how great was the change that had taken place in Silvia.

'What pretty stones,' Silvia eventually remarked, pointing to a strip of sand about a foot wide under the water.

'That's fish spawn,' her father explained. 'At the end of September the trout leave the lower stretches of the river and swim towards the source. The females look for sandy, well-protected places to lay their eggs. They push the pebbles apart with their tails, and then lay their eggs, which stick to the stones.'

'Is that how trout are born?'

'The eggs are only fertilized by the males afterwards. They follow the trail of the females and sprinkle a thick, milky fluid over the stones where the eggs are lying. A few days later the eggs start opening.'

Silvia gazed full of wonder at the strip of sand where this marvel took place.

'How beautifully simple,' she said.

'Trout don't go to church, my dear girl.'

That was all they said during the walk home.

'Did you talk to her?' Daniele's wife asked.

'Yes.'

'Well?'

'Nothing.'

One day the engineer left his room for the first time and lay on a chair in the orchard. Caterina and Daniele came back together from Gordola. The engineer called out 'Signorina Silvia!'

Caterina heard his voice and stood rooted to the spot. Then she went and looked through the hedge that separated the garden from the road. 'Signor Daniele,' she said, trembling from head to foot, 'Signor Daniele, that man is the spy I told you about!'

'You're mad!' Daniele exclaimed, and told the woman how the man had been brought to the house while he was away.

Caterina again went over to the hedge and examined the invalid, who was talking and joking with Silvia, more closely.

'Of course it's the man,' she said. 'I'm going before he sees me!'

'All right,' said Daniele, who had grown pale. 'Tell Agostino to come here to-morrow at the same time, and I'll take care the man doesn't see him.'

A little while later Silvia came and talked to her father. 'Our invalid is much better,' she said to him. 'It would be nice if you'd talk to him sometimes. You'll see what an excellent man chance has brought to our house.'

'Certainly, I should like to talk to him,' Daniele replied, trying to hide his emotion. 'We can all have dinner together.'

At dinner the situation was intolerable. Daniele could not bear seeing this man sitting between his two daughters. He excused himself, saying he had a slight headache, and went out.

Later the others came and joined him in the orchard.

'What's the news in the papers?' the so-called engineer asked his host. 'I haven't seen a paper for weeks.'

'There's some tragedy or other every day,' Daniele replied. 'There was a big railway accident in France yesterday, with hundreds of people killed.'

'There's a tragedy every day,' the engineer said, taking up Daniele's words. 'But how much more tragic is the way people go towards their fate. Just consider the hundreds of people who were killed in the accident yesterday. There were students, peasants, commercial travellers, officers, doctors, milliners, lawyers, all in the same train. They were in the same train and yet they were not in the same train. The peasants were thinking about market prices, the lawyers about the cross of the Legion of Honour, the officers about finding themselves rich brides, the doctors were quarrelling in imagination with the mayors of their villages, and the students were day-dreaming about the new ties they had just bought. Thus they were all travelling in their own trains. In human affairs each man travels in his own train. And then suddenly all of them are put in the same train, the train of death. The students' tie ends up under the peasant's boot, the officer's sword pierces the commercial traveller's chest, the milliner's

new models disappear in smoke and flame. They were all in the same train without knowing it.'

'But the railway authorities hastened to destroy the unity created by death,' Daniele said. 'They had the corpses in fur coats laid out separately from the others.'

'So people are condemned to be enemies even after death?' Silvia asked.

'There is an abyss between the nature of man, his destiny and what society makes of him,' the invalid replied. 'While I was struggling with death I was haunted by that idea the whole time. Every one of us travels in his own special train, and yet we're all on the same railway.'

'Present-day society is based entirely on the separation and antagonism of man to man,' Daniele said. 'The great majority of mankind are separated from the results of their labour. The product of their labour has scarcely left their hands when it no longer belongs to them but to their enemies. The product is the enemy of the producer. Lifeless objects have become a fetish before which man must bow.'

'Must it always be so?' Silvia asked.

'When I was young,' the invalid replied, 'I too hoped for a kind of society different from that in which we live. . . .'

Daniele rose and went on digging his orchard. Spring was near, and there was a great deal to do. He drove his spade angrily into the earth, stepped on it with his right foot with all his weight, and then shovelled the displaced clods to one side. Behind him Filomena smoothed out the earth with a rake. A sweet smell of damp earth rose from the orchard. Big beads of sweat appeared on Daniele's anguished, tormented face. The injured man remained lying in the garden until evening, until the first stars appeared over Monte Ceneri.

'Not for many, many years have I looked up into the sky,' he said quietly to the family sitting round him. Silvia went away and returned with a book.

'You remind me of an incident in the first volume of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*,' she said. 'Prince Andrei was wounded in November 1805, in a battle between the Russians and the French. This is what Tolstoy says of him:

'"Then he opened his eyes again, hoping to discover the result of the artilleryman's fight with the two Frenchmen, and whether the red-haired artilleryman had been killed or not. He also wanted to know whether the guns had been captured or whether they had been saved. But he could see nothing except the sky high over his head. The sky was not clear now, but still it was immeasurably high, with

grey clouds floating gently across it. How quiet and still and magnificent it is, Prince Andrei said to himself, and how unlike our shouting and bustling and fighting. The quiet procession of clouds across the high, unending sky has nothing whatever to do with the Frenchman's fight with the artilleryman, as they struggled with desperate, agitated faces for the sponge-staff. How has it happened that I have not looked into the sky before? And how fortunate I am that I have at last looked into it now. Everything is vain and empty and unreal, except the infinity of the sky. There is nothing, nothing exists apart from it. But even the sky does not exist. There is nothing but peace and quiet. And God be thanked for it."'

The moon had risen and was flooding the valley of Magadino.

'The moon,' said Luisa, 'has eyes and a nose like ours.'

'Those are mountains and seas,' Silvia instructed her younger sister.

'If the dwellers in the moon are looking down at the earth at this moment, no doubt it looks very much the same to them,' the 'engineer' said. 'What do the great cities of the earth look like from above? From up there Italy must look like a comma and Switzerland like a full-stop.'

'What is Mussolini from up there?' said Luisa.

'Or Motta?' Daniele asked.

Everybody laughed.

Next day when Daniele saw Agostino coming he went to meet him and took him into the house through the door on the side away from the orchard, where the 'engineer' was lying in the sun. The two men went up to Luisa's room. Agostino hid behind the curtain and looked at the spy without any danger of being seen.

'That's the man all right,' Agostino whispered.

'At least he won't give us the slip this time,' he added, rubbing his hands.

'Surely you're joking?' Daniele said, in a voice that made Agostino prick up his ears.

'The fox is in the trap,' he said. 'Are you going to let him get out of it? At last one of the men who murder our comrades in Italy, in the prisons and on the islands, is in our power, without our having raised a hand to get him. Are we to let him go?' There was anger in Agostino's voice.

'He's in my house; he's my guest,' Daniele answered calmly.

'He's a spy!' said Agostino.

'He was a spy, but now he is my guest,' Daniele answered with the

same calm. 'He came to my house seeking hospitality as a dying man. He recovered in my house. . . .'

Agostino could not believe his ears.

'But why these scruples?' he said. 'You know well enough with what means the Fascists fight us, they don't recognize any moral scruples.'

'I know,' Daniele answered. 'That's why I'm not a Fascist.'

'It was because of our moral scruples that we were defeated.'

'And because of them we shall triumph,' Daniele replied.

In the face of such obstinacy Agostino could only shake his head silently.

'How much longer is he staying here?' he then asked.

'Perhaps another week, because he's still very feeble.'

'Then there'll be time to talk about him again before he gives us the slip,' said Agostino.

Daniele decided to say nothing of all this to his family. He did not want to worry them. He also took care to see that his guest noticed nothing. One of his wife's sisters had recently had a baby and Daniele decided to go and see her with his wife and Silvia. Luisa was left to look after the invalid.

'You've been here for several weeks and you've never even seen the house properly,' the girl said to the alleged engineer.

'That's only because I was in bed the whole time,' he replied.

Luisa showed him everything; including the storeroom in which the potatoes, onions, fruit and gardening tools were kept, and her own room on the first floor in which she and Silvia now slept. A framed picture on the wall, decorated with two red paper carnations, attracted the 'engineer's' attention.

'Who is that?' he asked.

'Matteotti.'

The 'engineer' sat down on a chair.

'Who is Matteotti?' he asked.

'He was a man who stood up for the poor, so he was murdered by Mussolini.'

'Are you an anti-Fascist?'

'Of course.'

'Is Silvia too?'

'She's more anti-Fascist than I am.'

'And your father?'

'He's more anti-Fascist than any of us. . . . But he doesn't talk about it, he acts.'

Then Luisa took him up to the second floor.

'This is my parents' room.'

'And what's that room there?'

'Nobody's allowed in there. Father forbids it. There are lots of papers in there, and he doesn't want them untidied.'

Luisa and the 'engineer' went back to the garden.

He spent the next half-hour pacing up and down the garden path. Then he made up his mind, went up to Luisa and said:

'Will you send off a telegram for me?'

He gave the girl the message and the money, and said he was tired and was going straight to bed.

Next day Silvia took up the 'engineer's' breakfast, but there was no answer. The door was locked. Certain that something had happened, Silvia started crying out, and the whole family came to see what was the matter. Daniele smashed the door in. The room was empty, the bed had not been slept in, the luggage had disappeared.

'He's gone!' Silvia shrieked.

'He's gone without saying good-bye,' Luisa added.

'He must have left last night,' said Filomena, pointing to the bed.

In two bounds Daniele was on the second floor, where the women heard him raging and shouting like a madman. 'Thief! Rogue! Traitor! He's taken all my papers!' he stormed and raved.

The women hurried upstairs. The room was in disorder.

The drawers had been emptied on the floor.

At that moment Agostino appeared. As yet he knew nothing, but he was pale and agitated.

'The spy cleared off last night and took most of my papers with him, including those for the frontier traffic. We must warn the men involved at once,' Daniele said to Agostino. 'There's not a moment to lose!'

'Twenty workers were arrested at Luino station early this morning,' Agostino said. 'They were all men who come into Switzerland to work for the day and return home to Italy at night!'

Silvia gazed at her father and Agostino in utter astonishment and bewilderment, as though this were a piece of play-acting.

'No!' she started sobbing. 'No! No! It isn't true! It's all a joke! Agostino, for God's sake tell me it isn't true!'

Daniele pulled himself together.

'We must think at once how we can save those who have not been caught yet,' he said.

He and Agostino hurried away.

Daniele did not return till late that evening.

Filomena and Luisa were sitting by the stove. Silvia was sitting on a box at the back of the dark kitchen.

'Our smugglers were arrested early this morning,' Daniele said, standing at the kitchen door. 'A book depôt was raided at midday. The police have been to Caterina's, and Agostino seems to have been arrested and will no doubt be expelled from Switzerland. Haven't the police been here yet?'

'No,' said Filomena.

Daniele sat down at the threshold.

Night came and stars appeared. The cock crowed for the first time, but no one thought of going to bed. No one wanted to set foot on the first floor, which until yesterday had been occupied by the 'engineer.' The cock crowed a second time. Filomena and Luisa remained sitting by the stove. Silvia remained sitting on a box at the back of the dark kitchen, and Daniele sat at the threshold. It was like a death-watch, as though someone had died. The cock crowed a third time.

A piercing animal cry broke the silence, like the howl of a dog in great pain, followed by a protracted and agitated cackling of all the hens and chickens. Daniele sprang to his feet and dashed down the garden towards the hen-house. He saw a fox with its paw in the trap. The animal, with humped back, was pulling with its three free legs, trying to free the captured limb. When it saw Daniele approaching it started jumping frantically from side to side, though it was hampered by the chain which held the trap.

'At last!' Daniele exclaimed. He seized an axe which was lying near the hen-house and started striking the beast as though he were felling an oak-tree. He struck its head, its back, its belly, and its legs, and went on striking long after he had hacked the carcass to pieces and reduced it to a bloody pulp.

JOHN CORNFORD

THREE POEMS

AS OUR MIGHT LESSENS

Mind shall be harder
Heart the keener
Mood the more
As our might lessens.

I

THESE carrion men that fear our power,
The heroes of the pogrom hour,
Who measure virtue by the strength to kill,
Because they know their time is near,
Would hold us down by murder's fear.
The dying crucify the living still.

For those whose tortured, torturing flesh
Stirred at the body under the lash,
The painted boy in the prætorian's bed.
For those who were strong to love and live,
Who claimed life had no need to starve,
Camphor and pincers fouled urine and blood.

Our girls whose limbs were shaped for love,
But love as equal not as slave,
Were raped by madmen on the wooden horse,
Who dying fought life's weakness down,
Our men, castrated, still were men,
For manhood in their living burnt so fierce.

For all but suicides and slaves
This death is background to our lives,
This is the risk our freedom has us take.
Some may die bold as Schulze died,
Many will live to avenge our dead,
But this fear haunts us all. Flesh still is weak.

II

No abstraction of the brain
Will counteract the animal pain.
The living thought must put on flesh and blood.
Action intervenes, revealing
New ways of love, new ways of feeling,
Gives nerve and bone and muscle to the word.

Action creates new ways of living,
Shatters the old ideas of loving,
Brings us in motion face to face with fact.
In forcing us to readjust
The half-adjustments of the past
Strips all illusions from the sexual act.

Locked in the first or final kiss,
No time for thought, you know that this
In ebb or flow of movement will keep steady.
Feeling love's wanton buttocks move,
Scaling your sex, you know all life,
All strength moves in the dance of a woman's body.

Only the maimed talk of soul's dress.
Her glory is her nakedness,
The free surrender fusing love and lust,
And manhood muscled by this love
Under the madman's whip can prove
Stronger than the force by which its life was crushed.

Even now while we have yet to win
Our light from dark, our senses can
Oppose this burning life to that charred by death.
Love gives a new, a stranger pride,
And we go taller by a head
Now nerve and senses check the compassed path.

III

We cannot hope to ease life's itch
Gleaning the harvest of the rich,
Gathering the rotten peaches from the trees,
And by retreating to the mind,
However deep we grub, we'll find
No magic formulæ, no golden keys.

Not by any introspection
Can we regain the name of action,
Whatever dreams may mean to you, they mean sleep.
Black over Europe falls the night,
The darkness of our long retreat,
And winter closes with a silent grip.

But what the dawn will bring to light,
Victory or fresh defeat,
Depends on us until the nightmare's over.
On how we fight their truth and lies,
Their death in rescuers' disguise,
Till the ice starts breaking up on the frozen river.

Though flesh is weak, though bone is brittle,
Our sinews must be hard as metal,
We must learn to mock at what makes readers wince,
Our home, our job is everywhere,
We have no time to stand and stare,
Nor miss the fighter's nor the lover's chance.

We cannot hide from life with thought,
And freedom must be won, not bought.
No talisman will keep us safe from harm.
But moving in the masses' blood
Vienna, Amsterdam, Madrid
The ten-years-sleeping-image of the storm

Shows us what we stand to gain
If through this senseless-seeming pain,
If through this hell we keep our nerve and pride.
Where the nightmare faces grinned
We, or our sons, shall wake to find
A naked girl, the future at our side.

SERGEI MIRONOVITCH KIROV

(Assassinated in Leningrad, December 1934)

NOTHING is ever certain, nothing is ever safe,
To-day is overturning yesterday's settled good.
Everything dying keeps a hungry grip on life.
Nothing is ever born without screaming and blood.

Understand the weapon, understand the wound:
What shapeless past was hammered to action by his deeds,
Only in constant action was his constant certainty found.
He will throw a longer shadow as time recedes.

POEM

HEART of the heartless world,
Dear heart, the thought of you
Is the pain at my side,
The shadow that chills my view.

The wind rises in the evening,
Reminds that autumn is near.
I am afraid to lose you,
I am afraid of my fear.

On the last mile to Huesca,
The last fence for our pride,
Think so kindly, dear, that I
Sense you at my side.

And if bad luck should lay my strength
Into the shallow grave,
Remember all the good you can;
Don't forget my love.

ALFRED KANTOROWICZ

A MADRID DIARY

Translated from the German by James Cleugh

20TH DECEMBER, 1936

FOR three days Madrid has been enveloped in a dense fog, so thick, at times, that it was impossible to see as much as two yards ahead. The front lines were all quiet.

Yesterday morning the mists cleared. I called for Kurt at the Political Commission, where the Fifth Regiment has its headquarters, and we set out for the front.

I asked him how it was that a Division comprising at the present time tens of thousands of militiamen, organized into several Brigades, came to be called the Fifth Regiment. He explained that the four regiments garrisoning Madrid when the rebellion broke out had at first thrown in their lot with Franco. A new regiment was recruited and called the Fifth. In a few days it was able to put thousands of volunteers into the field. Its strength is now over sixty thousand. Its name is, therefore, no longer that of any particular military unit but merely designates the general body of volunteers from Madrid. The Political Officer of the regiment, Carlos, whom I met the day before yesterday, is a first-rate organizer. I was told that Lister, the farmer's son, was the best military chief the regiment had.

In the working-class suburb situated on the road to Fuencaral we found a woman lying dead in the street. We stopped. Our driver learnt from the bystanders that she had been shot down from behind in the early hours of this morning.

Who had shot her? The 'Fifth Column,' was the answer. She had one bullet through the lung and another through the throat. She was lying face downwards. One of the bystanders told us that she was well known in the neighbourhood as a Socialist official. We waited till the hearse came to take her away. The incident was dicussed in matter-of-fact tones. Death in public had come to be of daily occurrence here. It was no longer regarded as sensational.

As we drove away Kurt informed me that the 'Fifth Column' is a powerful body of Fascist agitators working in the remoter republican

areas. They consist of army officers, Falangists, hired ruffians of all kinds, spies, sabotage agents and criminals. Their object is to support, by nightly murders, acts of provocation, sabotage and so on, the four columns converging on Madrid under Franco's orders. These gangsters have grown slightly more wary of late. But it is still advisable to keep one's revolver handy when driving back from the front at night.

All the cross-roads were strictly watched. Kurt's shout to the sentries: 'International Brigade!' is a phrase to conjure with about here. It acts as a universal password and Open Sesame. The glamour and affection that clings to this battalion of French, Italian, German, Polish, Hungarian, Jugoslav, Belgian, English, American and Czech Anti-fascists makes one flush with pride and pleasure at being allowed to belong to it. To be able to say, 'I'm one of the Eleventh (International) Brigade,' makes one much more respected hereabouts at the present time than any other rank, distinction or reputation in the world. I am all impatience to get my uniform, after all this delay, and 'join up.' After to-day's decidedly generous 'baptism of fire' I feel I have a certain amount of right to assume the privileges of 'belonging.'

We drove through Fuencaral about half-past nine, and after paying a short visit to a German battery went on to the Staff Headquarters at L. It was a glorious day, sunny and clear, with excellent visibility. The snowy crests of the Guadarrama mountains lay shimmering before our eyes. All was still, quiet, as if peace reigned here. Not one of us but secretly wished, ready as we were to fight on to the final victory, that peace might soon come again.

We found many old friends at the Staff Headquarters. Scarcely any but familiar and trusted countenances surrounded us. Hans, the commander of the Eleventh, was there. So was our charming friend Alexander, performing his important duties as a staff officer as quietly, efficiently and amiably as he had formerly worked in Paris at his modest job of forwarding clerk to a publisher.

We greeted one another in haste. For the Fascists were already beginning their strenuous attempt to break through the Boadilla—Majadahonda line.

This is a spacious country mansion. Field telephones and writing-tables upon which maps have been spread out are set up in the lounge. We eat, sleep and work downstairs. Smaller rooms on the first floor are occupied by the special service staff. Kurt and I went upstairs to the Political Commissar's office. This is a small room containing a field-service library, a copying-press, a typewriter, newspapers and

masses of other documents. Our job to-day was to assemble the material for the battalion newspapers. But it was difficult to concentrate on office work while the enemy was launching his critical offensive in the field. We longed to join the battalions that were already in action. On days like these, we told each other, the Political Commissar's place was out there, in the front line.

We went downstairs again. The position was serious, we heard. Our battalions had been forced to retreat at certain points. Reinforcements were on their way. If the line could hold out a few hours longer all would be well. Accordingly, the Thaelmann and Edgar André battalions would move up for a counter-attack in the evening.

Kurt arranged to accompany a staff officer up to the line in about an hour's time, with dispatches. I begged to be allowed to go with them. Kurt seemed to hesitate. I asked him whether he thought a civilian's life more valuable than that of a soldier. He referred me to Hans. It was some time before I could get hold of the latter but eventually he gave me permission. I obtained a rifle and cartridge-belt and held myself in readiness.

Our departure was delayed. About midday three heavy bombers came over. We were standing just outside the house, in the sunshine. These Junkers are well known to the comrades. They excited more curiosity than fear. Some of our fellows came out of the house to take a better look at them. They were coming straight at us, flying rather high, at about two thousand yards, I calculated. Then, bang! A bomb fell in the ploughed field fifty yards from the house. Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Four more dropped in the garden. A little girl about ten years old ran towards us across the field, shrieking. Her face was bleeding. But she could only have been grazed by the tiniest splinter. We took her into the house. Someone shouted from outside: 'They're turning round!' He meant the Junkers. Bombs fell again in front of the house. Bang, bang, bang, bang! One dropped thirty yards away, another fifty, another twenty. The house rocked. Would they get a hit? They weren't going to give us much rest to-day, evidently. We bolted into one of the smaller rooms. Someone dashed after us, slamming the door. A very young militiaman next to me gave a convulsive start. Even a staff officer turned pale and yelled out nervously: 'It's only the door!' He snatched open the door again and crashed it to once more, with a noise like thunder, in the midst of the roar of the explosions. The young militiaman started crying.

Finally, about three o'clock, we managed to get away. We had to visit the Spanish reserve battalions first. After driving a few miles

we found ourselves in the zone of fire. Our direct route was being heavily shelled, so we made a detour.

To travel by car under shell-fire was a new war experience for me. I felt helpless, exposed to risks that nothing but a good pair of ears and an eye for cover would enable one to meet. When a large fragment of shrapnel struck the road about fifty yards behind us on the very spot where we had been a few seconds before, I began to get nervous. Naturally, I concealed my agitation. But it proved to me that I no longer possessed the *naiveté* of an eighteen-year-old lad, the *naiveté* with which I had charged at the head of my company, in the attack on Combles, yelling boisterously to my captain: 'Now at last we've got something better to do than that damned musketry drill!' That same *naiveté* which had caused me to rush about laughing under the heaviest fire and to turn all my terrors to thrills was simply due to lack of imagination. I had been altogether wrong in mistaking it for courage. I shan't know whether I am courageous or not until I learn to recognize danger imaginatively and to experience, when facing it, the normal reaction of fear. As soon as I became clear on that point I regained the tranquillity of mind which was indispensable for our present enterprise.

We came to a place whence it was only possible to continue our journey on foot. We started running straight across country. Then we had to ford a brook, but the water only came half-way up our calves. I had to laugh heartily when I thought of the extraordinary clothes I was wearing. My old black suit had originally been cut, sixteen years ago, for evening wear. Four years ago I had had it altered to a day-suit. My overcoat, of a most peculiar design, was nearly as old. I had bought it in Capri. My rifle and cartridge-belt, the fashionable Parisian shoes and socks with which I was wading through the icy water, completed an appearance that must have seemed utterly ludicrous.

We delivered our message to a Spanish battalion in the first reserve position. They were to send up two companies to the line nearest the enemy. Then back we went to the car, through the brook again, and drove on, fast, towards the German battalions. By now it was half-past four and in three-quarters of an hour it would be dark. Presumably the counter-attack had already started.

Our own guns were firing uninterruptedly over our heads. We could see the shell-bursts about two miles further on. The line, therefore, could not be more than a mile and a half away. Our car was held up by a body of Spanish militia which was in a hurry to reach its position in the front trenches and thought we might know where

its battalion was posted. We couldn't tell them. There was a discussion and we advised them to follow us.

While we were talking aeroplanes appeared on our flank. We counted nine machines. They were dropping bombs on the positions ahead of us. We presumed that they were our own aviators, acting in support of the counter-attack. They were flying very low over the line and raking it with their machine-guns. Then they turned and flew straight towards us. Our group comprised about forty men. Someone suddenly shouted that the machines were Fascist. We scattered. But there was no cover available. I could see a low ridge, about twenty yards away, which afforded a certain amount of shelter, at any rate from one direction. I made a rush for it and threw myself on the ground. The aeroplanes were just over our heads, only about fifteen or thirty yards up. But they were our own men. If they had been Fascists we should all have been killed. I never experienced such a feeling of helplessness as I did in those few seconds, unprotected, lying exposed in a mere furrow which afforded practically no cover, physically and mentally unarmed against the fighting machines that roared over us at a speed of two hundred and fifty miles an hour.

We reassembled and moved forward again with our Spanish comrades. Bullets began to hum past our ears. Fragments of shrapnel hissed through the air. We reached a trench, or rather the bare hint of one. Behind its low parapet two companies of Spaniards were standing, exposed to view from the navel upwards. Kurt and the staff officer joined them. A lively conversation ensued, in spite of the bullets.

They obviously had to be taught a lesson. That it's not cowardly to take cover and that it's not brave to expose oneself needlessly to hostile fire. As I couldn't make myself understood I signed to them to get down behind the breastwork. But they only laughed at my gestures. I noticed one of them particularly, an extremely youthful but vigorous looking militiaman of middle height, who was taking a leading part in the talk and was particularly zealous in exposing his person, with scornful laughter, to the bullets, above the parapet of the trench. He saw me gesticulating and came slowly towards me, taking his cap off and revealing himself as a very pretty girl. I seized her hand and drew her down by main force, but in friendly fashion, into the trench. Gradually a few of the others followed our example.

Meanwhile some of them had been hit, naturally. It was growing dark. We were not quite sure, now, of our position. The Edgar André battalion should have been on our left. Apparently there were no more lines in front of us. We began to investigate. The gunfire

grew steadily in volume. Our Spanish companion was badly wounded by a shell splinter in the upper part of the thigh, which had probably broken the bone. We carried him back, still under fire, to the car. Shells had fallen all round it and it was covered with sand and mud but hadn't been hit. The driver was lying in a shell-hole some distance away. We had the greatest difficulty in persuading him to drive the wounded men back, under fire, in the car. By the time we had seen our friend safely installed in the field hospital at Majadahonda and were ready to return, the driver was lying beside the car in a fit of convulsions. When we picked him up he began to vomit. It was not until late in the evening that we learned the reason for his collapse. Three days before, his brother, also a motor-driver, had been killed by a direct hit.

It was now pitch-dark. We drove slowly back to Staff Headquarters. On our arrival Hans explained the situation to us by candlelight. The counter-attack had been successful. The Fascists had been thrown back to their original positions. The Thaelmann battalion had particularly distinguished itself during the action. Thanks to it the wood at Boadilla had been held and the advance on Majadahonda brought to a standstill by the threat to its flank.

A Fascist who had cut the wires of the electricity system, was brought in to be questioned. He admitted he had been promised three hundred pesetas to do the job. He had already got two hundred for finding out the position of our Staff Headquarters.

Eventually I managed to get some dry shoes and socks. Alexander discovered a mattress for me. I slept in my clothes, the deep sleep of exhaustion.

24TH DECEMBER, 1936

To-day has been quiet. But the troops are on the alert, for the enemy lines are suspiciously peaceful after these last furious assaults. The Spanish battalions which have relieved the Thaelmann and the André were able to occupy, this morning, without a struggle, some miles of territory that have hitherto been desperately disputed. Why? Is it weakness, demoralization, mutiny or just some trick? It looks as if there had been mutiny, for our men found a number of dead Fascist officers.

They also found the bodies of some of our comrades of the Thaelmann battalion, fifteen of the shock-troop section, twelve of them Germans and three English. They alone had held up three companies of Fascists, fighting to the last cartridge and after that with bayonets, the butt-ends of their rifles, and knives. They could have saved them-

selves. They had been ordered to retreat. But they had answered that if they abandoned their positions the Edgar André battalion might be cut to pieces. So they stayed, and held up the decisive thrust against Boadilla Wood. At least two hundred Fascists had fallen before their barricade. They held the position and fell to the last man, those twelve Germans and three English soldiers of freedom, fighting hand to hand. We shall bury them the day after to-morrow, at noon, in the cemetery at Fuencaral.

25TH DECEMBER, 1936

To-day I drove out, with Kuttner, the Social-Democrat delegate, and Soria of the *Humanité*, to visit the troops. We paid our first call on the French *Commune de Paris* battalion, also known as the Dumont battalion after its commanding officer, a former professional soldier of rank. The battalion had had a particularly hard time, for their position had been attacked during the night offensive of the 16th December and they had been under fire continuously ever since. But they have had two days' rest and are now again in good shape. They have been indulging in baths, and what is extremely important to our French comrades, regular meals. They're in splendid spirits.

The English section which fought alongside them has been transferred to another brigade. The French officers and also Ribière, the Political Commissar, are loud in their praises of their English comrades and sincerely sorry to lose them.

Towards midday we reached the Edgar André battalion. We found practically nobody there. They had all gone to the Children's Home at El Pardo. We followed them there and found them surrounded by cheering and saluting crowds of children, who were enthusiastically greeting them with cries of *Salud!* Our men had brought with them Christmas presents in the shape of tangerines, raisins, and sweets, as well as sausages, various woollen articles and cakes. The jollification seemed quite endless and our men as delighted as the children themselves.

It was a long time before we could find Wilhelm, the commander of the battalion, and Artur, the Political Commissar. Meanwhile Kuttner talked to a number of Social-Democratic comrades who were members of the battalion. He was obviously impressed by the spirit of comradeship he observed and by the fact that the People's Front has long been a reality here among these battalions of freedom, while in Prague and Paris they are still debating as to whether it exists or not. He was believed when he promised us all, with evident emotion, in the presence of his Social-Democrat comrades, to support our every endeavour to unite the forces of Anti-Fascism.

During our drive back in the evening aviators bombed the town for the second time to-day. Christmas was apparently to be celebrated, according to these devout Christians, by doubling the deaths of women and children.

26TH DECEMBER, 1936

Last night a banquet was given in the quarters of the Fifth Regiment to the military and political officers of the Eleventh Brigade. Men who had come straight out of hard fighting and were to return to more hard fighting the next day sat and pelted one another with tangerine-skins, their eyes sparkling, just like schoolboys.

Speeches were made by the commanding officers. Hans spoke on behalf of the Germans ; Dumont, of the *Commune de Paris* battalion, for the French. Our Spanish hosts and comrades also spoke.

Hans recalled that, twenty years before, he as a German officer and Dumont as a French officer, had been posted opposite each other at 'Dead Man's Corner.' They had discovered the fact when they first began to exchange reminiscences. 'To-day,' he cried, 'we are fighting side by side, we Germans and Frenchmen, against the common enemy, international fascism, and side by side we shall strike the common enemy down.' One of our French comrades called out: '*Ça va mieux, hein?*' We all laughed with the utmost heartiness, happy in the conviction of the solidarity we Germans and Frenchmen had achieved during these last weeks, in spite of the differences in our national characteristics.

Dumont replied somewhat as follows: 'The Germans of the Edgar André battalion ask: Who are our neighbours in the position? The *Commune de Paris* battalion, is the answer. Good, we can rely on them, is the German comment. The French ask: Who's posted on our left? The answer is, The Thaelmann battalion. *Alors, ça va bien,* say the French.'

Nicoletti, our Political Commissar, and Carlos of the Fifth Regiment, also spoke. Then we sang in unison 'Red Wedding,' the 'Carmagnole' and some Italian and Spanish revolutionary war-songs. Last of all came the 'International,' in many different languages. Then we all went on to a dance which had been organized for the German battalions by the young people of Madrid.

When we sing the 'International' here, to the same tune, in three, five or eight languages, each line of the text which we have all sung, thoughtlessly enough, a hundred times before, takes on a new and direct reference to the struggle in which we are here united. 'Awake, ye rejected of this world!' 'Peoples, hark, the trumpets sound!

Up, for the last great fight!' 'Nations of the world! Win ye the rights of man!' There are moments at which these phrases, every word of which we now deliberately emphasize, assume the character of an oath. It may sound sentimental, but it's true. We've all experienced what it means when men belonging to three, five, eight nations stand with helmet on head and rifle in hand, united in the life and death struggle for the rights of man.

I never realized this so clearly as I did yesterday afternoon. We were standing in the cemetery building at Fuencaral, participating in the funeral service for our fifteen comrades, the twelve Germans and three Englishmen belonging to the shock-section of the Thaelmann battalion which had held Boadilla Wood. Their bodies were lying side by side in the mortuary. Most of them were unrecognizable, their faces bruised by the butts of rifles, their bodies riddled by bullets and by bayonet and knife wounds. The sight hardened our hearts for as long as life should last.

A detachment of the Thaelmann battalion carried the plain coffins on their shoulders to the hastily dug graves which the Spanish workmen were still excavating. We stood in a row, shoulder to shoulder in our uniforms, the workmen drawn up opposite to us. We stood for a long time, with clenched fists, silently looking at the coffins, which had been deposited between the two ranks. Then one of us began to sing the 'International.' We all joined in, singing in German, Spanish, French, English, Italian, Polish, Jugoslav, Hungarian and Czech. Our song, at that moment, was an oath.

2ND JANUARY, 1937

The troops have had little to do for the past few days. But we Political Commissars have been exceptionally busy. Not with fine speeches or even shrewd ones; nor with the effort to perform our duties with proper attention or enthusiasm. Our problem was, above all, during this slack period, to look after the material needs of our comrades returning from the field, beginning with the organization —or its supervision—of hot baths and continuing with the distribution of Christmas parcels, the arrangement, in common with the population of Madrid, of meetings and festivities, the supply of theatre and cinema tickets, the dissemination of newspapers and books, postal affairs, the establishment of the brigade's own Press service, visiting wounded comrades in the hospitals and organizing such visits *en masse*. Hundreds of men called daily at our office. There were Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Italians, Spaniards, Hungarians, Czechs, and Poles, with a thousand suggestions, desires, complaints

and inquiries. A large part of our most necessary work was to listen to them all, advise them if possible, calm them down when needful and give them information. And on top of all this business, which occupied fully four and twenty hours of the day (and even then one could only do half what was necessary) as the pinnacle, so to speak, of a Political Commissar's work, came political lectures and talks to the troops themselves. It was in this connection that I first came to understand, during the far too few opportunities I had to deliver such addresses, how inseparable are political and military qualifications in revolutionary bodies of troops. The most efficient fighting force is always also the most politically sound. In cases where political convictions weaken owing to the deaths of politically prominent comrades, or in any other way, the fighting spirit of the unit depreciates in a precisely similar proportion.

Every day I spend here I learn something new and important. But the discovery, through experience, that the fighting spirit of revolutionary troops depends upon their political faith and education is the most profound and impressive of all my lessons.

5TH JANUARY, 1937

These are dark hours. The allied Fascists have attacked in full strength, and gained some ground. Majadahonda is in their hands, and probably Las Rosas too, by now. The latter commands the main road to the Escorial. The full force of their thrust is not yet spent. Further determined attacks are to be expected during the next few days. The city is under fire. An air raid takes place every few hours. German and Italian tanks, German and Italian aeroplanes, German and Italian artillery, German and Italian officers are in charge of this assault. It's no longer a civil war. It's a war between the Fascist States on the one side and the Spanish people on the other. Investigation committees may debate in London for as many more years as they like, falsifying obvious facts, refusing to see what everyone else sees and to hear what everyone else hears, viz., that a war is being fought here between the Spanish people and the German and Italian nations, which are utilizing the services of a few treacherous and rascally Spaniards.

It has been a hard day. And for me personally too. Early this morning I learned from Nicoletti that Ralph Fox had been killed. He was Political Commissar to the English company. I had always hoped to meet him here again. I thought a great deal of him as a writer, as an organizer and as a comrade. He was the uncompromising and active core of the revolutionary movement among English writers.

Each time I met him or worked with him he seemed to me more and more of a model for us all, in his unobtrusive energy, modesty and determination in all matters of principle, in his straightforwardness and complete lack of vanity. He was a man of lucid and sane intelligence, with a well-stored mind, as well as a writer of remarkable ability and high promise. He was a year or two younger than myself. He always behaved towards me in the frankest spirit of comradeship. And yet, from the very start, I felt the respect for him which I would have felt for a much older man. He never made any fuss about himself or what he did. There were no stories about him. He lived and fought and died here, at the head of his company. The scanty reports so far available all comment on his exceptional daring and popularity. His death is a great loss to the whole of anti-fascist literature, and more: to the anti-fascist movement itself.

I had to drive to the telephone exchange and inform Fox's friends in London and Paris. I got a little more material together and did not leave the office till about twelve o'clock. As we reached the Plaza Tetuan bombs began to fall in great numbers. Twenty-three Junkers and Capronis were flying right above our heads. People bolted into houses and Underground stations, shrieking with terror. Women snatched up their children from the pavement. One bomb fell quite close to the Underground station entrance. We drove on furiously. It would have been madness to stop. I shouted to the driver to get on. He raced round the corner, dodging the screaming, running people, in the direction of the telephone exchange. But this building, too, was one of the bombers' objectives. We charged right through the bombardment, zig-zagging in all directions. From behind us came the roar of explosions, the crash of falling masonry and the whine of flying fragments. We circled craters that had been made only a moment before. According to the figures available by the late afternoon the raid resulted in the loss of more than three hundred lives. After the raiders had unloaded their bombs in the centre of the city they used their machine-guns, on the way back, in the suburbs, against women and children. That is Fascism. Was there ever anything like it before? Such epithets as one could use to characterize it seem utterly feeble and inadequate. Italian and German aviators descended to a range of fifty yards in order to mow down the women and children standing in the provision queues.

That is Fascism. The bodies of those women and children, lying in rows along the streets of Madrid, form the picture with which this scourge will pass into history. To think that there are Germans who are spreading it abroad! We must be thankful that those of us who are

here, are enabled, through our work and the sacrifice of our best lives, to make some amends for this national disgrace.

As soon as we arrived in the building we found ourselves in the midst of a stream of people rushing down the stairs to take cover in the cellars. They were much too late, for the raiders were already retreating above our heads. The Exchange was not hit. The Fascists seldom do manage to reach their objectives. I pushed my way upstairs. The Spanish telephone operator was sitting imperturbably at his post. I asked him, breathlessly, to get me Paris. It only took half a minute. Friedel was at the other end. I knew she would be working at her office there to-day. I had been so delighted at the prospect of speaking to her. I had intended to use the time I thought I should have to wait, calculating that it would be at least half an hour, in arranging my thoughts and writing down the most important questions, so as to avoid being silent when there was so much to say and allowing banality to usurp the place of the essential. I knew well enough what it means to hear one's wife's voice after such weeks of separation and to realize that one only has two minutes in which to tell her everything. The result is that one tells her nothing.

I knew all that. And yet, owing to the unexpected rapidity with which connection was established, everything that I had wished to avoid happened. My ears were still ringing with the roar of the bombs and the shrieks of those who had been hit. I was still out of breath. And suddenly there came my wife's voice from the office in Paris. I said, 'Hallo,' and 'How are you?' then repeated the words, for she couldn't hear me very well. 'Yes, I'm all right too, thanks . . . yes, quite all right. . . . I'm perfectly well. No, everything's all right here. . . . Not a bit of it, the raids aren't half as bad as you think. One gets used to them. Have you sub-let the flat yet?' Then came silence for a quarter of a minute. I couldn't think of anything else to say, had no ideas. Friedel was in the same quandary. My telephone call had taken her by surprise. We asked after one or two people we knew, Kurt, Gustav, Mieke, Jeanne. Then I had to ask her to call M. to the telephone to hear my news. I didn't want to tell her about Fox's death just like that, over the telephone, for she had known him well and had a great respect for him. As soon as I had put back the receiver I remembered everything I had wanted to say to her.

It was not until towards evening that the seriousness of the strategical situation became clear. Dumont, of the *Commune de Paris* battalion, has been wounded. His Political Commissar put in a report. The battalion had to bear the brunt of the recent offensive. Kurt brought further news from the Staff. He had a young Austrian with him who

had been sent back to the André battalion the day before yesterday, after having been wounded in November. To-day he has been hit for the second time, with a bullet through the shoulder. We took him to the military hospital where the victims of the air raid were being bandaged and operated on and which was already being invaded by stretcher-bearers from the field, with such cases as could be moved. The wounded men were crouching on benches or lying on their stretchers, with blood trickling through their improvised bandages on to the ground and over their uniforms. The doctors worked without ever looking up, like machines. There was a stench of iodoform and blood. One of the men started vomiting. Another was groaning softly. A third, from time to time, uttered a shriek. War is disgusting. It is far worse here in the city than in the trenches yonder.

8TH JANUARY, 1937

I was with the battalions in the field to-day. It was a relief to be there. I am more confident, calmer, more hopeful, when I am with them. One ceases to brood or be jealous. There are no problems. Everything is clear and simple. We eat and drink and sleep when we can and keep watch when required. I am happy to be with them, just happy, and never stop to wonder why.

All the same, in these days we have little apparent reason to be happy. The Fascists are still pressing us exceptionally hard. The strength of their reserves is considerable. In particular, they seem to possess quite unlimited supplies of material and specially trained men. Their tanks and anti-tank apparatus, their aeroplanes and artillery are all German and Italian, with German and Italian personnel. It is astonishing that, in spite of this, their attack was so quickly brought to a standstill. The staff are actually already discussing a counter-offensive.

The Fascist losses are said to have been positively enormous. But have not our own casualties, much lighter so far as mere numbers go, been still more serious? Again many of our best men, the nucleus of our forces, have fallen. Albert Müller has been killed. He was a member of the S.D.S. in Paris and an ardent and shrewd fellow-worker. He was introduced to me four or five days ago by Richard, the commander of the Thaelmann battalion, as the future chief of the battalion and one of the best soldiers he knew. Albert only joined the troops a few weeks ago and he was already in command of a company during the last engagement. 'He's a true soldier,' Richard told me. 'He knows the job from A to Z and has learnt more in a

few weeks than many a man in the Reichswehr learns for years.' I happened to know that Albert was not only a soldier. I remembered having met him before, though I hadn't at first recognized him in his uniform and steel helmet. He was a student of theology and an art historian who had proved to us all by his publications and his educational work in Paris, both as organizer and lecturer, but principally as a critic, that he was a comrade from whom even we older men could learn. He knew a great deal. We soon became very sure of that, quiet fellow though he was. We all admired him intensely. When Richard introduced us a few days ago in R. we agreed, after we had both got over our first astonishment at finding each other here in uniform, to meet for a longer period during the course of the next few days. Then came the attack. And now he has fallen at the head of his company.

On this occasion the Thaelmann battalion suffered the heaviest losses, after the French and Spaniards. The word went round once more, during these dark days: 'The Thaelmann battalion will hold the position.' And the Thaelmann battalion held it. I don't yet know all the details, but two of the episodes of the action are quite clear to me. On the 4th of January the battalion was lying so far forward that the Fascists, who believed that the lines in question had long been abandoned, advanced to within a couple of hundred yards of it, at least two battalions strong, in quite casual fashion, with cigarettes in their mouths and rifles slung over their shoulders. The entire battalion had sufficient self-control to remain quiet until this distance had been reached. Five minutes later both Fascist battalions had been completely wiped out. The enemy advance came to a full stop and our troops had time to breathe.

Two days later, on the night of the 6th—7th January, the battalion was installed in a second key position. Again the word was passed: 'The Thaelmann battalion will hold the position.' The first company took over the front-line trenches. Its commander, Walter, a former officer of the Reichswehr, one of the most loyal and courageous anti-Fascists in the battalion and one of its most highly trained soldiers, had been lying seriously ill in hospital for the last three days. The first company, being an outpost, had to hold a trench in an extremely awkward position. On the morning of the 7th this trench was attacked by a large number of Fascist tanks, supported by infantry. The first company was alone in the trench against the hostile tanks and an immeasurably superior force of the enemy. It could have saved itself by retreating. 'But we've got to hold the position,' said one of the survivors imperturbably. 'We've had no orders to retreat!'

The first company held that position against the assault of an entire army, as the men of Thermopylae held theirs. If ever the history of these battles and the part taken in them by the International Brigades, or simply the history of the Thaelmann battalion, comes to be written, a profusion of deeds of heroism will be discovered, performed both by individuals and by whole groups, such as can unquestionably take their place with all the great legends of heroes in history.

This evening a meeting was held in Nicoletti's office attended by Hans, the Brigadier, Richard, commander of the Thaelmann battalion, Wilhelm, commander of the Edgar André, Dumont's representative —fortunately the former's wound is not serious—and the Political Commissars, Artur of the Thaelmann, Paul of the André and Ribière of the *Commune de Paris*. What a pitiable condition they were in! Richard, that man of iron, the best battalion commander and the best of comrades—I get sentimental when I think of him and I am not ashamed of it—Richard was pale, his hands shook, his cheeks were hollowed and his features twitched. I could not bear to look at him. Hans, who always used to be cool and cheerful, good-humoured and self-possessed in the most difficult situations, also had deep shadows under his eyes, looking weary with lack of sleep, and careworn. Ribière, whom we called 'Scamp,' always jovial and ready for a frolic, as brave as could be, flung himself into a chair, covered his face with his hands and burst into loud weeping. Nicoletti himself only restrained his tears with difficulty. We all sat there in silence, not daring to ask what had become of this or that friend.

Finally, Hans addressed us, pointing out that at whatever sacrifices of our best lives the formidable Fascist offensive had been brought to a standstill after gaining only a few miles of territory. Madrid, once more, had been saved. They didn't get through and they wouldn't get through.

9TH JANUARY, 1937

The Brigade is going to be given a rest and its cadres will be restored and reorganized. Last night was the worst I have ever spent in Madrid. Did the Fascists wish to avenge their defeat or do they believe that by starting a panic in the city they can achieve what they could not achieve in the field?

While we were at supper upstairs in the canteen of the Fifth Regiment bombs began falling all round us at distances of a hundred, two hundred or fifty yards. The building tottered. Window-panes were shattered. Women rushed screaming to the door. We men, too, sprang to our feet—somewhat foolishly, for either we were going to

be hit there and then or else the raiders were already in retreat above our heads.

We sat down again. I looked along the row of faces. The men were trying to smile, rather shamefacedly. All were pale, even those who had been through a hundred raids and were used to them. It's different here in the city from what it is out there, where there are only men present. We proceeded to give it as our professional opinion that the bombs had been 'heavy stuff' this time, probably those weighing 120 kilos. Some of us went out in search of the places that had been hit.

Half an hour later the raiders were back again; this time with incendiary bombs. Flames burst out all over the place. The extraordinary thing is that so little of the damage is visible even early the next morning. The fires are put out and the rubbish cleared away, sometimes even the holes in the roadway are repaired. The spirit of the population nowhere shows itself so clearly as in this sort of work, undertaken with tenacious resolution, as a matter of course. Madrid reacts to the infliction of these ravages, which have now been going on for months, as if they were trifling street accidents, to be dealt with at once in a perfectly normal way. The fires are put out, the holes in the street filled up and the rubble carted away. The next morning Madrid wakes up as if nothing had happened. One has to look very carefully to perceive that once more certain houses have disappeared and that in so many places in the streets bright new paving-stones are visible.

There were raids practically every half-hour last night. Incendiary, heavy and medium-sized bombs were dropped at half-past nine, ten, eleven, half-past eleven and so on. Towards eleven o'clock an artillery bombardment began. Just before midnight a violent engagement took place near the Puerta Moncloa, a good three miles away. But it sounded as though the firing were coming from the next street. At last there could be no more doubt about it. There *was* firing in the neighbouring streets, rifle and machine-gun fire. Carlos ordered his men to fall in and we, too, fetched our weapons. Could it be the 'Fifth Column'? Or had the Fascists broken into the city? After all, it was only two or three miles from the front line to the centre of the town. Our suspicions were, of course, due to nothing but nerves. Someone had started shooting in the streets, others had followed the example. In the general state of nervousness, what with the air-raids, the artillery bombardment and the fighting at the Puerta Moncloa, a purely fictitious battle had developed in the streets. Doubtless the original signal had been given by Fascists. The thing was always much

too systematic to be due to chance. A burst of machine-gun fire would come from some darkened room and that would be enough to start the shindy. Certain of the consulates afford refuge to whole companies of organized Fascists.

One of the defence committees rang through to say that signal flashes to the raiders had been observed and to ask for assistance in assaulting the building where the flashes had been seen. A little later some youthful comrades arrived with the same request. We reassured them, but posted sentries round the houses under suspicion.

During the night we received a visit from the widow of the Political Commissar attached to the Garibaldi battalion, Picelli, who had been killed some days before. It was not until nearly two o'clock that Kurt, Gustav, Nicoletti and I had a chance to discuss the situation, as we had all along intended to do. We sat in the darkened room, listening to the cannonade and counting the half-hours to the next raid. The women were in the cellar.

Gustav told us about the fighting in which his brigade, the Twelfth, had been engaged, before Siguenza. Nicoletti, Kurt and I filled up the gaps in our knowledge of the dark days through which the Eleventh Brigade had passed. Then we fell silent, for the raiders were back again. Gustav growled: 'Those hounds! Dropping bombs on sleeping women and children!' The bombing throughout the night was quite indiscriminate. Both the English Embassy and the English Consulate, among other buildings, were hit. The enemy wanted to create a panic. But at the present time—it is about midday—Madrid is quiet again, almost incredibly calm. For the raiders are still coming over almost every half-hour, even to-day. We went on to consider the urgent problem of preserving our skeleton formations. Nicoletti assured us that a great deal would soon be done in this connection. But the difficulty was that scarcely anyone wanted to leave the front, although there was such important work to be done behind the lines. We could all understand the men's feelings. But we shall probably have to take strong measures and withdraw a good many people to be posted to relatively less dangerous work.

Our ultimate objective is still the promotion of revolution in our own countries. Many of the best of us are here in Spain. The death of each individual of us is a loss to the great project which is common to all of us here, namely, the freeing of our several native lands. For us the fight will be renewed on the day on which victory is obtained here.

Half-past two. The raiders are back again. People are starting to run in the streets. But quite a number of them stand still, watching

with interest to see where the next bomb will fall. The fortitude of the citizens borders on the miraculous. Day after day the Fascists send their bombs crashing down among the crowds and enfilade women and children with machine-gun fire. But these dreadful daily visitations are hardly over before girls are laughing again in the streets, the women washing clothes on the roofs singing, children playing, old women sitting on benches in the sun, while the trams with their fluttering banners swing past freshly-made craters and the smoking ruins of houses, and almost before the dead and wounded have been carried away the queue of women waiting to obtain provisions forms up again, though at the nearest corner it didn't even break its ranks.

The city shivers, for there is no coal, goes hungry, for provisions are scarce, lacks almost everything and lives in continual peril. But so far I have heard no grumbling and noticed no signs of panic. If ever men deserved to be called heroic the men of Madrid deserve the name. And not only the men but still more, perhaps above all, the women, without whose uncomplaining equanimity and inspiring resolution in face of the enemy Madrid could never have held out.

10TH JANUARY, 1937

I was visited last night by Walter, the captain of the First Company of the Thaelmann battalion. He brought me some information about the German aviator who had been shot down, the non-commissioned officer Kneiding, belonging to the Immelmann raiding squadron. Walter, who was only just out of hospital, had been the first to reach the wrecked machine. The moment he saw the pilot, who was already dead, he called out: 'Why, that's Kneiding!' He knew him quite well, for they had served together for years in the same air battalion. Walter was at that time a warrant officer and Kneiding his immediate subordinate. Now Walter was the first to come across him on this side. Material for a novel! But one couldn't use it because it sounds too improbable. Walter brought me Kneiding's diary, together with a few papers, letters and photographs of his fiancée. I sent on the material to the proper quarter this morning.

We talked till late last night. He told me a good deal about himself, for instance how he, as an officer of the Reichswehr, came to join us, and still more about his comrades in the Thaelmann battalion. One of them, Fritz, had been three times wounded and would never admit it. Another, Egon, had driven a tank up to the front line and distributed, under fire, the load of cases of bombs that it contained. Walter told me many such stories. Practically every one of his comrades had

performed some such deed of gallantry. The conflict that they are waging here is already history.

The Brigade will be given a rest to-day. And I, too, shall be leaving in an hour's time. I have received a message from Albacete to go to Valencia. I wonder for how long?

I am reluctant to leave. This struggle for the freedom of a people and to some extent for the freedom of our own nations will be decided in Madrid. These few square miles have become one of the critical areas of history. What active revolutionary would care to leave this city at such a time, when its struggle and its heroic courage have compensated us for all the darkest hours of our exile and given us strength for all the dark hours that are still to come?

MARGOT HEINEMANN

THREE POEMS

FOR R. J. C.

(Summer, 1936)

No, not the sort of boy for whom one does
Find easily nicknames, Tommy and Bill,
Not a pleasant bass in the friendly buzz
Of voices we know well,
But not much changing where he goes
Divides talk coldly with the edge of will.

When he began, he talked too fast
To be heard well, and he knew too much.
He never had, though learned a little at last,
The sure, sincere and easy touch
On an audience: and his handsome head
Charmed no acquiescence: he convinced and led.

Any movement, going north or south,
Can find a place for charm and open shirts,
The sun-bright hair, the lovely mouth,
But needs as much the force that hurts
And rules our sapphire dreams.
For seeing visions on the evening sky
I can do tolerably well; but I
Can read no blue prints and erect no schemes.

They fear the meddling intellect,
Cold, gritty, loveless, cynical, pedantic—
Rightly, had he no work but to dissect
Romance and prove it unromantic,
Breaking the scenery with his conscious hands.
But we are working towards a richer season,
And mean to plough our lands
With this unfruitful reason.

Thought, which our masters cannot use,
Walks on the slag heaps, wags on broken wires
At the old pit head, hears no news.
Thought rakes the fires
That keep our furnaces at even heat.
Capricious as a starving flame
Frail inspiration flickered till he came
To give the fire a world to eat.

GRIEVE IN A NEW WAY FOR NEW LOSSES

AND after the first sense 'He will not come again'
Fearing still the images of corruption,
To think he lies out there, and changes
In the process of the earth from what I knew,
Decays and even there in the grave, shut close
In the dark, away from me, speechless and cold,
Is in no way left the same that I have known.

All this is not more than we can deal with.

The horror of the nightmare is that it evades
Your steady look, steals past the corner of the eye,
Lurks in the sides of pictures. Death
Is fearful for the fifth part of a second,
A fear that shakes the heart: and that fear lost
As soon, yet leaves a sickness and a chill,
Heavy hands and the weight of another day.

All this is not more than we can deal with.

If we have said we'd face the dungeon dark
And gallows grim, and have not meant to face
The thin time, meals alone, in every eye
The comfortless kindness of a stranger—then
We have expected a privileged treatment,
And were out of luck. Death has many ways
To get at us: in every loving heart
In which a comrade dies he strikes his dart.

All this is not more than we can deal with.

In our long nights the honest tormentor speaks
And in our casual conversations:
'He was so live and young—need he have died,
Who had the wisest head, who worked so hard,
Led by his own sheer strength: whom I so loved?'
Yes, you'd like an army all of Sidney Cartons,
The best world made conveniently by wasters, second rates,
Someone that we could spare,
And not the way it has to be made,
By the loss of our best and bravest everywhere.

All this is not more than we can deal with.

ON A LOST BATTLE IN THE SPANISH WAR

THIS is defeat of a sort.
Whoever wins now, these have lost.
These have seen faces of bad dreams
Look at them down a levelled gun,
And nothing has broken the dream nor woken.

Those who died at Badajoz
Will be dead when men who shot
Their brothers, Fascists, foreign tools
Are nothing; when across the world
The people stand on victory.

These saw the cities race with flame,
The friendly streets run blood,
The walls fall, the ignorant
Murder the honest, and whatever happens
They will not see the rest.

They have no immortality
But what their dying works in us.
Blood does not cry to heaven, nor take
Its own revenge when they are dead.
By their agony the living learn to fight.

NIKOLAI TIKHONOV

MORALE

Translated from the Russian by Stephen Garry

Latpari Pass, 9,000 feet above sea-level. Southern slope.

IN places the clouds rose like foam on the top of boiling milk. Uneven, their edges broken with turbid tongues, they licked the stones. The enormous bowl of the forest disappeared beneath their dishevelled frenzy. The mountains were changed in their features when the flood of this inaudible sea approached them. It drowned the sun and threw up ever-fresh milky crests, implacably hastening towards the highest points of the range.

Grating his crooked teeth, Yefremov, the commander of the detachment, gazed at the evening clouds swaying above him. The clouds were obviously hurrying.

'They're moving at a trot, the swine!' he said.

At that moment Kononov, the military commander, shouted as he dragged the panting cavalry horse behind him over the stones:

'Alexander Sergeevich, you're admiring those clouds, but do you know what this means?'

They both halted to look. Angrily kicking his heels against the edge of the unmelted snow, Yefremov chewed the mouthpiece of his dead pipe. He did not answer.

'It's night, that's what it means,' the military commander answered his own question. 'Night is hurrying on, but we're not hurrying, commander, we're only hastening slowly.'

'Hurry is all right when catching fleas,' Yefremov said morosely. 'Leave me alone, military commander. As it is it's more than I can stand.'

The mountains around them were now perceptibly darkening. The milky foam of the cloudy sea grew grey and hostile.

'Things look bad, Alexander Sergeevich, bad,' the military commander said. Yefremov pointed him to the bends in the mountain path, to where the dark strings of the hungry, chilled and weary detachment were winding.

An exhausting wind suddenly whistled in their ears. The military commander's horse coughed and shook its mane, which had grown beyond the normal length. Auzen, the battery commander, rushed up and down the slope, shouting at the packs of his bedraggled battery stranded among the infantry. Some of the artillerymen were making their way upward off the path, tormentedly shortening the distance, clinging to their horses' tails. The horses hung over the abyss, collecting their breath.

'Let go of their tails, you devils!' shouted Auzen. 'Isn't it enough for them to have to carry six poods without you going and finding room for yourselves? Follow the path! Let go of their tails, or they'll be getting paralysis in their haunches.'

The pack horses moved upward in a series of jumps, which caused all the weight of the packs to beat against their cruppers and forced them back on their hind legs again and again. Breathing like horses, their mouths gaping, the men halted at every five paces.

'Well, that's fine!' said Auzen. 'We're scattered over seven viorsts, and you can go and look for the barrel here, the wheels there, and the carriage somewhere else. We shan't get sorted out before nightfall.'

'And there's night coming,' the military commissar threw out his hand in the direction of the clouds. 'There's night already; it's already up to our knees.'

'Good job we're not going into battle,' Auzen replied, and again shouted down the slope: 'Who's that trotting? At a walking-pace, there! Don't dare to trot! And pass the word down: "Nobody's to trot."'

'Make way there!' came a shout from below, and the infantry scattered. The men sat down above the path and yelled.

'They're famished,' said Yefremov, 'the men are famished. But there's nothing to be done about it. We shall be at our night-quarters soon.'

'Where are the night quarters?' Kononov asked, as he took the tobacco-pouch from the commander's hand.

'At the top of the pass, according to our schedule,' Yefremov answered without blinking an eye.

'Ye-es,' Kononov drawled, 'at the top of the pass. To play snowballs?'

'Not to play snowballs,' the commander answered with business-like passion. 'But you judge for yourself, military commander. We shall never get to the bottom safely in the darkness, with men and horses fagged out. Where would you go, tell me? Look at what's happening.'

'Make way!'

The last pack-horses passed the leg-weary infantry at a quiet, servile walk. A cold prickly rain beat in their faces. The medley of men, stones and animals darkened still more. Night was upon them.

A grey horse was the first to break away from the narrow path. The rubble crunched and rattled under its rolling body. Without releasing the reins, a Red Army man jumped after it. He shouted and jumped, sinking up to his knees in the friable rubble. The horse ceased rolling and lay trembling on a projecting spur, baring its teeth, with no thought of getting up. The Red Army man pulled on the reins. Trembling, the horse rose and again made its way upward, stumbling, and glancing askance at the abyss.

Another horse fell, blocking the path and slipping towards the edge of the wall.

'Look what's happening,' Yefremov said coldly, lighting his pipe. 'This isn't the steppes of the Kuban—snort as much as you like!'

'You've stopped. What have you stopped for?' Auzen asked. A crowd was gathering round a well-fed and dashing little horse which was scooping up mouthfuls of snow.

'We're adjusting the saddle, comrade chief.'

'The saddle . . .' Auzen began, but did not finish. Behind him, passing around above, a horse fell into a snow-hole and rubbed its nose over the snow, beating at the hole with all its four hoofs. Three Red Army men held it by the tail while one pulled at the reins, himself sinking deeper and deeper into the snow.

'Fine sight!' said the military commissar. 'Things couldn't be worse. Fine sight!'

'Nikolai Yegorovich, stop grumbling,' Yefremov sat down on a stone. 'We've cleaned up the Mensheviks, beaten the dust out of them. There's not a trace left of their band. And crossing mountains isn't a parade. They're a real test, such crossings. Look at my lads scratching their heels on the stones. And smoking! They're actually smoking. I gave orders for no smoking. The devils have nothing to breathe, and they're bold enough to smoke.'

'But you're smoking yourself, you fool. . . .'

The riflemen scrambled upward, wrapping themselves in their long, cold, saturated greatcoats, their rifles slung across their shoulders and held with one hand at the back, hunter fashion. The rain overtook them, but, gazing ahead and seeing not the faintest sign of light and rest, they marched on more and more slowly, until at last they halted, clinging to boulders and listening to the muffled beat of hearts leaping across invincible barriers.

'We haven't taken their tiredness sufficiently into account,' said Yefremov. 'What do you say, military commissar?'

'You're tough!' Kononov answered. 'How many roads have you travelled? But some of these men are recruits. And you've completely overestimated their powers of endurance. Where will you put them to sleep?'

'Where put them? Budionny fashion, on the ground. Fist under the head.'

'That's just the point,' the military commissar said sadly. 'Well, and how are your men, Nikolai Elmarovich?'

'I've collected them all. Trust me for that! I've mustered every man. They're just driving up two packs now. *Abgemacht!* The top of the pass is just round the next bend. May I say something, military commissar?'

'Out with it!'

'We shall lose the detachment to-day.'

'Why do you think so?'

'Well, you look at them.'

The Red Army man striding along in front of them sat down, wiping away the sweat and groaning, panting as though his last breath were being pumped out of him.

'Hurry now, hurry!' Yefremov's voice came floating down from somewhere above.

'Alla Verdi!' the military commissar shouted furiously.

'Alla Verdi . . . Alla Verdi's wanted in front . . . Alla Verdi!' the words were passed down the windings of the detachment. The name went straight into the clouds, which were now embracing the lower edge of the track with their cotton-wool weight.

A rider emerged from the clouds. A felt cloak of princely splendour hung around his extremely thin, absurd shoulders. His rust-red face was streaming with the slanting rain. The horse shot up the hill and came to a halt beside the military commissar. Alla Verdi's real name was Mikan Hassan Shakrilov, but for years everybody had known him as Alla Verdi.

'Alla Verdi, is there water at the top of the pass?'

'No water,' Alla Verdi swiftly answered as he threw off his capuchin.

'Is there grass for the horses?'

'No grass.'

'Then what is there?' the military commissar asked, stroking the horse's neck.

'There's snow, there's stones, there's darkness,' Alla Verdi quickly answered, and turned his horse round.

A white outline approached them, lying just above head level, so that an outstretched knout would have reached it.

'Halt! Detachment, halt!'

'And here's the top of the pass,' said Yefremov. The rain flooded his pipe.

A so-called rest

When the Georgian Mensheviks raised an insurrection in Svanetia, their finest speaker, Kapaleishvili, lost his voice through incessantly and vainly repeating the same thing again and again. The white-green bands were burnt out and swept out of the forests of Cholura by an iron besom, and their remnants fled in disorder without hope of return.

Detachments of the Red Army marched in various directions clearing up the fragments of the bands. The season was late autumn. There is nothing more mournful than a mountain pass on an autumn night. A wind, the mountain's own desolate, prehistoric wind, was blowing everywhere. The shadows of the tremendous peaks swayed above the haze of the mist. Snow began to fall.

The Red Army men stood around in groups, pressing one against another. The artillery-men warmed their hands by thrusting them beneath the horses' manes and against their hot necks. No one could bring himself to sit down on the snow. They were faced with the prospect of standing all through the endless hours until morning. After each squall followed the silence peculiar to mountains. Not a bush, not a blade of grass stirred, for there was none throughout all the length of the pass. Stones and snow surrounded them. Such night quarters had no right to the peaceful assignation of hours intended for rest and sleep.

Wrapped in his cloak, Auzen wandered among the horses. He touched their backs, and the darkness devoured his distorted mouth and almost terrified eyes.

'This horse has been rubbed raw, my man,' he said. 'And the withers are chafed. What does that mean? It means the horsecloths are not being adjusted properly. When we get to the bottom again I'll warm you, my man.'

With an electric lamp he threw a beam of light on the trembling horses' legs, and stooped like a veterinary surgeon.

'Cuts, my man,' he said almost in a whisper. 'Cuts on the legs. Instead of leading the horses the men clung to their tails. When we get to the bottom I'll warm you.'

'The road's been nothing but stones,' the men answered out of the mist. 'Think of the places we've come through—no bridges, not even roads, having to ford all the rivers, and stones without number. And it's been hard for the men.'

With a challenging note in his voice Auzen replied into the mist:

'So it's been hard for the men, comrades! And how did we fight in Daghestan? Fifteen men were holding one gun, steadying it with ropes. At the twenty-seventh time of firing, I remember it exactly, there was a crash, and neither ropes nor gun were left. Three viorsts of precipice, and the gun went flying down from cliff to cliff until it buried itself. And there it remains sticking barrel upward to the present day. A plaything for the devil. . . .'

'We shall all be sticking barrel upward soon,' a voice came from the mist. 'We shall peg out before the morning. Neither sitting nor standing. . . .'

Auzen listened in silence.

'Comrade commander,' said Kurkov, a rifleman, with a greatcoat hanging like draperies around him. 'I sat a month in Khunzakh, and ate vetch with horseflesh in Daghestan, but this is worse. Judge for yourself: neither stump nor fire. . . .'

'My fingers are aching,' said another rifleman. 'My legs are giving way; it's reached my knees. I've jumped and jumped until I haven't the strength to jump any more.'

'My hands are frozen, I can't hold my rifle. If it were war now! But this torture when on a march is for God knows what.'

The voices came from all sides. The entire pass was grumbling with those hoarse, complaining voices.

'We couldn't have found a better spot to halt in all the world.'

'Now you start crying. . . .'

'You'll start yourself before long. There's bound to be snow, and we'll have had enough of the snowstorm before the morning for certain. We shall freeze like flies.'

The black cloak of the military commissar followed Auzen's cloak around.

'Nicolai Yegorich, what's to be done?' Auzen asked.

'Now you're asking! Listen!'

From out of the darkness came a sharp, creaking voice. Alla Verdi was telling some mountaineer's story. They went closer. Fragments of phrases reached their ears.

'The hunter said: "I shall crawl into the lair; when I catch the bear I shall jerk my legs . . ."'

The wind carried the following phrases in the other direction.

Then they heard the creak of his voice still closer, and the words grew more intelligible.

'". . . had he got a head or hadn't he? They went to his wife and asked: did your husband have a head or not? His wife said: I don't know whether he had a head or not, but I bought him a hat every year. . . ."'

The audience stamped their feet as though dancing a round dance.

'Alla Verdi!' came a shout from farther along. 'You're wanted at the staff. At once!'

The military commissar and Auzen passed along the bivouac. It was the most incredible bivouac they had ever known. The cold went wandering over their bodies as though through an empty room. Time stood still. Men ran about among the stones and cried out with the cold. Horses snorted and coughed. Men sat down impotently on the snow, their teeth chattering.

Unintelligible words, rattles, coughs, the sound of a fallen rifle, the creak of packs, were surrounded by the night. Cold, wind, hunger and weariness threw themselves upon the men as though upon their prey. No one hoped for the morning. Somewhere below were orests, great, dry, well-proportioned trees, bushes,—what fires could be lit! Somewhere below people were sleeping in houses, barred off with warm walls from this fine snow and endless darkness.

'The detachment will perish,' said Auzen. '*Abgemacht!* That's clear. What use are such night-quarters?'

'Nikolai Elmarovich,' said the military commissar, 'let's go to Yefremov. The position is so bad that it simply can't be allowed to go on.'

'*We must think of something.*'

Out of the wooden cartridge-case on his chest Alla Verdi drew sulphur threads and pieces of tarry wood.

'Here's wood, and I know where there are a few trees. I'll get you warm,' he said. 'I'll light a fire. . . .'

Yefremov pushed away Alla Verdi's hand and laid his own on the mountaineer's shoulder.

'Alla Verdi,' he said almost affectionately, 'do you remember when you got married? Ah? How you showed her to me and said: "This is my wife." "You couldn't have found anything worse," I said at the time. "All Vladikavkaz knows that straw. All the town ran after her, but you didn't know. . . ."'

'You spoke well . . . thank you. I don't want a wife like that. Thank you.'

'Alla Verdi, do you remember how we took Baku? How for three days you galloped with bared sabre, and shouted: "Baku, Baku!" And we took Baku. . . .'

'I remember, chief. . . .'

'Alla Verdi, we must think of something. . . .'

'We will think. . . .'

And they began to whisper together like a couple of inveterate conspirators.

Yefremov stood between Auzen and Kononov. The military commissar's blue cheeks had gone black with the cold. Auzen was almost weeping, why was not clear. He was not frozen.

'Fine business!' the military commissar said to Yefremov. 'The staff didn't take into account that we wouldn't be through the pass to-day. The horses have been worked off their legs. And the men too are ready for bed. But there's no bed for them. They're standing. This can't go on, Alexander Sergeevich, the detachment will perish. And you will be responsible, you . . . and I. We must think. . . .'

'I've been all round the bivouac,' said Auzen. 'I've never seen anything like it in all my life. I refuse to be responsible for the battery, there'll be nobody fit either to fire or to carry the packs. We must find some way out. . . .'

Yefremov emerged from his tent. The military commissar and the battery commander followed him with their eyes. Crowds swayed and crowds stood in the uncertain mist. The snow was no longer falling.

Suddenly, the distant crack of a rifle pierced the noisy suspense of the bivouac. In a moment all voices in the pass died away. . . . There was shooting going on below.

'Apparently,' said Yefremov, 'not all our Menshevik friends have given up the ghost. . . . They must be engaging us at the bend; did you hear?'

The firing came from somewhere just below the pass. The shots sounded from various directions.

'That's it,' Yefremov said, growing more cheerful. 'Send all the company and platoon commanders here. Nikolai Elmarovich, you take your guns and liven things up a bit with some shrapnel. And then grenades. We'll all soon be warm now. Good lads, the guards; they weren't caught napping. We'll remember this for posterity.'

Nikolai Elmarovich Auzen, Battery Commander, whose nerves were shattered during the World War

Nobody in the detachment would have believed that Nikolai Elmarovich was more afraid of the darkness than of anything else. And yet it was so. He was sure he would die at night-time. He had never said a word to anybody about his fear. Yet he went blue from head to foot with terror.

Point 815 of field regulations: the captured heights are immediately to be consolidated with artillery.

'Fire!' The midnight roar of the mountain gun burst over a mound of boulders. A weight of six and a half kilos struck against the stony bastion. The wall groaned. Shuddering and rumbling, invisible avalanches groaned on and on. Auzen's thin cheeks were turned livid by the explosion.

'Fire!'

All the nether gloom crawling under Auzen's feet roared out to meet him, thunderously rattling the echo of the shot between its stony palms.

During the previous day they had forded rivers. Afterwards, during a halt for rest they had greased the guns and shell-cases. Attention to everything, yet the horses had got cuts and chafes. Auzen's two eyes were not sufficient.

'Fire!'

The thunders recoiled upon them like the bursts of enemy shells; but the enemy were without guns now, were without even machine-guns. . . . Fear rose to his very heart, like those evening clouds. . . . It was necessary to aim at the stony mounds, then the stones and fragments of rock would pour down on the heads of the enemy.

And now the division was clear. Here was the Auzen whose bones and flesh were confused, were broken with mortal terror, in whose eyes tears rose from the intensity of his inner pain, a sick man fearful not for the fate of the detachment, not for himself, but only for the blows of his shattered, useless heart. And there was the other Auzen, standing like a devil in his black cloak, unshakably at the gun, without signallers, without communications, without range, taken by surprise, discomfited by the darkness—the Auzen at the service of the mountain artillery, the specialist who, if he were to die at that moment, could not be fully replaced by anyone else in the detachment. If it were not for this second Auzen, the Auzen of duty and will-power, the first Auzen would sit down by the gun, would crawl from the gun-carriage to the ground and would burst into tears, covering his face

with his hands, because in the whole world there was nothing he was more afraid of than darkness—not death, not pains, not battles—he was afraid only of darkness.

'Fire!'

The ruddy phantom of the shot, the spirit of the explosion could not overcome the night, which was accumulating with all its sombre weight upon the shoulders of one man. The night burned his shoulders through the cloak—or maybe it was the wind and the cold—the darkness settled in grains on his brow—or maybe it was the snow. Auzen longed for fire; not this momentary flashing and thundering, but good, kindly, long-lasting fire, overthrowing the darkness. He struck match after match; some would not burn at all, others flared up and went out. When he slept at night he covered his head.

'Fire!'

That was the voice of the other Auzen, whom all knew and loved; he took thought for men and horses, he knew his guns as he knew himself. As he knew himself! He hid his head in his cloak. The tears flowed down his cheeks. His heart numbly quivered like a vessel settling in shallows. But no one must know that Nikolai Elmarovich Auzen, a brilliant soldier, was afraid, to the point of tears, of the darkness. That was nothing to do with anyone. That was his personal affair. It was very strange, such a childish ailment in a full-grown man. It was very strange. Let it die with him and his accursed heart. With lips blue with cold—or with fear—he commanded:

'Fire!'

The savage blow of the mountain-gun struck against the stony wall. Invisible avalanches in all directions roared long and drearily.

Piotr Ogipovich Kurkov, Red Army soldier, speaks at a meeting devoted to reminiscences of the Civil War

I must tell you, it's most uninteresting, civilian comrades and comrades of the struggle, to fight at night. You can't be seen, that's true, but neither can you see a thing. We spent the night standing, as you might say. Someone had made a wrong estimate somehow, and, by Christ, we arrived at the most lonely spot on the top of the mountains. You couldn't sit or lie. Your cheek-bones froze up with the frost, and all our clothes were just worn to ribbons. I couldn't find myself, I was frozen all over. The weaker of the men began to screech like owls, by God! We couldn't make out what the commissar and the commander were up to.

Not a stump, not a fire, not a bush, not even a twig. And not a

drop of water either. The snow lay, and as for the boredom, we were just sick with it. And no matter how closely we pressed against one another, how much we breathed into our sleeves, we couldn't get warm. In a word, the top of the mountains, right up against the sky, and the end of the world. There'd be a weakening of discipline soon, I thought. Already some hadn't got strength enough to hold their rifles, and the bleariness in all eyes from the snow and the boredom was such that obviously we wouldn't get through to the morning without something serious happening. But wait and see what did happen. Whether some unfinished-off bands of white-green Mensheviks learnt of our situation through espionage, or what, I don't know; but up they came, right close up to us, and began to test out the sentries. They thought they were frozen stiff or fast asleep. But the sentries opened fire on them in sheer annoyance, because of the cold. Shots were exchanged.

And from the moment of the very first shots, you mark my words, the situation changed, and that at once in our favour. The very quietest among us began to remember their duty. And the command was given: 'Fall in!' And we all began to fall in, both those who could and those who couldn't, we all fell in at once. And we set off to outflank the enemy, and over such rocks, it was enough to frighten the life out of you. And we marched so fast that we flew from stone to stone, from the second to the fifth, and there was no stopping us. And we fired our rifles to get warm, and at first we fired haphazard-like, and then we began to carry out our military task without firing, and as we'd had nothing to eat that evening our legs were so light that we climbed straight up the face of the cliffs. Cliffs so terrible that when we looked at them in the morning we couldn't believe it was us who'd climbed them.

And there were no low spirits to be observed among any of us. I've been through a lot in the Caucasus, but it was the first time I'd seen anything like it. And nobody wanted to be left behind, and those who had screeched like owls now talked in their natural voices and cursed with all their breath. We smashed the Menshevik bands completely, and not a trace of them was left. We cleared the road for the whole detachment and then sat down to rest on some rocks, and we didn't need any fire, the steam rose from our greatcoats as though from a samovar. We'd all got warm while scrambling over the rocks and trying to come to grips with the enemy. But he had vanished as if into water. That always happens when the outflanking manœuvre is sound. The enemy loses his position and, if he's lightly equipped, flees into a more remote spot, and if he's got a baggage-

train then he leaves it behind for us. But in this case evidently he was lightly equipped. And when we had driven off our class enemy of course we entered his village and slept and ate there in the warmth. Of course the artillery was a great help to us. I've eaten vetch thirty days in khunzakh, but I've never seen such a battle. And in khunzakh too the artillery was a great help. But that's interesting only from inside, but from outside fighting at night's unpleasant. It's not so bad if you're killed, of course, because it's dark, but it's worse if you're wounded, because they don't send out for you at once and collect you, possibly not till the next day.

Fragment from the report made by the Military Commissar, Nikolai Yegorevich Kononov

I have to report that with two sections of the N. mountain battery and an incomplete two companies of the N. riflemen's regiment we marched up the river Tskhenis-Talheli and arrived at nightfall at the top of the Latpari pass. . . .

During the march the morale of both men and commander personnel was excellent. After a very exhausting and unbroken advance, having as objective the liquidation of the white-green bands on which I have already reported in detail, the morale was weakened somewhat, the chief reason for this being physical tiredness beyond the men's powers of endurance. . . .

The march to the top of the pass was not planned in agreement with the staff of the N. detachment, and we arrived at the pass towards nightfall. At the pass there proved to be neither wood nor grass, it was not even possible to make tea and feed the men. We had reckoned on crossing the pass, but in this we were not successful.

The strong wind common to such a locality was blowing, and snow peculiar to high mountains was falling, with the result that the men began to lie down on the bare stones; and by the morning many of them might have been frozen to death. There was no shelter whatever from the wind and snow. Our wet greatcoats were as stiff as boards.

Examination of the horses revealed that five were chafed and six had bruises and cuts on their legs. The guns were in perfect order. Four of the men were unable to march to the pass, and other sick cases were left behind at Tsager, after which not a man fell out. There were no complaints of mountain sickness.

Some time after midnight a white-green band approached from the north, and attacked our outposts. We entered into battle with them, opening fire from two guns. The two platoons sent to outflank

the enemy climbed the inaccessible cliffs behind which the enemy was sheltering and put him to flight.

The band retreated in the direction of Ushkulia, in order not to be cut off in the Inguri valley. Without doubt the Gelilyani detachment will continue the pursuit. We have no wounded. The band's losses are unknown.

The men's morale is excellent.

All of them, though freezing with wind and cold, at once took up their positions and got themselves warm in the battle, especially those who took part in the outflanking movement, for you would have to see the cliffs in order to realize the inaccessibility of the places reached by our heroic riflemen.

The commanding officers acted without panic, and battery commander Auzen opened fire from the guns with especial rapidity and covered the march of the outflanking platoons, displaying extreme resolution and fighting spirit.

The man Piotr Kurkov particularly distinguished himself, being the first to make his way up the cliffs during the march to outflank the enemy.

The detachment is at present resting in the village of Larkhor, Kalsky commune, in the valley of the Inguri, at its junction with the river Khalde-Chala. Communication has been established between the staff of the N. detachment and the local executive committee. There is a shortage of tobacco. The men are a little disgruntled. . . .

Alexander Sergeevich Yefremov, Commander of the Detachment

'Have you written your report on the battle?' Yefremov asked the military commissar as they were resting in the village of Larkhor. He sat with his tunic unbuttoned, and his broad face, pitted with smallpox, maintained a concentratedly mischievous look. From the street, blocked with extraordinary towers and houses, came an ordinary Red Army song. The artillery-men were washing their horses by the stream.

'Yes, I have,' said Kononov.

'Tear it up before it's too late. There wasn't any fight. . . .'

Kononov's eyes narrowed to their limits as he fixed them on the bridge of Alexander Sergeevich's nose.

'What are you getting at?' he asked. 'What game are you playing now?'

'Tear up your report,' Yefremov slowly said. 'There wasn't any battle. There was an alarm, but that's not the same. Did you see even one single bandit?'

'No,' the military commissar answered, frowning. 'I didn't. But then who was it opened fire on us from the cliffs, in your view? Was that an echo? A trick of nature?'

'Echo or not, have you counted our wounded, or seen any dead?'

'No,' the military commissar quietly replied, and rubbed his knitted brows. 'But then who fired at us?'

'No one fired at us, but someone fired into the air. If I tell you you won't believe me. . . .'

'Well?'

'The man who fired, brother . . . What are you staring at me like that for? It wasn't I who fired, it was Alla Verdi.'

'What? But who gave him orders to?'

'I did,' Yefremov said, wrapping his tunic around him. 'Remember the situation: the men were freezing, the detachment would have perished. And what would you have done, whom would you have told? I sent for Alla Verdi and suggested to him: "D'you remember how you were on the point of marrying a carrion?" "I remember," he said, "and thank you for opening my eyes." "D'you remember," I asked, "how you and I took Baku?" "I remember," he said. "Well, if you haven't forgotten that, remember what I'm about to say to you. The detachment is dead to all feeling. . . . You go into the mountains and open fire, provoke an alarm. And I'll get the men jumping to it. They'll be warmed up in no time." And as soon as he set his rifle cracking over the cliffs they all stood to arms like angels. Was I right in acting so, do you think? You yourself said: "The position can't be worse. Who'll answer for it? You." You pointed your finger at me. "And I," You pointed your finger at yourself. And now look at them. They're not a detachment, they're model soldiers. They're singing songs. They're bursting with fighting spirit. Tear up your report, it's pointless. . . .'

'But do you think you were right in doing it?' asked the military commissar.

'And do you think I wasn't?' Yefremov said, and a cloud of blue smoke enveloped his repellently pockmarked face.

Mikan Hassan Shakrilov, whom everybody called Alla Verdi

He halted Auzen's dun horse on the timbered bridge over the Inguri. Auzen stared at him with haughtily empty eyes. In the daytime this was the customary Auzen, the observant, smart-looking, cautious, all-knowing artillery-man. Before him stood an old moun-

taineer, long a fellow-traveller with the detachment, its guide and interpreter.

'Thank you, chief,' Shakrilov said, putting his hand to his heart.

'What are you thanking me for? Aren't you fully awake yet?' Auzen said. 'Let go of my horse.'

'I will in a moment. Thank you for not killing me; you fired a little to one side. . . .'

'I fired at you?' Auzen asked, bending down from his saddle and staring at the mountaineer's ancient beard. 'When did I?'

'When you fired from your gun, the mountain poured down on my head, and all but killed me. The stones rolled down and passed by me; they kept falling a long time; if you had fired once more it would have been the end of Shakrilov. Thank you. . . . You fired well, you fired honestly. . . . Ride on. . . . I'm gone.'

And he pushed at the horse and, smiling, strode across the bridge. Looking back, Auzen rode on, and his dun horse dribbled over the snaffle and looked back, like his master.

Auzen glanced up at the sky. The clouds were not underfoot like those of yesterday. They floated high above his head. They could not be reached with his sabre, as they had been reachable yesterday. They could be reached only from a rifle or from his 76.2 mm. mountain gun, with a shell weighing 6.5 kilos, an effective range of seven kilometres, carried on seven packs, and with its equipment weighing 650 kilos.

AHMED ALI

OUR LANE

I USED to live in Chelon ka Koocha. The door of my room was divided into two halves, and by closing the lower one the upper half was turned into a window. This window opened on the narrow road. In front was the shop of Siddiq, the Banya, and adjoining it was the shop of Aziz, the carpenter. And round about were the shops of the Kahaars (the palanquin bearers), the druggist, the Paanwala, and a few other shops, like the Butcher's, the Bisaati's (one who sells all sorts of bric-à-brac), and the sweetmeat seller's.

People could go to other localities through our Mohalla. And all sorts of men passed below my window. Sometimes a person dressed all in white went by finding relief from the scorching summer sun under his umbrella. Sometimes a person rigged out in English clothes went by stepping lightly over the sprinkled water or quickly jumping away as someone threw water on the road, avoiding the urchins or glaring at them angrily for gazing and staring at him. Sometimes the passer-by would get exasperated and would raise his stick or umbrella to strike the boys; but they would run away and shout:

'See, what a sight, boys!'

Then the gruff voice of Mirza, the milk-seller, would be heard:

'What are you up to, you rogues! Have you nothing to do at home?'

And if someone were near, Mirza would complain to him:

'Look at their mothers. How they leave their children to roam about like consecrated bulls. And the rogues have no other work besides swearing and making mischief.'

And his small red eyes would glow, and scratching his triangular beard he would turn to some customer and take out curds from the earthen pot or milk from the iron cauldron, and putting a little cream on top of it would pass it on to him.

They said that Mirza came of good stock. His father had turned him out of the house when still a boy for not remembering his lessons; and after roaming about aimlessly for some days Mirza opened a shop. His father asked him a number of times to forgive him and come back home; but Mirza refused. Then he got married; and his business began to flourish. His 'Peras' (sweets made of cream) were renowned for their excellence throughout the city; and his milk was always delicious. Whenever a person came to buy milk he tossed it from an

'aabkhora' (an earthen cup) into a bowl and back again with a swinging movement until it swished and started frothing and bubbling. Then he cut the cream from the top of the milk so skilfully with his 'khapcha' (a sort of a big flat circular spoon) that the milk was not disturbed at all.

Sometimes his wife sat in the shop. She had become old. Her face was wrinkled; her back had bent; and her gums were toothless. Her broad forehead and fair complexion proclaimed that she came of a good family.

But now their business had become slack, as they could not work hard on account of old age. Their only son was dead, and there was no one to lend them a helping hand.

During the days of Non-co-operation when the movement for freedom was surging like a wave from one end of the country to the other, Mirza's son took part in a procession together with his friends. The air was ringing with the shouts of *Bandé Matram* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai*. At the Clock Tower a whole battalion of Tommies waited, armed to the teeth. The Superintendent of Police, the Deputy Commissioner and a few other Englishmen stood watching nervously the fury of the mob and that demonstration of national anger. The people wanted to go forward, but the soldiers did not allow them. The people rushed to break through the line of soldiers, and the Deputy Commissioner gave the order to open fire. Under the shower of bullets many were killed, and Mirza's son was one of them.

When after a long time they were allowed to take away the dead, his friends brought the body of Mirza's son home.

All the shops were closed and the lane was desolate and silent. The winter sun shone ashy and pale. The smell of putrefaction came from the gutters which had not been cleaned. When the dead body was brought in Mirza and his wife were completely stunned. They could not believe for a moment that their son who was alive a little while ago, who had been laughing and that very morning had prepared the sweets and had rinsed and washed the cauldron, who had changed and gone to see his friends, was no more alive and was dead. They looked at the corpse besmeared with blood over and over again; and Mirza's wife embraced it and began to rend the air with her cries. People tried to take her away, but she would not be separated from her son's dead body.

'Ah, my darling, my loved one,' she wailed; and sometimes a cry burst from her lips and she moaned:

'May God destroy these Farangis. They have murdered my loved one. May they die.'

Mirza rushed in and out of the house like a madman.

Siddiq Banya had opened his shop; and when Mirza passed by, his hair all dishevelled, Siddiq called out and inquired:

'What a pity, brother. What happened after all?'

There was no sign of tears in Mirza's eyes; but his face was a picture of pain.

'I am done for. My everything, my son, is dead.'

And he walked away towards the house.

The customers who were standing in front of the shop asked of Siddiq the cause of his death. Siddiq bent forward and cast a glance at the receding figure of Mirza. A strong gust of wind blew and the lane was full of dust. A tattered bit of paper rose in the air and tumbling and tossing, began to descend again. Mirza's long hair waved in the wind; and he vanished in the by-lane.

'Happened? He had gone to non-co-operate, and was shot down. Why won't they mind their own business? Serves them right to go against the Government. He was a well-built, handsome young man; but he fell a prey to these Hell-ants and Khadderites.'

As he talked he put a spoon in the mouth of a pot. Many pots were fixed side by side in the wall and looked like a dove-cot. Taking out some cereal Siddiq pushed it towards a customer. The customer who was listening to Siddiq nonchalantly began to tie it in a piece of cloth. Suddenly he happened to look at the cereal, and said:

'I say, Bashsha, what is this you are giving me? I had asked for "arhar." Make haste or my wife will shout at me.'

In the house Mirza's wife was beating her breasts, and was crying loudly and cursing both the English and Gandhi. When Yaamin's mother heard of the accident she rushed to condole. She had also lost a young son who was crushed under a falling wall; and she was now bringing up his children by doing the work of a seamstress. Both of them embraced and wept and cried; and Mirza's wife was consoled a little. . . . At last they took him away to bury him. The night was dark and gloomy. The wind blew cold; and the Mohalla was more chilly on account of damp. In the dim light of kerosene lamps the whole place looked dreary and desolate; and not a live thing was visible on the road.

For some time after this incident one could often hear the sad voice of Mirza's wife singing:

Suddenly the times have changed,
And there's no peace for my soul. . . .

But then she began to remain silent, and busied herself with work.

* * * * *

In the 'deorhi' (vestibule) of my house was an old date-palm tree. At one time it used to be heavy with fruit, and the bees flocked round it descending right to the earth in search of food. Birds came and perched on its expansive boughs, and stray pigeons rested there at night. But now its leaves had withered, the boughs had seared and fallen, and its trunk, ugly and dark, stood like a scarecrow in the darkness of night. No more did the birds flock on it now, no more were the bees attracted towards it. Only now and then some raven perched on its bare top and croaked, croaked itself hoarse; or some kite sat there and crying its shrill cries flew away. In the growing light of dawn its trunk shone out against the sky; but in the sunset it gradually faded away from sight and was lost in the darkness. Often as I entered the house at night my eye fell on its thick and ugly trunk, and followed it up towards the sky. The stars were shining, and in a line with its top was the end-star of the Great Bear; but the tree trunk stood between me and the sky, and I could not see the expanse of the shining stars.

* * * * *

A mad woman frequently came to our Mohalla. Some one had shorn her hair; and her head looked like a walnut on her heavy and well-built body. God-fearing people often dressed her in clothes; but after a few hours she would become naked again. Either someone took off her clothes or she herself tore them away. Saliva always ran down her mouth, and her arms hung stiff by her sides. She often pranced and capered on the road, and mumbled incoherently like the dumb.

The moment she set foot in our Mohalla a whole crowd of boys gathered round her and followed her clapping and jeering and pelting her with stones, shouting 'Pugly, Pugly' (mad woman). The woman helplessly cried 'Ain, Ain,' and hid in corners. Whenever this happened in front of Mirza's shop, he shouted at the boys: 'You idiots, haven't you got to die? Get away from here. Run away.' But after a little while the boys would collect together again.

Often even the grown-ups cracked jokes at her. She was rather ugly, but she was not old. Her belly was bulging out, and often Munnoo, who belonged to a well-to-do family, but had now turned a loafer, put his hand on her belly and asked her:

'Well, when art thou going to give a baby?'

And the mad woman would utter a wild and painful cry, and thrusting her hands forward would turn towards some passer-by or shopkeeper and point at Munnoo. In her cracked, ugly voice was a request and prayer, the request some helpless person makes to his

superior or someone stronger than him to forgive and save him. But other people also joined in the fun and laughed merrily. . . . They said that some men had dragged her away to the Old Fort one night and since then her belly began to bulge out. . . .

* * * * *

There are thousands of people in India who do not know any other reality besides eating, drinking, and dying. They are born, they grow up, earn, eat, drink, and die. They do not bother about anything else. They have no sense of the grandeur of life, they are like slaves who are not conscious of any other reality beyond labour and death. For them the days are created for work and the nights for sleep, and death alone can bring them salvation from living. . . .

Another thing which was very conspicuous in our Mohalla were dogs, sickly and starving. Many were suffering from mange, and their flesh showed through their skins. They bared their sharp teeth and scratched their backs, or closed in mortal combat over a bone in front of the butcher's shop. They came stealthily sniffing the gutters with their tails between their legs, and quarrelled over refuse meat. But often it so happened that just as they had espied some piece of meat or some bone the kites swooped down and carried it away. Then pressing their tails between their legs they sniffed at the spot, like a man who has realized that he is being made fun of; or they tried to hide their shame by quarrelling with each other.

* * * * *

Early in the morning was heard the voice of Shera, the hawker of parched gram. He went about from lane to lane hawking his grains which he carried in a bag slung across his back. He was about forty years of age, and very lean and thin. Wrinkles had already appeared on his face, and there were grey hairs in his close-cropped beard. In his eyes which had dark hollows round them, hunger and poverty, misery and squalor were reflected clearly. On his eyeballs ran thin red threads, which appear either on account of intoxication or fever and starvation for days, and were visible from a distance. On his head he wore a dirty cloth cap, on his back hung a tattered shirt, and through his meagre loin-cloth showed his thin, bony legs.

Years ago he had come to our city from some neighbouring district in search of a job. At night he used to lie down in a mosque, and wandered on the roads during the day. But like the towns and villages the big cities have hardly any jobs to offer; and Shera could not procure any work.

Mir Amaanullah used to come for prayers to this mosque. Shera related to him his tale of woe. Mir Sahab took pity on him and took him to his house. Shera was an honest and industrious man; and after some time Mir Sahab gave him five rupees.

'I am giving you this money,' said the Mir Sahab, 'so that you may start some business. You may return this money whenever you have it; otherwise it's all right.'

Shera started hawking Kabuli gram and 'daal seo.' In a short time many people of the locality came to know him, and he started having a good sale. Within one year Shera returned Mir Sahab's money; called his wife and children from home; rented a small house, and was very happy.

Just at that time Abdul Rashid was condemned to death for the murder of Swami Shardhanand. All the Musalmaans of the city were furious and excited. On the day of the execution thousands of men had collected outside the jail. They all wanted to rush the gate and get in somehow. But when the police refused to hand over Abdul Rashid's dead body, the fury of the mob was beyond control. They just wanted to demolish the jail and to bury that Ghazi (one who has killed an 'infidel') in a manner befitting a Shaheed (one who is killed in the cause of Islam).

Shera had gone to the Juma Masjid that day on business. The sky was covered with a cloud of dust, and the roads looked deserted and desolate like a graveyard. He met a number of hungry dogs licking the refuse and offal. In a gutter lay a dead pigeon. Its neck had bent to one side, its stiff, blue legs were sticking upwards, its wings were wet in the dirty water, and one of its eyes which was visible glared in an ugly and sickening way. Shera stopped to look at it. Just then from the turn in the road rose the cries of the 'Kalma' (an Arabic verse recited when taking a dead body to the graveyard). People were bringing a dead body on their shoulders. As the funeral drew near the crowd at the back became thicker, so much so that far and wide only human heads could be seen. The crowd had run away with Abdul Rashid's dead body. Shera went forward and began to take turns in carrying the dead body. At the same time the police came down the road, stopped the funeral procession, and arrested a number of persons. Shera was one of them; and he was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment for taking part in that 'riot.'

Now he had come out of jail; but his customers had forgotten his once familiar voice, and he did not have any money to start his old business again. Some people collected two rupees and gave them to him; and thus Shera could again start some business; and now he went

about hawking parched gram. But his voice had lost its old resonance; and misery and sorrow were heard in every cry he uttered. Still, as they heard his voice, the children rushed to buy gram, and he took them out by handfuls from his bag, weighed and handed them over.

* * * * *

Another frequenter of our Mohalla, who came every night, was a blind beggar. He was short in stature, and his small beard was always dust-begrimed. He carried a broken bamboo stick in his hand with which he felt his way. He looked insignificant and futile like a swarm of flies over a dust-heap or the skeleton of some dead cat. But his voice had a sadness and pathos which spoke of the transience of life. It came as if from far away on the winter nights, bringing with it gloom and hopelessness. I have never heard a sadder voice and it is still ringing in my ears. Bahadur Shah's poem which he used to sing brought back the memory of the olden days when Hindustan had not been shackled in its new sorrows. His voice did not merely convey the grief of Bahadur Shah, the last of the Moghuls, but in it was heard the plaint of India's slavery. His voice came far away:

> I am tired of this tempestuous storm they call life;
> We'd welcome death in preference to such living.

But the well-to-do people of the Mohalla shrank from giving him alms for he was addicted to 'charas.'

* * * * *

On a summer night at about ten of the clock, I was sitting in my room. Most of the shops had closed; but the 'Kavabi' (one who sells meat cutlets) and Mirza had not yet closed theirs. On either side of the road people were lying on their 'charpais.' Some had gone to sleep, but some were still chatting. The air blew dry and hot; and the smell of putrefaction rose from the gutters. Underneath the wooden plank jutting out of Mirza's shop sat a cat as if in wait for some prey. A man came and bought milk worth an anna, and after drinking it threw the 'aabkhora' on the ground. The cat stole out of her place of hiding and began to lick the 'aabkhora.'

Just then Kallo passed beneath my window followed by Munnoo. Kallo was young. She was dark, but youth had imparted to her face a freshness and glow. She swayed her body when she walked, drunk with youth; and her figure was slim and lithe with the bursting of life. She served as a maidservant at Munsif Sahab's whose wife had brought her up since childhood. Now she had become a widow, her

husband having died some three years ago. But the young men of the Mohalla had their eyes on her all the time.

When she reached the corner of the lane, Munnoo caught her by the hand. Furious with shame and anger, Kallo shouted:

'You lump of flesh! God's scourge on you! How dare you lay hands on a lonely woman!'

'Dost thou mean to waste thy youth?' said Munnoo.

'Get away. Let go my hand!'

Near by on the roof of a house two cats began to fight. Kallo gave a jerk and freed her hand.

'Thou, beaten-with-a-broom, mayst thou die young! Thou thinkst I have no strength. I shall have thee beaten so that thou shalt remember for the rest of thy life.'

Mirza, who had gone inside the house for a minute, came back just then. He could hear Kallo's last sentence, and asked her:

'What's the matter, Kallo?'

But without once looking back Kallo vanished in the alley.

Aziz the carpenter, who was sleeping in front of his shop, was awakened by the noise. When he saw Munnoo standing there he inquired:

'What's wrong, Munnoo?'

Munnoo stood there crestfallen and injured. His face had suddenly gone dry and looked thin and long. His eyes were venomous and sharp like the eyes of a snake.

On a heap of dust and refuse the eyes of a cat gleamed in the dark for a moment and vanished again. Munnoo turned to Aziz and said in a sad, hurt voice:

'Nothing. It was just that Kallo.'

'Could you strike any bargain?'

'O no. Couldn't get at her. She ran away. But where can she get away?'

The cats were still quarrelling on the roof. They purred fiercely and then screamed and caterwauled, as if they were going to devour each other. Then one of them mewed loudly and ran away and the purring tom-cat followed at her heels.

Aziz the carpenter asked Munnoo to sit down on his bed, and produced a 'biri' (a sort of a cigarette with the tobacco wrapped in a leaf) from under his pillow and pushed it towards Munnoo. But Munnoo took out a silver cigarette-case from the pocket of his shirt.

'Well,' said Munnoo, 'here is a cigarette which you will never forget for the whole of your life.'

And he took out a cigarette and gave it to Aziz.

'I say, whose is it that you have pinched this time?'

'What can I lack? Whom God denies, Asifud Daula supplies. And if I had just relied on Allah, life would have been miserable.'

'I say, talk sense. Fear Him. You will have to pay for this by burning in Hell fire.'

'O, go away. Don't be an ass. Eat, drink, and be merry; that's all I know. More than this my master hasn't taught me. I believe in twisting my moustache and idling my time away. Even if Hell exists, we shall see when we are there. Why should we worry now?'

'Stop, stop. Don't utter such blasphemies. Everything comes to pass. And then you will forget all this boasting.'

'All right. Now that you have started talking in this vein, I am off.'

'Just a minute. You see, something has been worrying me for a long time. Swear that you will tell me.'

'All right, you won't have cause to complain. By Allah, I will tell you.'

'Tell me, why do you steal?'

'O no, this wasn't agreed.'

'Look here, you can't go back on your word.'

'All right, I have lost. To tell you the truth, I would never have stolen anything. You know that my relations are rich people.'

'That is why I wonder so much.'

'Well, I had a cousin. The boy was rather handsome. It was about ten years ago. I sort of fell out with him. We used to read in the same class; and he went and told the master and had me punished. The devil got into me. I said, all right, if I don't have my revenge, I will shave my moustache in urine. One day I stole his satchel. There were very expensive things inside it. That's how it began. Another time I took fancy to an uncle's cigarette-case. Ask him for it I could not; so I pinched it. After this I became adept in my business. And if you want to know the truth, these people will never give anything to the poor. You can get things out of them only in this fashion.'

'But if you are caught?'

'Again you have started asking those silly things. I am off now, or at home there will be a quarrel for nothing.'

Saying this he got up, and slapping Aziz loudly on the back he went away. . . .

* * * * *

Hisaan-ur-Rahman used to call the 'azaan' in the mosque of our Mohalla. He was a strong, well built man. His complexion was

dark; and his beard was dyed red with henna. His head was bald, but on the sides and on the nape hung long hair. A big callosity had appeared in the centre of his forehead as a result of constantly rubbing his forehead on the floor during prayer, and shone conspicuous from a distance. Often he passed beneath my window clearing his throat loudly. He wore a loose khaddar pyjama and 'kurta' (a kind of loose shirt without any collar), and on his shoulder he carried a big red, painted kerchief. There was that rare resonance and charm in his voice which is seldom bestowed on man. His 'azaan' was famous far and near, and his voice could be heard in several Mohallas. Even his clearing of his throat before he called the azaan was audible at a distance.

They called him Balaal Habshi, after one of Mohammed's companions who was renowned for the glory of his voice, a negro. They had many things in common—their glorious voices and their dark complexions.

One evening I was sitting alone on the roof of my house. Thin clouds were spread over the sky, and the sunlight fell on them and dyed them a dirty red, for the atmosphere was not clear, and the dust and dirt of the city, and far away the smoke of factory chimneys, was floating in the air. The hum of the city's noises came from the distance like the buzz of flies. And everywhere there was a heartrending hopelessness, that painful gloom which is the distinguishing feature of our cities, which conveys to us the sense of poverty and filth, of the futility and helplessness of life. A pigeon flew across the dust-covered, dirty clouds, and was lost in their toneless colours. From afar sounded the sirens and the railway engines. Flocks of pigeons rose from the high roofs and minarets of the city, towered above, and settled down again. As far as the eye could see, ugly and filthy buildings jutted their heads out to the skies. Far and wide there was a sense of the futility and indifference of life. Here and there some two or three storeyed houses were being built, and their wooden structures stood between the vision and the sky; but the colours of the bamboos and girders did not jar on the eyes and were lost in the tones of the clouds and looked hazy and dim. Just then Hisaan-ur-Rahman began to clear his throat, and his ringing golden voice filled the atmosphere. There was that sadness yet peace in the voice that my boredom vanished and was changed into a silent gloom. There was neither glory nor greatness in that voice, but it communicated a sense that life is transient and ephemeral, that this world is fleeting and impermanent and its lovers are dogs, that this life is meaningless and vain just as the dust and the dirt and the smoke on the face of the

clouds. A prey to my futile thoughts I listened to the azaan until it neared the end and the silence-producing sound of 'Haiya-alas-salah, Haiya-alas-salah' began to ring in the ears. Then the sound of 'Haiya-alal-falah, Haiya-alal-falah,' rose on the wind, then so gradually came to a close that one did not feel at all that the voice had stopped, and it seemed that silence had always been reigning over the earth, a deep silence which seemed to tell me that somewhere very far away from this earth there is another world in which the Beginning and the End are the same and this universe is vain and meaningless. The voice was lost in the ether as the earth comes to an end on the horizon and the sky begins and no one can distinguish where the earth ends and the sky begins.

And I sat thinking how well this azaan symbolizes our life. There were the same helplessness and futility in it which have become an inseparable part of our minds and souls, the same hopelessness and gloom, the same dread of objective reality which force us to lead a subjective life. Ignoring the world we dream inflated dreams of Creation and the End; forgetting man we spend our time in quest of God. And everything of our life leads us towards it, all our songs sing to us the same lullabies. There are shackles on our feet, but we have become so used to their rubbing that they do not seem to us an objective reality. Our hands are fettered, there are iron rings round our necks, our tongues have been tied, but we are oblivious of everything. Our bodies have become numb, our souls are rapt in slumber; and we are happy in our helplessness and lead a senseless life of indifference, until Death drags us into her arms. Our glory and shame are not different, our life and death are just the same, and like the azaan we change from life to death so quietly that no one can say that we were really alive or it was all a mere shadow and delusion, and we, the loved ones of Death, drunk with its lullabies from times immemorial, had been sleeping a sound and peaceful sleep. . . .

* * * * *

One night some three or four persons were talking at Mirza's shop. One of them was Aziz, the carpenter, the other was the Kavabi, and a few others had collected in the shop. The hukka was placed before them, and they were pulling at it by turns.

'Well, "yaar,"' one of them was saying, 'I see and wonder at His glory in everything.'

At this my curiosity was aroused and I began to listen attentively. In the meantime a customer came and asked for five pice worth of milk, and stood aside. Mirza took an 'aabkhora' and reached his ladle to the cauldron to take out milk.

'The other day I was going through Chandni Chowk,' the voice said continuing its story, 'when I saw a young cow approaching from in front. Just at that spot lay a small child. The cow stopped when she came near the child. I said to myself, let's see what does she do now. But to my surprise she put all her four feet together and took a jump and went clean across the child. There was a manifestation of His glory in that animal's wisdom.'

One of Mirza's hands was near the cauldron; in the other he held the 'aabkhora,' and he was staring into the speaker's face.

'Great is His glory,' said Aziz.

Mirza filled his bowl with milk and began to toss it.

'Mysterious are His ways,' another began. 'Once Hazrat Suleiman (the prophet Solomon) was ordered to build a palace. Well, he began to make preparations. The jins collected colossal stones and slabs in no time; and the work was started. You know how quickly the jins work. So high to-day, so much higher to-morrow—within a few days the palace rose to the sky. Hazrat Suleiman went there every day to see if any one was neglecting his work and wasting his time. Well, then one day the palace was ready. Only the bits of stones and pieces of slabs remained to be cleared. The next day Hazrat Suleiman again rested his behind on his stick and issued the order to clear the lumber. But in the meantime some other order had been issued from There. Now see the manifestation of His glory that while the palace was being cleaned of all the lumber the worm set at Hazrat Suleiman's stick. But he stood there firmly. Until at last the worm had eaten the whole of the stick and set to work at its top. But he was completely oblivious, and the stick fell down in ashes, and he himself was dead. But what I am wondering is who will now throw out those pieces of stones and bits of slabs?'

Aziz held the stick of the hukka in his hand near the mouth and was gazing at the speaker. One of Mirza's hands which held the bowl was raised in the air and the other one with the 'aabkhora' was lower down near the floor, and he was lost in the story.

I burst out laughing, but suddenly fell to thinking who will really throw out these 'pieces of stones and bits of slabs.'

A strong gust of wind blew and the kerosene lamp went out leaving the road in total darkness. And just then the people got up from Mirza's shop and began to disperse; and I too went inside the house. . . .

(Translated from the Urdu by the author.)

H. MALLALIEU

POEM

He is aware of our own land, its downs,
The rusty chalk of long-neglected quarries;
His ear's familiar with the noise of towns,
His brain absorbed by purely English worries.
    He has seen the star-shot lake
    And the startled heron take
Its frightened wings above the sandy marsh.
It is not the fabric but the flag which he denies:
He knows our histories and our apathies and the harsh
Fact that they are lies.

He asks not for your praise that he has learnt
Love for the flooded meadows of the plain;
He does not envy the profits you have earnt
Within the limited effulgence of your reign.
    Nor flatter his respectful eye
    With thoughtful lack of pay,
He knows how accurate is the perspective
Drawn through the poisonous tears of strife:
He knows that prolonged hunger grows vindictive
Yet asks not death but life.

The futile years, the bourgeois's overdraft
Have cast their lean spell upon the spring,
Blinded the beast which swallowed the last tuft
And sent its squint-eyed children scurring.
    But the ace is up their sleeve
    War may bring reprieve
And their own hands shall finish off their death,
He and his children shall be sacrificed to make
Refuge for ants; but through the putrid, gaseous breath
New worlds shall break.

SEVEN ENGLISH STORIES

V. S. PRITCHETT

MANY ARE DISAPPOINTED

HEADS down to the wind from the hidden sea the four men were cycling up a deserted road in the country. Bert, who was the youngest, dreamed:

'You get to the pub, and there's a girl at the pub, a dark girl with bare arms and bare legs in a white frock, the daughter of the house, or an orphan—may be it's better she should be an orphan—and you say something to her, or better still, you don't say anything to her—she just comes and puts her arms round you, and you can feel her skin through her frock, and she brings you some beer and she knows what you want because she wants it too and the other chaps aren't there and the people don't say anything except laugh and go away because it's all natural and she doesn't have a baby. Same at the next place, same anywhere, different place, different girl, or same girl—same girl always turning up, always waiting. Dunno how she got there. Just slips along without you knowing it and waiting like all those songs. . . .'

And there the pub was. It stood on the crown of the long hill, straight ahead of them, a small red-brick house with outbuildings and a single chimney smoking in gasps against the strong white light which seemed to be thrown up by great reflectors from the hidden sea.

'There's our beer, Mr. Blake,' shouted Sid on his slim pink racing tyres, who was the first to see it, the first to see everything. The four men glanced up.

Yes, there's our beer, they said. Our ruddy beer. They had been thinking about it for miles. A pub at the cross-roads, a pub where the old Roman road crossed this road that went on to the land's end, a funny place for a pub but a pub all right, the only pub for ten miles at Harry's ruddy Roman road, marked on the map which stuck out of the backside pocket of Harry's breeches. Yes, that was the pub, and Ted, the oldest and the married one slacked on the long hill and said all he hoped was that the Romans had left a drop in the bottom of the barrel for posterity.

When they had left in the morning there had been little wind. The skylarks were over the spring fields and the sun itself was like one of their steel wheels flashing in the clean sky. Sid was the first,

but Harry with the stubborn red neck and the close dull fair curls was the leader. In the week he sat in the office making the plan. He had this mania for Roman roads. 'Ask our Mr. Newton,' they said, 'the man with the big head and the brain.' They had passed through the cream-walled villages and out again to pick up once more the shrill singing of the larks; and then cloud had covered the sun, west of Handleyford the country had emptied and it was astonishing to hear a bird. Reeds were in the small meadows. Hedges crawled uncut and there had been no villages, only long tablelands of common and bald wiry grass for sheep and the isolated farm with no ivy on the brick.

Well, they were there at last. They piled their bicycles against the wall of the house. They were shy before these country places. They waited for Ted. He was walking the last thirty yards. They looked at the four windows with their lace curtains, the varnished door. There was a chicken in the road and no sound but the whimper of the telegraph wire on the lonely hill. In an open barn was a cart tipped down, its shaft white with the winter's mud, and last year's swallow nests, now empty, were under the eaves. Then Ted came up and when he had piled his bicycle, they read the black sign over the door. 'Tavern,' it said. A funny old-fashioned word, Ted said, that you didn't often see.

'Well,' Sid said, 'a couple of pints all round?'

They looked to Harry. He always opened doors, but this door was so emphatically closed that he took off his fur gauntlet first and knocked before he opened it. The four men were surprised to see a woman standing behind the door, waiting there as if she had been listening to them. She was a frail, drab woman, not much past thirty, in a white blouse that drooped low over her flat chest.

'Good morning,' said Sid. 'This the bar?'

'The bar?' said the woman timidly. She spoke in a weak wondering voice and not in the sing-song of this part of the country.

'Yes, the bar,' Ted said. 'It says Tavern,' he said nodding up at the notice.

'Oh, yes,' she said, hesitating. 'Come in. Come in here.'

She showed them not into the bar but into a sitting-room. There was a bowl of tomatoes in the window and a notice said 'Teas.'

The four men were tall and large beside her in the little room and she gazed up at them as if she feared they would burst its walls. And yet she was pleased. She was trying to smile.

'This is on me,' Sid said. 'Mild and bitter four times,' he said.

'O.K., Mr. Blake,' Ted said. 'Bring me my beer.'

'But let's get into the bar,' said Bert.

Seeing an arm-chair Ted sank into it and now the woman was reassured. She succeeded in smiling but she did not go out of the room. Sid looked at her and her smile was vacant and faint like the smile fading on an old photograph. Her hair was short, an impure yellow and the pale skin of her face and her neck and her breast seemed to be moist as if she had just got out of bed. The high strong light of this lonely place seemed to have drunk all colour from her.

'There isn't a bar,' she said. 'This isn't a public house. They call it the Tavern, but it isn't a tavern by rights.'

Very anxiously she raised her hands to her blouse.

'What!' they exclaimed. 'Not a pub! Here, Harry, it's marked on your map.' They were dumbfounded and angry.

'What you mean, don't sell beer!' they said.

Their voices were very loud.

'Yes,' said Harry. 'Here it is. See? Inn.'

He put the map before her face accusingly.

'You don't sell beer?' said Bert. He looked at the pale, blue-veined chest of the woman.

'No,' she said. She hesitated. 'Many are disappointed,' she said and she spoke like a child reciting a piece without knowing its meaning. He lowered his eyes.

'You bet they ruddy well are,' said Ted.

'Where is the pub?' asked Sid.

She put out her hand and a little girl came into the room and clung close to her mother. Now she felt happier.

'My little girl,' she said.

She was a tiny, frail child with yellow hair and pale blue eyes like her mother's. The four men smiled and quietened down because of the resemblance between the woman and her child.

'Which way did you come?' she asked, and her hand moving over the child's hair seemed to get courage from the child. 'Handley-ford?' she said. 'That's it. It's ten miles. The Queen's Arms, Handley-ford, the way you came. That's the nearest pub.'

'My God!' said Bert. 'What a country!'

'The Queen's Arms,' said Ted stupefied.

He remembered it. They were passing through Handleyford. He was the oldest, a flat wide man in loose clothes, loose in the chin, too, with watery rings under his eyes and a small golden sun of baldness at the back of his head. 'Queen's Arms,' he had called. 'Here, what's the ruddy game?' But the others had grinned back at him. When you drop back to number four on the hills it comes back to you:

They're single, nothing to worry about, you're married and you're forty. What's the hurry? Ease up, take what you can get. 'Queen's Arms'—he remembered looking back. The best things are in the past.

'Well, that's that!' said Sid.

'Queen's Arms, Harry,' Ted jeered.

And Bert looked at the woman. 'Let's go on,' he said fiercely. She was not the woman he had expected. Then he blushed and turned away from her.

She was afraid they were going and in an anxious placating voice she said, 'I do teas.'

Sid was sitting on the arm of a chair and the child was gazing at a gold ring he wore on his little finger. He saw the child was gazing and he smiled.

'What's wrong with tea?' Sid said.

'Ask the man with the brain,' said Ted. 'Ask the man with the map.'

Harry said, 'If you can't have beer, you'd better take what you can get, Mr. Richards.'

'Tea,' nodded Sid to the woman. 'Make it strong.'

The woman looked at Sid as if he had performed a miracle.

'I'll get you tea,' she said eagerly. 'I always do teas for people.' She spoke with delight as if a bell had suddenly tinkled inside her. Her pale eyes shone. She would get them tea she said and bread and butter, but no eggs because the man had not been that morning, and no ham. It was too early, she said, for ham. 'But there are tomatoes,' she said. And then, like a child, 'I put them in the window so as people can see.'

'O.K.,' Sid said. 'Four teas.'

She did not move at once but still, like a shy child, stood watching them, waiting for them to be settled and fearful that they would not stay. But at last she put out her hand to the child and hurried out to the kitchen.

'Well, Mr. Blake,' said Ted, 'thank God, I'm T.T.'

'Have a gasper, Mr. Richards,' said Sid.

'Try my lighter, Mr. Blake,' said Ted.

He clicked the lighter and no flame came.

'Wrong number,' said Ted. 'Dial 0 and try again.' A steak, said Sid, had been his idea. A couple of pints just to ease the passage and then some real drinking, Ted said. But Bert was drumming on a biscuit tin and was looking inside it. There was nothing in it. 'Many,' jeered Bert, 'are disappointed.'

They looked at the room. There were two new treacle coloured arm-chairs and a sofa with a pattern of black ferns on it. The new plush was damp and sticky to the hands from the air of the hidden sea. There was a gunmetal fender and there was crinkled, green paper in the fireplace. A cupboard with a glass door was empty except for the lowest shelf. On that was a thick book called *The Marvels of Science.*

The room was cold. They thought in the winter it must be damn cold. They thought of ten drizzling miles to Handleyford.

They listened to the cold clatter of the plates in the kitchen and the sound of the woman's excited voice and the child's. There was the bare linoleum on the floor and the chill glass of the window. Outside was the tarred road with blown sand at the edges and, beyond a wall, there were rows of cabbage, then a bit of field and the expressionless sky. There was no sound on the road. They—it occurred to them—had been the only sound on that road for hours.

The woman came in with a cup and then a plate. The child brought a plate and the woman came in with another cup. She looked in a dazed way at the men, amazed that they were still there. It seemed to Ted, who was married, that she didn't know how to lay a table. 'And now I've forgotten the sugar,' she laughed. Every time she came into the room she glanced at Bert timidly and yet pityingly because he was the youngest and had been most angry. He lowered his eyes and avoided her look. But to Ted she said, 'That's right, you make yourselves comfortable,' and at Sid she smiled because he had been the kindest. At Harry she did not look at all.

She was very startled then when he stood at the door and said, 'Where's this Roman road?'

She was in the kitchen. She told him, 'The road by the white gate.' She showed him from the doorway of the house.

'There he goes,' said Sid at the window. 'He's looking over the gate.'

They waited. The milk was put on the table. The woman came in at last with the bread and butter and the tea.

'He's missed his beer, now he'll miss his tea,' Ted said.

'Well,' Ted said, when Harry came back. 'See any Romans?'

'It's just grass,' Harry said. 'Nothing on it.' He stared in his baffled bull-necked way.

'No beer and no Romans,' Ted said.

The woman, who was standing there, smiled. In a faltering voice, wishing to make them happy, she said:

'We don't often get no Romans here.'

'Oh God!' Bert laughed very loudly and Ted shook with laughter too. Harry stared.

'Don't take any notice of them, missus,' Sid said. And then to them, 'She means gypsies.'

'That come with brooms,' she said, bewildered by their laughter, wondering what she had done.

When she had gone and had closed the door, Bert and Ted touched their heads with their fingers and said she was dippy, but Sid told them to speak quietly.

Noisily they had drawn up their chairs and were eating and drinking. Ted cut up tomatoes, salted them, and put them on his bread. They were good for the blood, he said, and Harry said they reckoned at home his grandad got the cancer he died of from eating tomatoes day after day. Bert, with his mouthful said he'd read somewhere that tea was the most dangerous drink on earth. Then the child came in with a paper and said her mother had sent it. Sid looked at the door when it closed again.

'Funny thing,' he said. 'I think I've seen that woman before.'

That, they said, was Sid's trouble. He'd seen too many girls before.

He was a lanky man with a high forehead and a Hitler moustache and his lips lay over his mouth as if they were kissing the air or whispering to it. He was a dark, harsh-looking cocksure man but with a gentle voice and it was hard to see his eyes under his strong glasses. His lashes were long and his lids often half lowered, which gave him the air of a man full of dirty stories. He put his thumbs in his waistcoat and stuck out his legs to show his loud check stockings and he had the ring on his finger. 'Move that up a couple and he'd be spliced,' they said. 'Not me,' he said. 'Look at Ted.' A man with no ideals, Bert thought, a man whose life was dirty behind the syrup-thick lens of his glasses. Flash Sid. See the typists draw themselves up, tilt back their heads and get their hands ready to keep him off. Not a man with ideals. See them watch his arms and his hands, start tapping hard on the keys and pretending to be busy when he leant over to tell them a story. And then when he was gone, see them peep through the inquiry window to watch where he went, quarrel about him and dawdle in the street when the office closed hoping to see him.

'Well,' said Harry when they had cleared the table and got out the map. Sid said:

'You gen'lemen settle it. I'll go out and fix her up.'

Sid's off, they said. First on the road, always leading, getting the first of the air, licking the cream off everything.

He found her in the kitchen and he had to lower his head because of the ceiling. She was sitting drably at the table which was covered with unwashed plates and the remains of a meal. There were unwashed clothes on the backs of the chairs and there was a man's waistcoat. The child was reading a comic paper at the table and singing in a high small voice.

Four shillings, she said, would that be too much?

She put her hand nervously to her breast.

'That's all right,' Sid said and put the money in her hand. It was coarsened by work. 'We cleared up everything,' he said.

'Don't get many people I expect,' he said.

'Not this time of the year.'

'A bit lonely,' he said.

'Some think it is,' she said.

'How long have you been here?' he said.

'Only three years. It seems,' she said with her continual wonder, 'longer.'

'I thought it wasn't long,' Sid said. 'I thought I seen you somewhere. You weren't in . . . in Horsham, were you?'

'I come from Ashford,' she said.

'Ashford,' he said. 'I knew you weren't from these parts.'

She brightened and she was fascinated because he took off his glasses and she saw the deep serious shadows of his eyes and the pale drooping of the naked lids. The eyes looked tired and as if they had seen many things and she was tired too.

'I bin ill,' she said. Her story came irresistibly to her lips. 'The doctor told us to come here. My husband gave up his job and everything. Things are different here. The money's not so good. . . .' Her voice quickened, 'But I try and make it up with the teas.'

She paused trying to read from his face if she should say any more. She seemed to be standing on the edge of another country. The pale blue eyes seemed to be the pale sky of another distant country where she had been living.

'I nearly died,' she said. She was amazed by this fact.

'You're O.K. now,' Sid said.

'I'm better,' she said. 'But it seems I get lonely now I'm better.'

'You want your health but you want a bit of company,' Sid said.

'My husband says, "You got your health, what you want company for?"'

She put this to Sid in case her husband was not right but she picked up her husband's waistcoat from the chair and looked over its buttons because she felt, timorously, she had been disloyal to her husband.

'A woman wants company,' said Sid.

He looked shy now to her, like Bert, the young one; but she was most astonished that someone should agree with her and not her husband.

Then she flushed and put out her hand to the little girl who came to her mother's side, pressing against her. The woman felt safer and raised her eyes and looked more boldly at him.

'You and your friends going far?'

He told her. She nodded, counting the miles as if she were coming along with them. And then Sid felt a hand touch his.

It was the child's hand touching the ring on his finger.

'Ha!' laughed Sid. 'You saw that before.' He was quick. The child was delighted with his quickness. The woman put the waistcoat down at once. He took off the ring and put it in the palm of his hand and bent down so that his head nearly brushed the woman's arm. 'That's lucky,' he said. 'Here,' he said. He slipped the ring on the child's little finger. 'See,' he said. 'Keeps me out of mischief. Keep a ring on your little finger and you'll never be disappointed.'

The child looked at him without belief.

'Here y'are,' he said, taking back the ring. 'Your mother wants it,' he said, winking at the woman. 'She's got hers on the wrong finger. Little one luck, big one trouble.'

She laughed and she blushed and her eyes shone. He moved to the door and her pale lips pouted a little. Then, taking the child by the hand she hurried over to him as if both of them would cling to him. Excitedly, avidly, they followed him to the other room.

'Come on, Mr. Blake,' said Ted. The three others rose to their feet.

The child clung to her mother's hand and danced up and down. She was in the midst of them. They zipped up their jackets, stubbed their cigarettes, folded up the map. Harry put on his gauntlets. He stared at the child and then slowly took off his glove and pulled out a sixpence. 'No,' murmured Ted, the married man, but the child was too sharp.

They went out of the room and stood in the road. They stretched themselves in the open air. The sun was shining now on the fields. The woman came to the door to see them. They took their bicycles from the wall, looked up and down the road and then swung on. To the sea, the coast road and then perhaps a girl, some girl.

'Good-bye,' they called. 'Good-bye.'

And Bert, the last, remembered then to wave 'Good-bye,' too, and glanced up at the misleading notice. When they were all together, heads down to the wind, they turned again. 'Good God!' they said.

The woman and the child had come out into the middle of the road, hand in hand and their arms were still raised and their hands were fluttering under the strong light of that high place. It was a long time before they went back into the house.

Now for a pub, a real pub, the three men called to Harry. And Sid was ahead, getting the first of the new wind.

TOM BURNS

TWO STORIES

A BIT OF FUN

THE windows, still misted with the steam from the morning's cooking, glowed freshly as the sunlight, reflected from the farm-buildings opposite, struck through them. The woman seated at the large table in the middle of the kitchen, contemplating her arms spread out before her, shifted her body irritably inside her clothes. She turned her head towards the man by the fire, which glowered from the spilt ash of its morning labours.

'Come on, Charlie, you'd best be off. Master'll be about in a minute. He's catching the afternoon bus.'

Charlie rose, slipped his jacket off the hot-water pipes and slummocked out into the yard, greeted there by casual chuckles from two hens stalking gloomily about under the cart-hovel. He caught up a hoe from the stable wall and walked with a loose-legged slouch up the farm track, treading with supple ankles over the scored chalk and pebbles. The sun fired glints of pale quick light from the thorn hedge and the swarming nettles, wet after the showers, and great bundles of cumulus were scattered across the sky between the hills. At the third gate he turned off through a wide patch of young kale to the darker slashed green of the potato crop. As he went, he swung the hoe above him as a sign to Dassy, who was working with him but had preferred lying up in the hedge bottom for his dinner-hour. He saw Dassy break out of the hedge at the other end of the field and come trotting down the headland, hoisting his legs along with exaggerated movements of his shoulders.

Dassy was the Clewton fool, but amiable, quite harmless, and able to do a full day's work when under somebody's eye. His face—ears, nose, and chin—was pointed like a fox's, and gave the same impression of sub-human, anxious cunning. He came up now, his thin lips stretched in a cheerful grin, showing a toothless mouth discoloured with tobacco juice.

' 'Allo, ducky,' he shouted. ' 'Ad plenny a pudden f'ye dinner?'

'Never you mind what, you get stuck into these 'ere tates.'

Immediately, Dassy picked up his hoe and began. Charlie hung his coat over an elder branch, lit a Woodbine and rubbed up the blade of his hoe before starting two rows below. They worked steadily

along the field, clearing the growth of couch and young charlock from each plant. The sun was strong now, getting underneath their clothes and pricking the blood and stretched muscles across their backs, making the sweat run over their stomachs and down their legs. They bent, small and black, before the sinewy trunks of the beech-woods marching the hill above them.

Occasionally, Charlie would scan the other's row, as a matter of prestige, and insist on Dassy's going back and 'doin' the job proper.' One hour's work brought them back to the headland, where they stopped to ease their hips and backs. Dassy sat down on a horse-hoe that had been tipped into the hedge, pulled out a few strands of tobacco from a waistcoat pocket, and sucked them. Charlie, glancing up at the woods, saw a gamekeeper strolling down the ride which continued the headland, a gun held slackly under one arm and a small black spaniel at heel gliding over the bumpy turf. As he came near he winked at Charlie, who answered with a grin and jerk of the chin, then turned on Dassy, who was facing the other way, and shoved him with his foot.

'Wha' be asleep, then, Dassy?'

'Wha' be at, —— you,' said Dassy, and shifted round. 'It's Lawrie Shaper. 'Allo, me dear, 'ow be arn?' He leant forward and tickled Lawrie in the stomach. ' 'Ow be arn?'

'Steady, thanks, Dassy,' replied Lawrie, stepping backwards. 'How's yerself?'

Dassy sat back on the horse-hoe and grunted. 'It's me guts,' he said, pointing to them.

Charlie looked at him composedly. 'Ar, the fool, it's the way 'e gollops 'is food down. Wonder 'e don't choke 'isself sometimes, with the tackle 'e eats. Got no teeth either, 'ave you, Dassy?'

'Got no teef,' agreed Dassy, squirming in surprised agony.

'Ar, there you are.'

Lawrie took a hoe and supported himself on it. 'Wha' be at up at Duffley's lately, Dassy?' he asked, his mouth slightly open in astute inquiry.

Dassy forgot his indigestion. 'Wouldn' ye like to know, me dear?' he grinned.

'What's 'e bin at now, then?' said Charlie, taking his place in the baiting ritual.

'Bin over at Duffley's every night now for a fortnit, 'angin' about the buildin's after that new maid they got there, so Tod Duffley was tellin' me; doin' jobs for her too, feedin' the chickens an' that. Dirty ol' fool. Knows 'e can't do 'er no good.'

'Say yer don't know, ducky, say yer don't know. Took 'er out last Sunday, quarter past four to ten to eight. Tha's right, ban it? Went fer as Fawley. O.K.'

'Does she love yer then, Dassy?'

'She'll 'a' me when I gits a job regler.'

'Did she say that, then, Dassy?'

'Ain' arst 'er yit.'

'You ought to, then. She wun 'ave yer without you ask 'er, will she, Charlie?'

'No, you can't 'ave me on like that. I got to do me courtin' first, then she'll 'a' me.'

' 'Ave you sent 'er any love-letters, then, Dassy? They always want love-letters.' Lawrie was casting about for a hold.

'Can't git 'olt on one,' said Dassy, ignorant but cautious, being dimly aware of pub talk about such things.

'Write 'em yourself. You tell me what to put an' I'll write it down for you.'

'Come on, Dassy. Can't sit an' look at it all the arternoon. Lot o' work 'ere.'

'Eff the work,' said Dassy, feeling bold with the gamekeeper by him. 'Boss is into Henley 's arternoon, git it done an' done with now, Lawrie.'

'All right, bus'll be along in a minute, an' 'e'll want to know what we bin doin' when he can't see us in it.' Charlie gave him up, and started by himself.

'Right, then, Dassy.' Lawrie patted his pockets for pencil and paper. 'Let's 'ave it.'

'How yer start?'

'What's 'er name—Jinny Dearborn, ban it?—all right then, start off my darlin' Jinny. Now then, Dassy.'

Dassy pulled out some more shag. He dictated, seriously and without hesitation. 'Teller I'll come ther regler if she'll 'a' me—put th' banns up. Then I'll take 'er out to-night. I means to stick to 'er regler. Teller I don't like Mrs. Hubble much. I likes Jinny best, I likes 'er well. Teller I'll treat 'er—plenny work on, an't I?—thrashin' an' harvest. She'll 'a' a let me catch olt on 'er arm. I sha' like to 'ave 'er for my wife. Drop me a letter in the week. Ask 'er whereabouts she waunts a git married. Teller Rad'n' or London, teller. Teller five bob for the wedden' cake.'

'That the lot then, Dassy?'

'Ah, O.K. Post it right away.'

'Can't send it like this, Dassy. I'll copy it out decent and post it to-night. She'll 'ave it by to-morrow.'

'O.K.' Dassy had finished with it. He trotted clumsily on his long thin bandy legs along the field to join Charlie.

Lawrie stood on the headland and watched him stumbling over the potato plants, waving his hoe and hailing Charlie with his ''Ullo, ducky.' He whistled up the spaniel, which had been lying in the shade under the hedge, and set off down to the road at the foot of the hill. He was smiling. He would keep quiet about the letter until the end of the week, and then bring it out at the 'Black Boy' on Saturday night. They knew him there, and, besides, Dassy might be there, too.

He began to whistle, softly.

BACK RENT

'NAH then, none o' yer ol' buck, Ernie, because I won't stand fer it. I've 'ad abaht enough o' your tormentin' this week. None o' your ol' buck, nah, or y'll cop a peasey one. I tell yer straight, I'll gi' yer a peasey one. An' 'op orf aht quick 'fore yer father comes in an' catches yer. I got to get this table cleared fer when 'e comes in an' wants 'is tea. Yer know what 'e's like Friday nights. An' take that spoon aht o' the condense' milk.'

Ernie crouched over his cup, regarding silently the thin stream of condensed milk that wavered from the spoon he was holding above his tea. He felt stiff and tired with the effort he had made in asking whether his mother had paid the landlord any money. For weeks, ever since he had first heard the mention of eviction, he had been persecuted by the threat. Whenever he was alone two pictures contested slowly for place in front of his mind; there was one of himself and his sister standing by the furniture in the street and being watched by a giggling circle of neighbours, and another of them sleeping under a railway arch; these images had sketched themselves in with increasing vividness and then, complete, had planted themselves firmly within him so that he could not think—he was filled with a dreadful anxiety, and a desperate longing for security; there grew quickly a passionate love for the house they lived in, for the things in it, the shape of the rooms, the smells.

Without looking up, he spoke again.

'Mum, can't I stay in an' take the money rahnd when dad——'

'Nah shut up. I won't stand much more of yer, I won't, so shut it. I'll tell yer father when 'e comes in, you see if I don't. An' don' let

'im come in an' find you still 'ere—clear orf aht, an' find Ethel an' tell 'er I want 'er in 'ere. Gaw on, nah.'

She stopped polishing the grate and glared angrily at him as he stepped over the fender and fire-irons to the door. As he went out of the kitchen she slammed the door on him, knocking him forward, then opened it again. Her voice, rising as he went further away, followed him along the passage. 'An' don' ferget what I told yer 'baht Ethel, nah, an' mind you keep aht o' the 'ahse till it's gorn seven.' Finally, as he slipped on the newly whitened doorstep, 'Gurt, yer great slommock.'

A few yards from the door, he passed his father. They did not speak, and Ernie looked away, but he heard the footsteps halt and felt his father watching him; he was afraid to look behind, and his back and knees cringed involuntarily as though he expected a blow.

The man went indoors and sat down at the kitchen table. The middle of the room was still occupied by the fender and iron shelves removed from the stove, and he showed his displeasure by assuming an expression of fastidious disgust, interspersed with angry glances thrown quickly at his wife. She hurried to set his evening meal of bread, margarine and tea, and then produced a cup and saucer for herself and sat down with him, despite a look that followed her as she did so. He turned to his tea, crouching over it in the same attitude as his son's, and reading an evening newspaper on which he kept his eyes fixed when he reached for more tea or bread. They sat without speaking until she judged he had settled down. Then she stirred her tea vigorously, brought the cup to her lips, and said, over the brim, 'Young Ernie was lippin' me just before you come in. Needs a bit of a beltin'.'

He continued to read, bringing a piece of bread up to his mouth and holding it there until he had finished eating it. She too kept the cup at her lips and sipped tea noisily between her remarks.

'Abaht the rent. . . . Lippin' me abaht the rent, 'e was. . . . Said we ought to stay in to-night an' pay orf some o' the back-rent. Fancy young Ernie, yer know. . . . Oh well it's no use you givin' me them black looks, I'm not gon' 'ave you comin' up to me an' shahtin' the odds abaht me not tellin' yer—landlord called 's arternoon.'

'All right, 'e called 's arternoon. What abaht it?'

'Well, 'e called, anyway, an' 'e said abaht we'd 'ave to get aht if——'

Still without raising his head, he interrupted, speaking slowly and patiently. 'Can't all this wait till I've 'ad me tea? Can't you reelize I've 'ad 'ard day's work an' I come 'ome to 'ave me tea in peace an' quiet?'

He turned the newspaper over, and went on with his tea. She shrugged her shoulders petulantly; at any rate, now she had told him, there was no need to think any more about the business; it was Joe's affair.

He got up, poured more hot water into the teapot, and swilled it round.

' 'E can't do nuffing, I tell yer, Lil. 'E can't do a thing at all.'

'Well, all I say is don' come up to me shahtin' the odds abaht me not tellin' yer, that's all.'

'Talk abaht it to-morrer.' He gulped his tea down and took his coat off the door-knob. 'Talk abaht it to-morrer, I'll be in the billiard-room when yer come over. Don't be long, nah. Twenty minutes.' He went out, his wife following him to the door to wait there for Ethel.

Ernie had just found her in a narrow court some streets away. Another girl was playing with a tennis ball while Ethel rocked a perambulator vigorously.

'Efful!' he called. 'Efful!'

'O, blow, 'e put me orf. You go an' get the ball, it's your turn, Effie.'

'Efful!'

'Come on, you catch 'old o' this pram, 'e's neely orf. My mum wants me, I s'pose.' She picked up the ball and began bouncing it in time to a rigmarole chant, throwing a leg over the rising ball at the end of each line.

'One, two, free a-larey,
I spy madam a-zarey,
Sittin' on the rock a-larey,
Ice-a-chocolit-bab-y.
One, two, free a-larey——'

'E*ful*!'

'I spy madam a-zarey,
—Oh, what, then?—rock a-larey,
Ice-a-chocolit——'

'Efful, mum wants yer.'

' "Efful, mum wants yer, Efful, mum wants yer." Gurt, yer wet week. Wha' she want me for nah?'

'Oh, b——s, I dunno——'

'Oo, you wicked—I'll tell dad abaht you swearin', see if I don't.'

'Tell 'im, tell 'im, tell 'im. Tell tale tit—let's 'ave yer ball?'

'An' the next?'

He followed her along the street, two or three paces behind, for fear of a sudden blow.

'Gaw on, Efful, let's 'ave yer ball. Gaw on, Efful, gaw on——'

'Oh, shut up, I'm not goin' to, there, see?'

He followed another twenty yards.

'Efful, did you see the landlord 'sarternoon when 'e called? . . . E*ful*, did you see——'

'Yes, I did, an' what of it?'

'Wha'd 'e say? Tell us.'

'Nuffing to do wi' you.'

'Gaw on, yes it is. Tell us.'

She stopped, and leant against the wall, her lips closed tight. Ernie leant beside her, staring mournfully at his boots, murmuring, 'Gaw on, tellus,' and nudging her, until at last, after glancing about with excessive caution, she put an arm round his neck, and whispered, 'Well, I'll tell yer, only you swear you'll never tell?'

'If I do, you can—you can cut orf all me fingers.'

'All right, then, you look aht. Well, listen—they're goin' ter put us aht.'

The boy felt his heart squeezed tightly as a flood of fear poured down his body.

'When did 'e say?'

' 'E said 'e'd 'ave us aht inside a fortnight if 'e didn' get free weeks rent by Monday. Mum didn' 'alf let orf at 'em. Called 'im everythin' she could lay 'er tongue to, mum did.'

'What's gon' 'appen then, Efful?'

'Oh, I dunno. Don' care much. Can't do much worse'n this lousy rotten 'ole. Ain't no use carryin' on like that abaht it, pullin' a face like a kite. You know what they're like as well as I do. They'll get stone blind to-night, stone blind, an' stay like it till Monday an' they 'aven't got 'a'p'ny left.'

That made it true; the faint hope that occasionally flicked into his mind, that he was exaggerating the whole thing and that anyhow, he himself was immune from misfortune, departed when he heard his own fear in Ethel's words and tone.

'P'r'aps they'll see abaht it to-morrer, p'r'aps, Efful, eh?'

'Some 'ope. Some bloomin' 'ope.'

Then she left him. He slid his shoulders down the wall and squatted, resting his face on his knees. The constriction of his body increased his excitement as he became conscious of pulses in his arms and neck that syncopated with the coursing throb in his stomach. The impulse of his mind to hop, skip and jump to glorious and impossible solutions was repeatedly checked before the shameful visions of destitution and homelessness. He got up and walked along to 'The Crown,' where

his father should be by this time. As he went he dribbled the lid of a cocoa tin along the gutter: the noise disturbed those pictures and thoughts came in runlets between the kicks.

He sat on the pavement by 'The Crown' and looked through the bars of the basement window into the billiard-room. His father was there, in shirt-sleeves, shuffling jauntily round the table, his elbows stuck out and his back hollowed—comically. A rattle of indistinguishable talk and quick laughter rose and fell.

There had been a half-conscious idea of imploring his father, somehow, to go to the landlord now and pay him, but as Ernie looked down into the room, that seemed futile. The relationship with his father was a formal matter, a restriction rather than an intimacy; his father was a man, spending the freedom of his life among men, a stranger, to be afraid of. Ernie felt afraid, and watched the men with a novel curiosity.

He was still kneeling there twenty minutes later when his mother arriyed. She pushed him with her foot.

'Get up orf them cold stones,' she said, 'an' go indoors an' 'elp yer sister with the washing-up, you lazy young ike.'

He went home. The street-door was open, but Ethel, as he had expected, had gone out, leaving the remains of tea on the table—there was plenty of time for washing them after dark. He moved round the kitchen, picked up a match-stalk and pushed it away between the bars of the empty grate, shut and fastened a cupboard door, poured all the tea-dregs into one cup. He was often alone in the house. It gave him pleasure to handle, to alter at will, things that for the moment were his own belongings. He climbed on to a chair to inspect the surface of the mantelshelf, which was usually exasperatingly out of sight. He rested his chin on the edge and blew the dust along gently, driving it in and out of the bays and capes of the wrinkled brown oilcloth. Then, filled by this beginning with a sudden zest for cleanliness, he cleared off the canisters, alarm-clock, and the broken china teapot, fetched a damp cloth from the scullery and wiped the shelf clean. Then he settled down contentedly, whistling very quietly through his teeth, to sorting and examining the contents of the canisters. They were old and bent, with the portraits of King Edward and Queen Alexandra almost worn off, and were filled with a tangled mass of cotton, pencils, needles, cards of pins and linen buttons, string, and odd scraps of paper; he was very interested in all of them. He put them back, sucked down the spittle that had collected in his mouth with whistling, wiped his sweaty hands on his jersey, and took up the teapot. Inside was a pound-note, wrapped round two half-crowns.

He put the money in his pocket, replaced the teapot and the alarm-clock on the mantelshelf, and went out.

He walked with his hands in his pockets and his arms squeezed into his sides. He bewildered himself deliberately. He flung rapid glances up and down the street, caught up vivid recollections of films, games, school, and rushed them together, counted paving-stones, railings, steps, added the numbers on street doors, acknowledged the rub of his clothes on his cold, wet skin. By the time he reached the landlord's drapery shop in Mare Street, the boy was trembling with panic and exhaustion. He waited, to try to compose himself, but could not, and fearful of slipping back from the wave of resolution that had carried him there, knocked at the house-door.

The door was opened by a thin, pale woman, who leant listlessly against the wall and stared over his head after a first glance at him.

'Mister Buckfast in, please?'

'Wha' d'yer wan' 'im for?'

'Come abaht the rent.'

'All right. 'O's it for?'

'Butts.'

'I'll tell 'im.' She turned and called up the stairs in a sagging falsetto, 'Leo! Leo, yer wanted, Leo. 'E won't be long an' keep yer feet orf that doorstep. Butts, Leo.'

Mr. Buckfast came downstairs in his shirt-sleeves and still sucking round his teeth for the last scraps of boiled haddock.

' 'Al*lo*—allo—allo—allo—lo.' He belched loudly. 'Manners—oh, manners. Hurll, aaah, manners. Hah, you wouldn't say that, nah, would yer? No. Dragged up. Can't ixpect it. Poor *kid*, I say, father an' mother like that, poor *kid*. What is it, I say, what is it? Not ter blame. Shifty-eyed like 'is father, look, Maudie, see? You don't know 'im, though. Sendin' the kid rahnd 'ere like that. I told yer mother this afternoon. Monday I'm callin', I say, an' it'll be the last time. Can't stand 'ere like this, dragging me away from me supper. Nah what?'

'Please I got the rent 'ere wi' me, Guvner.'

'Got the rent 'ere wi' yer, 'ave yer? 'Baht time too. Beats me 'ow I stood fer it all this time. Eight weeks back rent, eight weeks—I told yer, Maudie, didn' I? Picks a fine time ter send rahnd wiv it I must say, look, gorn nine. Can't think—come on, let's 'ave it then—can't think what's come over 'im all of a sudden, eiver.'

Ernie handed him the money.

'Twenny—twenny-five bob? Is 'is all? Dunno what they think they're up to. This ain't enough, yer know. Rent fer two weeks

alone comes ter twenny-nine an' two. What's the good o' this ter me? Free weeks back rent be Monday's what I want. I'll book this, though. Where's yer rent book?'

'I ain't got it wi' me, Mister. Fergot.'

'Fergot! Stone me if you ain't a right crew. 'Ah d'yer get abaht like it? Beats me. All right, I'll call on Monday an' settle up. Free weeks it's got to be, tell yer dad, mind—free weeks.'

He closed the door and looked at his wife. 'Puts temptation in yer way, don' it no rent book? Come in 'andy, this twenty-five bob. No rent book. Yuh.'

Outside, Ernie walked away slowly. He muttered obscenities fiercely to himself and pinched his legs viciously through his trouser pockets to force down the sobs that gathered in his chest and forced their way in great bubbles through his throat and nose. He was torn by an almost unendurable sense of violent frustration.

He dared not keep still or return home yet, so he walked on, achieving purpose by going from one cinema to another to look at the photographs and posters outside until the last cinemas closed and the displays were taken inside.

It was a cool night, very clear now that the streets were deserted, with the gas lights standing warm and yellow before the dark housetops. A faint breeze chilled the scalp only; an occasional tram in Mare Street moaned and thudded from silence to silence, and unceasingly the boy's shadow swung quietly and smoothly from lamp to lamp towards home.

As he turned into his own street he heard his father's voice, a mutter creeping round the curve of the houses. He crossed to the inside of the bend, the side on which his house was, and went on slowly and silently, keeping close to the wall. His mother, he saw, was sitting on the doorstep. Her coat was open in front, and enveloped her almost entirely. She had her elbows on her knees, and her head clasped between her fists. Around her mouth was blood, and at intervals she spat; that was blood too, and she examined it carefully, smearing it with her foot. On the other side of the street his father was walking slowly and unsteadily up and down a short length of pavement, his face turned towards her as he cursed at her.

Ernie held his breath from the smell of sweat and blood as he stepped over his mother.

WILLY GOLDMAN

DOWN AT MENDEL'S

I

In the clothing workshops of Whitechapel summer is an unpopular season. A tiny basement holding nine or ten people and machinery is trying enough in winter. Summer turns it into a stokehold.

At Mendel's, the little master-tailor, summer was particularly intolerable. For 'speed' was the watchword there. Mendel was a producer of 'cheap work'; meaning that if his workmen turned out anything under five hundred garments a week it didn't pay him to keep the place open.

But to keep the place open was Mendel's one aim in life. And so all the work turned down by other employers on account of its unremunerativeness, found its way to Mendel's, as rubbish to a sewer. He never refused orders of any sort. If the stuff was too cheap he knew he could always make up his loss by cutting his workmen's prices. The manufacturers liked to deal with him: he was so 'reasonable.'

Mendel's workshop was notorious throughout the neighbourhood. It was known as 'the slaughterhouse.' At the end of every season there, somebody was sure to land up in hospital. Once, even, a man had dropped dead at his machine. The coroner established the cause as simple heart-failure. For work itself, as we know, kills nobody.

In early nineteen thirty-five there arrived one of those unexpected hot spring days that presages a torrid summer. That was not the only thing wrong at Mendel's that day. Right at the very beginning of the morning there were two absentees from work: Daniel the presser, and old Raphael, a machiner. It put everyone else off their own work. It was a bad omen for things to start off badly on a Monday. There were grumblings. But there was also relief that the 'guv'nor' Mendel was still asleep upstairs in the house, unaware as yet that 'the choke' had been opened on his usually smooth-running business.

It was well past eight o'clock, and the two men still absent. Marks, the dapper little 'second' presser, a brooding man at the best of times, became abysmally lugubrious as the coats that the machiners threw

over every few minutes piled up in a mountainous heap on his table. 'I suppose Danny finds it more comfortable by the side of his old woman in bed,' he said disagreeably in his throaty Yiddish as he swung the press-iron. 'Thinks he's still on his honeymoon!' He and Daniel were partners in the pressing.

The three machiners in the corner of the workshop began to set up a furious racing, their grumblings getting lost in the deafening buzz of the electric power. At the benches the two baisters were trying to talk in the noise. 'We'll soon be waiting for work to do, at this rate,' one of them kept urgently repeating as he handled a coat on his crossed knees. 'God knows what's happened to Raphael. It's half-past eight already.' In another corner of the workshop coat-hangers on the rails by the wall click-clicked as the weedy gentile shop-boy, Charlie, collected finished garments to take upstairs to the girl-hands for buttoning.

There was 'shopping' to do that day. Everyone was extra busy. They soon stopped their grumbling, hoping that the two absentees would turn up before long. The presser worked morosely but energetically, sending pale, dense steam-clouds up to the soiled skylight. The sun shone through a sickly rich yellow; the presser put on his bowler hat to shade his eyes. A fastidiously dressed machiner, known as 'Bertie,' took off his collar for the first time that season, and unbuttoned his waistcoat, shouting at Charlie to open the one little iron-barred window to the place.

At two minutes to nine the rackety workshop door opened with a prolonged groaning. Everyone looked up. Old Raphael came shambling in, followed by a young, thick-set, unshaven Daniel. Both their 'Good morning's' were like a dumb man's lip-moving, inaudible in the buzz of the machines. The machiner, Bertie, who was nearest the power-lever, half rose from his seat and switched off the current to make himself heard better. 'What's up, you two?' he called. 'What d'you think this is—Bank Holiday, or somethin'?'

The lean, middle-aged Raphael wiped his glasses without replying as he went to his machine. Daniel grinned, and went to hang his jacket on a nail. 'Didn't tell you fellers, did I? My missus was taken ill this morning. I had to stay home and wait for the ambulance.'

'Whew!'

'Don't you worry at all, Daniel?' stared one of the baisters, resting an elbow on his knee. Everyone had thought Daniel's recent unconcern about his wife, play-acting. They still thought so, in spite of knowing about his harassed married life. All the same they noticed he had not shaved that morning. . . .

If he was suffering on account of his wife there was certainly no sign of it in his demeanour. The others gazed at him as he vigorously rolled up his shirt-sleeves, and stretched for a coat.

'I've told you before, my boy,' he remarked to the baister who had addressed him, 'don't ever get married. You can earn enough in the busy season to give yourself a nice whore every week. If you don't take my advice you'll be like me, with one kid on my hands, and p'raps another one coming. . . .' He winked at the baister. The other was discomfited and puzzled. You never knew where you were with Daniel.

'Where'd you pick up Raphael?' asked a thick-faced machiner, Jumbo. He pointed a finger. 'Look, the old boy won't even tell us.' The others laughed. Raphael went on oiling his machine, peering short-sightedly into the crevices as he squirted the can.

'Don't you know?' said Daniel. He laid out a coat ready for pressing and sent the shop-boy Charlie for a pail of fresh water. 'On Saturday night the clocks were turned on summer time, if you remember . . . ? Raphael says it's really *eight* o'clock now.'

The others chuckled. Raphael's grizzled features puckered in a frown as he turned his eyes from the machine for a moment. 'Let them burn, the lowlifes!' He spoke in a harsh, staccato Yiddish. 'For twenty-five years I lived in Poland. There they didn't make any monkey-business with clocks. . . . Here in England—may the country burn!—they make a man start work an hour earlier all the summer!'

'But don't you see, Raphael?' insisted Bertie at his side. 'It's not really an hour earlier. . . .'

'Leave him alone,' shrugged Jumbo. 'Didn't you hear? He's been doing it for ninety years in Poland. You can't change a man's habits after ninety years.'

'Look at my clever Englishman,' Raphael crinkled his nose contemptuously. 'We Poles have more brains in our little fingers than you in your whole bodies!'

'Here,' another machiner cut into the laughing, 'what about turning on the power? There'll be murders if Mendel walks in.' Just then the sound of busy lavatory chains rumbled in from the backyard outside. It meant that Mendel's family was astir. Bertie hastily snapped the power-lever, and the revolving belts began their steady whining and whirring. Heads were soon bent absorbedly over machines.

It was not the kind of morning conducive to good temper. The men were unprepared for the summer weather: they were helpless before its onslaught. When Mendel's two sons came in at a quarter-past nine the second-presser, Marks, tersely asked them to open the skylight.

The efforts of Jack, the younger, who climbed up on one of the beams, were futile. Months of inactivity had rusted the catch; the window remained jammed. And Jack was unwilling to risk damaging his father's property by applying extra force.

It was on this day that Mendel happened to put in one of his infrequent appearances. When his two sons left the workshop at ten o'clock to visit two of their father's smaller shops in the City, the general relief was surprisingly terminated by Mendel, who came waddling busily into the place dressed in smart, blue-serge trousers and a clean, striped shirt with glittering armlets. It was a sign that an exalted visitor was expected: the manufacturer. Such were the only occasions on which Mendel troubled to dress properly.

He was not in a good temper. It was invariably so when there was shopping to do—although supervising the dispatch of finished garments a couple of days in the week, usually constituted his entire 'labour.' He was impatient and short with everyone, puffing copious directions while his sunken little eyes squinted nervously about. He spent a lot of time rushing from the workshop to his cutting-room, and back again. Every once in a while he gave a high-pitched yell for the shop-boy, Charlie—who was upstairs with the finishers whenever Mendel happened to want him. Mendel grew even more excitable. In between packing he frequently paused to thump his chest, swearing that the elusive Charlie would cause him 'heart failure,' so sure as he lived!

The coats were all packed into bundles at last. They were carried out to the barrow waiting at the front door of the house by a perspiring leg-weary Charlie; and Mendel disappeared finally from the workshop. The machines stopped buzzing as the men watched his departure. The sallow little second-presser, Marks, rested on his iron, and wrung an imaginary 'blow' from his nose in the direction of Mendel's back: 'Go and break your neck, Mendel the sweater!' The men bent over their machines once more as Bertie said, 'I wouldn't like to be in the cutter's shoes to-day. I bet Mendel's driving him balmy upstairs.'

Above the buzz of the machines and the thumping press-irons a scurrilous discussion was launched, concerning Mendel's personal life —as usually happened when he annoyed the men. Mendel was a good subject for gossip. He was known throughout the neighbourhood as 'the Squint.' On this occasion the men had something new to say about him. It appeared, from recent information, that Mendel's nickname 'the Squint' was a time-old distortion of his original one, 'the Pimp.' A mass of historical evidence was particularly offered by Daniel in proof of this assertion. . . .

The talk in the workshop dribbled to an end in the humid atmosphere. A long period followed in which only the machines and press-irons kept up their tireless buzz-thump-buzz. Even the dust particles in the air seemed motionless in their lethargy.

The sudden return of the shop-boy stirred a fresh flood of talk among the men. Charlie laid the empty wrappers on the 'guv'nor's' table, and stood there, his nostrils quivering like a distressed truck-horse. 'Didja buy a *Star*?' was Daniel's first question. 'I gave you a penny for it, didn't I?'

Charlie breathed hard and wiped his face and thin neck with a handkerchief. 'Didn't 'ave no time, Danny. . . . The guv'nor came back with me from shop. He's upstairs.'

'Bring any new orders with you, Charlie?' called out Jumbo.

'No . . .' Then Charlie's protruding teeth widened in a grin. 'But I've brought back some o' the old stuff. The manufacturer says they bin botched.'

There was a clamour. 'It's cheap work, ain't it?' demanded Bertie. 'What's he expect for eightpence machining—West End models?'

Marks, the second-presser, nodded his head vigorously. 'Tell the manufacturer, Charlie, tell him . . . tell him to break his head in five hundred and fifty-five pieces!'

The young weedy Charlie lifted his hands protestingly. 'What do you blokes wan' of me? It's not my fault. I'm just telling you what the manufacturer says, that's all.' He turned, startled at the plaintive drag of the door behind him.

It was closed with a thud, and Mendel came waddling past the boy with a coat folded over his arm. Looking at no one and frowning self-consciously he stopped at the dummy and tried on the garment. At the machines the men eyed him furtively from under bent heads.

Mendel stood back frowning at the coat, while he prodded a speculative finger into the bulge of his neck. 'A fire take the tailoring trade,' he said aloud, in Yiddish. 'Is this the kind of thing one strains one's guts for? Better to chop stones for a living than to break one's heart over alterations!' The men exchanged swift glances. Marks' features twisted in a leering grin as his lips spelt out to them: 'Bluffer, a fat bluffer!' They smiled faintly, then Bertie nodded meaningly to the others and half-rose from his stool.

'Mr. Mendel,' he called affably, 'what's the matter with the coats? Got a few alterations?'

Mendel turned, his little eyes blinking angrily. 'A few alterations?' he spluttered, and swung the dummy by the shoulders. 'Look! . . .

Look how the chest drags. As if the coat was fitted on a diseased whore!'

'Well, *you* ought to be a judge,' Marks murmured down into the coat he was pressing.

Mendel twisted the dummy away, and confronted the dapper presser. 'What do you mean, Marks?' he shrilled. 'We don't need any of your childish jokes here. These coats are no laughing matter, I tell you!'

Marks shrugged. 'Don't lose your temper with me because you lost some money at the bookie, yesterday, Mr. Mendel. I've enough of my own troubles at the press-iron.'

Mendel's stout hips seemed to tremor in his rage. Bertie cut in hastily: 'He don't mean anything, Mr. Mendel. . . . Tell us what's the matter with the coats, please?'

Mendel breathed hard, and pointed a little thick finger at the dummy. 'These coats . . . fifty of them like that . . . I tell you there's got to be better work done!'

'Did you get them back, then, Mr. Mendel?' asked Bertie.

'No . . .' Mendel flushed slightly at the pertinent question. 'No, not as bad as that. But there's got to be more care taken, I tell you.' He went on hastily, 'The manufacturer is coming to see me this afternoon and I might get an order from him. I don't want my chances spoiled by botched work.'

'Mr. Mendel,' ventured Daniel, 'what kind of garment does he expect for seven shillings all round? It's cheap work, after all, ain't it?'

Mendel, a little calmed, spread his hands. 'Dan, if I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times. There's no such thing as cheap work. A coat must be good whether it's for a pound or whether it's for fourpence. . . . What can *I* do? Do I fix the prices? Believe me, for my part you can have three shillings a garment, pressing—not fivepence, as you're getting now. But I'm not the manufacturer, my boy, am I?'

'I don't know what he expects us to put in the coat,' mumbled Jumbo. 'God knows our guts go into it already.'

'Let's pin a pound note on each lapel,' sneered Marks. 'Perhaps there'll be no complaints then.'

'Enough from you, Marks,' snapped Mendel. 'You know what to do if you don't like it. There's still plenty of room at the Labour Exchange!'

'As good there as here,' rejoined Marks, frowning and thumping the iron. 'In any case I'm working for Glickstoff the manufacturer—not for my children.'

'Sh, what's the use of arguing?' protested Daniel from the opposite side of the pressing-table. 'Listen, Mr. Mendel, we'll be more careful with the work in future. I can't say any fairer than that.'

'All right,' grumbled Mendel. 'Anyway, there's some slight alterations in ten coats that I want you to make. It won't take you long. Charlie will open up the seams for you to save time.' He grunted, and turned about, motioning Charlie to follow him out of the workshop.

They all watched him go. Daniel nibbled slowly at his upper lip. 'Well, what d'y' think of that?' he said half-aloud, as if to himself.

'I'll go and look for a bloody job better than put up with this,' muttered Marks, in between violent thumps of the iron.

'Don't talk like a child, Marks!' Bertie was concerned. 'D'ye want to put us all in the cart this week? As it is, our chance of having a good week's money's been spoiled again. Let's alter Mendel's ten lousy jobs and let him go hang with them. You know how bad trade is out.'

'Marks, my boy,' said Daniel heavily, 'take my advice and be like me. . . . Give up worrying. We'll both die by the press-iron, anyway.' He dipped the damp-rag in the pail at his side and withdrew it, wringing it like a housewife does a piece of washing. He spread it out over the coat on the table before him. 'If only the bastard had let Charlie get me a *Star*,' he mused, lifting the press-iron. 'I bet I've missed a good winning-turn, to-day.'

II

Through the skylight the sun came and spread itself in a dusty yellow over the machines and benches that formed a huddled group at one end of the workshop. The men toiled with sweat-drawn faces, their arms moving flexibly, as if the socket-joints were of rubber. No one spoke, except for a curt direction once in a while. Eyes were intent on the work, like those of prisoners under the surveillance of a guard.

Mendel and his two sons had gone to the City and the men were left alone; only the shop-boy, Charlie, was busy brushing and hanging up the finished alterations. It was three o'clock when Daniel glanced at his watch, and cursed: 'Bet the bookies are paying out, already!' The machines did not pause, and only Marks grunted into the coat he was pressing. 'The bookie won't solve our troubles.' Just then Mendel's younger son Jack came breezily into the workshop, calling

for the alterations. He was dressed in a new suit of bird's-eye design. Daniel grinned at him out of his sweat: 'We've bought you a new suit, eh, Jackie?' Jackie wriggled uncomfortably in his suit and smiled sheepishly. 'Don't chaff, Danny. I work as well as you all do for *my* money.' He called to Charlie to collect the coats, and left the workshop. Bertie gave a loud sigh. 'Thank God we got rid of that alteration rubbish. It put me right behind with my own work.'

The others nodded silently into their machines as they raced on. 'I wonder what all the busy's about,' mused Daniel. 'Did you see? There's Mendel dressed up as if he was going to a wedding, and his two sons running about to the shops all day. . . . Maybe there's a big order coming?'

'Maybe the opposite,' said Marks tersely. 'I've been longer in the trade than you, and I know. When a boss has got to chase after a manufacturer like a cat after a mouse, it's a sorry state of affairs. I bet Mendel the Squint's in trouble again.'

'*I'm* not standing for any more cut prices,' said Bertie darkly. 'We'll soon be owing Mendel money at the end of the week at this rate.'

Mendel himself soon came into the workshop, running a finger around the inside of his clammy collar. He made straight for the dummy, and fitted on the coat held over his arm, watched anxiously by the men. They were all relieved as they noted the design: it wasn't one of their own garments, and did not therefore augur another run of alterations.

'Yes, yes,' murmured Mendel appreciatively, 'it's not a bad number.' He turned to the men affably. 'What do you say, boys?'

The men eyed it critically. Daniel stepped over and fitted on the garment once again, smoothing the lapels and swivelling the dummy round for the others' inspection. Mendel extended a palm towards it. 'There you are,' he said emphatically, 'a rag. That's what it is—a mere rag. You ought to make six hundred of them a week without even taking your jackets off to work!'

'It's not *so* simple,' murmured Daniel. 'These razed seams, after all . . .'

'Pah!' Mendel stepped forward and swivelled the dummy once more for inspection. 'Look at it. . . . Believe me, when I was a machiner I'd have thought myself in heaven to get such bargains at the machine.' He took off the coat and reached for a hanger. 'All right, boys, we'll talk about it later. . . . I wish the new order was here as quickly as it'll be finished,' he added as he went to his own table.

He had barely laid out the coat to study the design, when the weedy Charlie came shuffling into the workshop and whispered something to him at the table. Behind Charlie a heavy man of middle height dressed in a light-grey summer overcoat came leisurely in. He paused to survey the workshop through strong, thick-rimmed spectacles. 'Ah, Mr. Glickstoff!' Mendel hurried forward to grasp his hand, leading him towards the table.

'See?' gestured Mendel. 'I was just looking over the sample, Mr. Glickstoff.' The other nodded shortly, and frowned down on the coat spread out on the table. He and Mendel both had their backs to the workshop and nobody could catch a word of their conversation only the neck-bulge over Mendel's collar wobbled as he nodded busily to the manufacturer.

Mr. Glickstoff at last picked up the coat and came towards the dummy, followed by a moist, waddling Mendel. The garment was fitted on. Mr. Glickstoff stood back a pace, frowning intently, while a hand fiddled with his middle waistcoat-button. 'Yes, yes,' he nodded, and his frown relaxed. 'It ought to be a good number, a very good number.'

Mendel chuckled as he carefully took off the garment. 'The tailoring trade isn't dead yet, eh, Mr. Glickstoff? It can still show a thing or two.'

The manufacturer wiped his glasses and nodded deprecatingly. 'Between you and me, I'd rather be out of it. What's the good of all the worry of a business? I'd rather have a good few shares in the Stock Exchange, better. Ha! Ha!...' He looked with quirking lips at Daniel: 'There you are, a presser. Look at him. When he's finished work, he knows he's free to attend his home, wife, and children. No worries of a whole business on *his* head.'

Daniel grinned good-naturedly as he rested on the iron. 'Go on, chaff away, Mr. Glickstoff. I'll change places with you any time you like.'

'Ah, well,' sighed the manufacturer. 'Each man to his own fate. Believe me, my boy, just let me make thirty thousand pounds—and you won't see *me* in this game any more.'

Mendel chuckled, and patted his arm. 'Don't worry, Mr. Glickstoff, you'll do it yet. You know what they say, don't you? A clever brain always wins through.... *Your* time will come, believe me.'

The manufacturer replaced his glasses and blinked. 'If only there weren't such expenses. There's wages (oh, I know your men earn their money, I'm not blaming them in the least!). And then there's

the rent. I've got to pay for a large shop-front, a fire take all landlords! . . . And then a chauffeur's wages, electric-light bills, children's school fees, and now my eldest daughter is getting married, God be with the child, and a thousand other things. . . . I ask you, has a man got a chance ever to retire?' He chuckled, and Mendel joined in as he folded the coat over his arm: 'And now, Mr. Glickstoff, if you'll come to my cutting-room, we'll speak business. . . .'

A great deal of talk broke out when they were gone. 'What do you think, eh?' said Bertie excitedly. 'Six hundred a week of those coats. We'll have a right smashing season, boys.'

'Depends on the price,' said Jumbo uncertainly. 'No use doin' 'em for tuppence a job, is it?'

'Go on, kid yourselves,' leered Marks, thumping the iron. 'You don't know Mendel and his manufacturer, yet, eh? Didn't you hear? He's got motor-car expenses, and his daughter's getting married!'

Charlie was soon back in the workshop to summon Bertie to the cutting-room. Bertie was chief machiner, and the call meant that Mendel was ready to arrange prices with him on the new order. Bertie got up from the machine and left with Charlie amidst encouraging advice from the men.

'Don't forget, Bertie, no cuts!'

'Be tough, my boy—no giving in!'

'Only *one* price, Bertie—even if Mendel should get apoplexy!'

Bertie returned within a surprisingly short time, accompanied by Mendel. He went straight back to his machine without a word. Mendel stood on one foot, with a limp hand flung around the dummy's shoulders.

'I'm sorry, boys,' he announced, mopping his forehead. 'There's only one price. I told Bertie so, didn't I, Bertie? . . . You see, it's impossible to pay more than sixpence machining, and pressing and baisting, of course, will be less. That's how it is, boys, and I can't turn down this work. My other shops are quiet, and Glickstoff can keep me going for quite a bit.'

There were frowns on all faces, but nobody paused in his work; until Daniel called across, 'How many a week did you say, Mr. Mendel?'

'Oh, as much as you can make.' Mendel was enthusiastic as he left the dummy and came forward. 'Say, for instance, you work a little later in the evenings, eh? Perhaps you'll make a thousand. *I* don't mind. I'll pay you for every single coat.'

'What are you arguing for, Dan?' said Marks with a tired sneer. '*He'll* tell you you can make a million. . . . You're a presser, aren't

you? Didn't you see what kind of a coat it was? With work like that you'll bring home hard bread and margarine for wages.'

Mendel's little eyes blinked sharply in his rage. 'Marks! . . .' He was incoherent. 'God, this man! I tell you, you ought to be thankful for people like Glickstoff. He gives you work, doesn't he? Where would you be without him?'

'Mr. Mendel, Mr. Mendel,' urged Bertie. 'What's the use of getting excited? Let's behave like men. . . . *You* say we can make as much as we like a week? Now, be fair. You saw the job, and *you* yourself were a machiner once. Can we make more than five hundred at the most? And we can't work later than we do already. Eleven and twelve o'clock every night is quite enough for me. . . . I'll get bloody consumptive at this rate!'

The others nodded. 'What then?' shrugged old Raphael into his machine. 'Work, I am not against. But a man is only a man—not a horse.'

Mendel pointed a scorning finger at him. 'Huh, look at the old woman. What does a Pole know of anything?'

Raphael glanced through his glasses. 'You Roumanian clod, you . . . !'

'Shush!' Daniel said loudly. 'You two Scandinavians at it again?'

Mendel interrupted him crossly. 'Let me alone, all of you. It isn't worth my while to argue with you. You can either do the work—or I'll bring in another set of men next week!' He whisked out of the workshop, swinging the dummy from his path.

They stared blankly after him. Daniel pursed his lips, shrugged, and turned for another iron to replace the cold one he was using. Bertie was the first to speak. 'All right,' he said defiantly. 'We'll strike, that's all. See what he says then.'

'What will a strike help?' muttered Daniel in between iron thumps. 'We'll just have to speak reasonably with him. Give him a chance to get rid of his temper. . . .' The others nodded. Marks untied his short apron. 'Before we think about Mendel lowlife,' he said laconically, 'let's first go to tea. It's a quarter to five already, and tea is more important than Mendel's dung-work.'

III

Across the street at 'Fat Sara's' the air was oppressive with the heat of the afternoon sun. The place was a tiny back-parlour converted to the use of serving teas. Under a single, streaky electric globe in the

centre of the low ceiling the men slumped loosely in their seats. Fat Sara, the proprietress, who wore glasses and waddled like a duck, brought over the tea and switched on the radio. The men listened in a perspiring stupor as the announcer's voice blared into the box-like room. '. . . It has not been a good day for racing fans. You sportsmen who are accustomed to your regular betting . . .' Bertie found the strength to murmur across his cup: 'Lucky get-out for you, to-day, Dan.'

The temperature of the tea-shop did not allow for the usual twenty minutes' stay. Across the air steamy with hot tea from a constant-boiling urn, Sara's voice was querulous as she bickered with the children who ran in every short while to buy some of her home-made ice-cream. The men hastily gulped their tea, and dribbled out after one another to the front door where they stood smoking and talking.

They were perturbed over Mendel's attitude that afternoon. It was eventually decided that Daniel call on Mendel in his cutting-room after tea. Daniel was the one who got on best with him.

It was not easy, after tea, to get the work into its usual smooth-running motion. Everyone waited impatiently for Daniel's return, glancing up frequently from their machines. Through the skylight the setting sun came down in miserable patches of yellow on the machines and benches.

'What a hot dog-fight they must be having in the cutting-room,' said Bertie at last. Just then Daniel came shambling through the doorway, with that flat-footed kind of gait he had developed as a result of standing all day on his feet as a presser. He made for his bench, biting at a thumb-nail and shaking his head. 'No good, boys, he won't listen.'

There was consternation on all faces as Daniel slowly changed the hot and cold irons at the stove behind him. 'What are you going to do, Danny?' called Bertie in an anxious voice.

Daniel shrugged without looking up.

'I'm going to look for another job,' declared Marks, frowning down on his work.

'Don't talk like a mug, Marks,' said Bertie irritably. 'Right in the middle of the season, too. And what about the rest of us, anyway?'

'Well, what then shall we do?' Marks' nostrils twitched in nervous impatience. 'Shall we strike? Mendel's not worth it! If this was a factory, yes. But strike at tuppeny-ha'penny Mendel the Squint's? . . . Pah! Let him burn with his work!'

'It's all very well, Marks, to talk like that.' Bertie was aggravated. 'But it's us who will be the losers. Believe me, Mendel won't burn

with his work. He'll just get in another set of men to make it, that's all!'

'If one could only argue with the man . . .' Daniel shrugged hopelessly.

'Look here,' said Bertie painfully, 'I wouldn't have minded if he'd behaved like a man. . . . But a liberty like that! Did you hear? Sixpence machining, he offered me. . . .'

Marks swayed his head from side to side: 'May he drink up in castor oil how much more the coat is worth!'

Bertie was insistent. 'I tell you if we struck work it would teach him a lesson. . . .'

'Oho, would I like to see him selling shoelaces in the gutter!' Marks licked his dry lips.

Old Raphael cut in irritably: 'Strike, strike—what will striking help? He'll get his judgment by God, all right!'

Marks stopped cursing to stare at Raphael. 'There you are,' he shrugged. 'Go and strike with a Pole . . . I tell you, one must work with the right people.'

Raphael blinked. 'What a hypocrite presser! . . . Believe me, Marks, you haven't earned it in pennies, the days I've lost in striking!'

Daniel chuckled across: 'You don't know our Raphael, do you? He was the man behind the Russian Revolution.'

Into the others' laughter Bertie's voice pierced urgently: 'What's the good of all this fooling! We've got to worry about a bloody living.'

'Well, what do you suggest, Bert?'

'Well . . . I'm not sure. . . . Y'see, if this was a Union place . . .'

Marks waved a contemptuous hand. 'Don't talk to me of the Union. I've had enough of it. *I* don't intend to wear my bones out to pay officials' salaries!'

'All right, don't you worry,' muttered Bertie. 'If this was an organized Union place . . .'

'Oho . . .' Marks put a pseudo-fierce expression on his face. 'If this was a Union place,' he mocked. 'I'll take you round to *Union* workshops any night after eight o'clock and I bet you'll find the men still at work. . . . You don't have to tell me about the Union, Bertie. I'm an old hand.'

Bertie pursed his lips as he threaded a new cotton in the machine. 'Just wait and see, Marks. The Union agent is coming round for my subs, this evening. See what *he* says.'

'Who wants to talk to him?' shrugged Marks. 'It's not my business to discuss anything with the man.'

'But there's no harm in asking. . . .'

There was no opportunity to talk any more, for the guv'nor's son, Mick, had entered the workshop to collect some coats that were to be dispatched that evening. He hurried the pressers: 'Make a move, boys, do me a favour. Charlie's got to get to shop before it closes.' Mick was his usual amicable self, and Daniel asked pleasantly, 'Where's your brother Jack this afternoon, Mick—gone on the spree?'

'Oh, busy running round to the shops.' He added awkwardly: 'It's a pity about the new order. Dad told me that there's trouble about fixing the prices. . . . Hard luck, boys.'

'Not such hard luck as it will be for old Mendel, your father,' said Marks, with a significant raise of the eyebrows.

'All right, Marks,' Daniel quietened him, as Mick turned away to his bench. 'It's his father we're doing business with, not with him. Save your tongue.'

Marks grunted into silence as the machiners, robbed of an opportunity to speak freely, set their machines to a deafening buzz. Jumbo, at one end, switched on the shaded globe above him, and the others soon followed. At the front end of the workshop Mick and Charlie were hurrying desperately, packing the finished garments. Mick glanced nervously at his watch every few minutes; and Charlie's thin legs seemed as though they were about to collapse at the knees every time he shambled in and out of the workshop on a journey to the finishers upstairs.

At last the coats were ready. They were packed and pinned together in a wrapper and lifted by Mick on to Charlie's shoulders. The boy went staggering through the doorway with bent knees.

Mick tidied his table and replaced the coat-hangers on the rail by the wall. He swiftly brushed his trousers, and left the workshop, bumping into a bowler-hatted, heavy man in the doorway. The latter pushed his awry hat straight. 'Hallo, Mr. Pinkin,' Mick greeted him, and hurried past. Mr. Pinkin ambled leisurely into the workshop with a slightly rolling gait, like that of a sailor. His red, oval-shaped face was jovially perspiring as he blinked through moist glasses at the men. He nodded to the bent heads at the machines: 'Hallo, you sweaters. Still making fortunes?'

'Oh, hullo, Pinkin,' said Bertie busily. 'I'll give you my card soon. You've got time, haven't you?'

'Oh, sure.' Mr. Pinkin leaned his elbows on the side of the pressing-bench, watching the vigorous thumping of the pressers. 'Still making all the money, Danny?' he chaffed in a high-pitched voice.

Daniel did not pause. 'I can do with some help, Pinkin,' he grinned

down on the coat he was pressing. 'Come on, take off your jacket, and start.'

Mr. Pinkin chuckled hoarsely. 'I'd sooner get my money at the bookie.'

'Don't worry, you won't get him to do such things,' said Marks, with a nasty twist to the end of his mouth. 'He knows when to stick to a cushy job, don't you, Pinkin? May all my children be Union officials—they won't have to worry about bread!'

Mr. Pinkin stared and blinked. . . .

'Hallo, Marks has started,' smiled Bertie. 'Here, Pinkin, Marks don't believe in the Union. Just tell him a thing or two, go on. . . .'

'Why,' stuttered Mr. Pinkin, straightening himself from the table, 'there's benefits, for instance . . . and health insurance. . . . It's as good as any other society, anytime.'

'*And* strike pay,' chipped in Bertie.

'Yes, and strike pay.' Mr. Pinkin turned to Bertie: 'But of course, not unlimited. It's got to be a fair strike. We don't like these mischief-makers running around stirring up strikes everywhere.' He reached over to take Bertie's offered card. 'Yes,' he murmured, writing the account in the column. 'The Union's done a lot for the trade.'

'A lot for people like you,' muttered Marks.

Mr. Pinkin's lips screwed up into a point; his glasses gleamed. 'You keep your mouth shut, little cheap-work presser, d'ye hear?' he ground out. 'Don't you talk like that to me. I'm a Union agent, see? A Union agent!'

Marks' sallow features creased in an ugly half-grin. 'You still stink the same as when you were a machiner, though! . . .'

The other men began to interfere. 'Pack it up, you two!' they called out. Mr. Pinkin raged as he almost threw Bertie's card back to him across the machine. 'A cheap-work presser, telling *me*,' he kept saying in Yiddish. 'A fire take Columbus when a Union agent gets insulted by a cheap-work presser! . . .' The men watched him tear through the tight gangway between the benches, and leave without another glance at anyone.

Daniel sighed: 'Well, did you have to do it, Marks?'

'Let him break his head in a million pieces!' Marks gave a sneering laugh. 'A Union agent . . . God, what the world's come to! . . .'

'He might have given us advice about striking,' returned Bertie.

'What advice can he give? You can put him in the same box as Mendel; two lumps of horse-dung!'

'That won't get *us* out of trouble,' brooded Daniel, thumping the iron half-heartedly.

'What's the matter, what are you so afraid of?' said Marks savagely. 'You want to strike? . . . All right, then!' He turned to the others.

'How about you, Bertie?'

'Well, if it's the only thing left? . . . Righto.'

'And you, Jumbo? And you, and you? . . . And you two baisters there on the bench?'

'I told before what I think,' said one of them. 'But I'm willing to do what you all do,' he added determinedly. His partner nodded agreement.

'There,' Marks gestured vehemently, 'you've got your strike. But I tell you, now that we *are* going to strike, it'll be a fight to the finish! . . . It's us, or Mendel!'

LESLIE HALWARD

ARCH ANDERSON

ABOUT half-past ten one Saturday night Arch was making his way towards home, alone. He had left the others at various street corners. He had had a night out with three of his pals; not a booze-up; just a quiet game or two of snooker, losers to pay for the table, first to pot a wrong colour to stand drinks all round, and a swallow or two in between times to keep the dust out of their eyes—a nice pleasant evening, you might say. Arch had enjoyed himself, at any rate, and he reckoned the others had too. He hadn't had to pay towards the table, neither, and half his drinks had come for nothing. A bit of a change for him, that was. His game must be improving. Or else the others were going off. He didn't know which it was. It didn't matter a lot.

Arch yawned and scratched the top of his head without bothering to take his cap off. He didn't know why, but he felt tired to-night. A bit of shut-eye wouldn't come amiss. It wouldn't that. He yawned again, almost closing his eyes, then smacked his lips as though tasting something. Ah well, in another two or three minutes he'd be up the wooden hill, and then it wouldn't be long before he was in dreamland.

He started to turn the corner into Martin Street, where he lived, his hands pushed into his trousers pockets and his head bent, and when he was half-way round, something—for a second or so he didn't know what—something came hurtling along and hit him with such a smack that it knocked all the wind out of him.

'What the hell?' he gasped, staggering.

'Oo, I'm sorry,' a voice said. It was a girl's voice. The girl was sitting on the pavement at Arch's feet. But she didn't sit there for long. 'I'm sorry,' she said again, scrambling up, avoiding Arch's helping hand. 'Did I hurt you?'

'Didn't hurt *me*,' said Arch. 'Hurt you?'

'No, I'm all right.' The girl laughed. 'Made me see stars, though.'

'Did me, and all. Sure you're all right?'

'Yes, thanks.' She was bending down now, almost double, turning this way and that, peering at the pavement. She looked comic.

'What you lost?' asked Arch.

'I'd got a parcel under my arm,' the girl said.

Arch began looking round also. 'Here it is,' he said, in a few moments. He picked up the parcel and handed it to her.

'Thanks,' she said. 'Nothing breakable, that's one good job.'

She stood upright, tossing her hair out of her eyes, giving Arch his first chance to see her properly. She was only a kid—eighteen or nineteen perhaps. Not bad-looking neither. Nice bit of stuff, Arch thought. *Very* nice bit of stuff.

'In a bit of a rush, wasn't you?' he said.

She nodded. 'I was hurrying home. I'm late. There'll be a racket if the old man's in first.'

'Where'd you live?'

'Price Street.'

'Better let me come with you, in case there's a rumpus.' Arch hoped he sounded gallant.

'No, thanks.' She said this hastily.

Arch tried again. 'It ain't safe, you know, walking the streets by yourself at this time o' night.'

She laughed again. 'I shall be all right, don't you bother yourself about that. Nobody'll run off with me.' She slapped the back of her coat, knocking the dust off it. 'Sorry if I give you a shock.'

'It's all right,' said Arch. She was beginning to walk away. 'Whereabouts in Price Street d'you live?' he asked quickly.

'About half-way up.' She took three or four steps. 'Good night,' she called, over her shoulder.

'What's your name?' cried Arch.

She didn't answer. And in another moment she was out of hearing.

In spite of the fact that he had felt tired, Arch didn't go to sleep for a long time after he got into bed. He kept thinking about the girl he had encountered on his way home. There was no doubt about it, she *was* a nice bit of stuff. The sight of a nice bit of stuff always disturbed Arch.

He fell asleep eventually, still thinking about her.

He thought about her almost as soon as he opened his eyes in the morning.

He thought about her from time to time during the day.

He thought about her as he sat having his tea.

And the more he thought about her the more he fancied her.

And the more he fancied her, the more certain he became that, somehow or other, he'd got to have her.

The greater part of that evening Arch spent wandering about in the vicinity of Price Street. He didn't care to walk up the street itself, but he hung about the bottom corner, then walked up another street and along the top and hung about there for a while. Two or three times he could have got off with other girls. In fact, one girl, seeing him walk up and down, passed him, re-passed him, lingered for a while, and then boldly came up to him and offered herself. Arch told her to go home and go to bed.

'That's what I mean,' she said. 'I believe in a bit of comfort, I do. How about it?'

'Go on!' said Arch. 'Beat it!'

She kept on trying to persuade him to go home with her and in the end Arch lost his temper completely. What he said to her caused her to march off with her face as red as a beetroot.

As for Arch, he didn't give up until a few minutes before closing-time. He nipped in and had a quick pint and then went home, feeling none too pleased about things.

The next evening he had arranged to go to the pictures with one of his pals. He didn't keep the appointment. The while his friend must have been sitting in the cinema alone, wondering where he had got to, Arch was standing about on first one and then the other corner of Price Street. He had no more luck than he had had the evening before.

The third evening it was the same.

On the fourth evening Arch had to work overtime, and it was eight o'clock and almost dark by the time he got out. He hurried off in the direction of Price Street. If nothing came off to-night, he had decided, he'd turn it in as a bad job, much as he hated being bested. He'd said that, or much the same thing, the evening before. 'Third time pays for all,' he had said to himself. And then he hadn't been able to resist one more try. Damn it, the wench *must* come out into the bloody street *some* time. Unless she'd had him on the end of a bit of string and didn't live in Price Street at all! He hadn't thought of that. The thought that she might have made a fool of him caused him to grit his teeth and then spit savagely into the gutter.

But he needn't have got worked up, he told himself a few minutes later, for there she stood now on the corner, looking first up and then down the main street, obviously waiting for someone. Arch shrugged his overcoat higher up on his shoulders, pinched the knot of his tie, and tilted his cap a little more over one ear. She was looking away from him. Without her knowing, he walked right up to her.

'Waiting for me?' he asked, quietly.

She turned, startled. 'Oh,' she said. Then, 'No, I'm not.'

He grinned. 'Oh,' he said. 'I thought perhaps you was. I thought perhaps you was expecting me, the way you're all dolled up.'

He could see she liked that, but she pretended she didn't. 'I wasn't expecting you at all,' she said, sharply. 'And I'm not dolled up.'

'Oh,' he said. 'Well, I'd like to see you when you *was* dolled up. I bet you'd look pretty hot.'

He could see she liked that even better, but she didn't say anything. She kept on looking up and down the main street.

Arch still grinned. 'Party you're waiting for,' he said, jerking his head at nowhere, 'bit late?'

She didn't answer.

'Been waiting long?'

No answer.

'I bet,' said Arch, 'you've been waiting here an hour. I bet,' he said, 'you're fed up of waiting.'

She exhaled sharply through her nose—a sort of outward sniff.

'I bet you what you like,' said Arch, 'he don't turn up at all.'

She glanced at him quickly. 'Think yourself smart, don't you?'

'He's done it on you,' he said.

She bit her lip.

'He's gone off with another tart,' he said.

She tapped the pavement with her foot.

'No good standing here *all* night,' he said. 'Better come to the pictures with me.'

She said nothing.

'Soon be too late to get in.'

No answer.

'Like Herbert Marshall?'

She raised her eyebrows.

He jerked his head at the clock outside the chemist's opposite. 'Get there just in time for second house if we go now,' he pointed out.

She almost spoke, but managed to stop herself.

'He won't come now,' said Arch.

Her lip trembled.

'We shall just about do it,' said Arch.

He pulled her arm.

'Come on,' he said.

The arm moved, but she remained like a statue.

'Come on,' he said again.

He pulled harder, and she took a step towards him.

'Come on,' he said a third time.

She began to walk with him.

In the cinema he put his hand on her knee, as if by accident, and she removed it.

Got to go slow here, he thought.

The film bored him.

When they came out she said, 'Thanks.'

'What for?' he asked.

'Taking me to the pictures.'

'Pleasure,' he said.

They walked to the corner of Price Street.

'Good night,' she said.

'Better see you the rest of the way,' he said.

'Better not,' she advised him. 'The old man might be about.'

He pulled down the corners of his mouth. 'Your old man one o' them sort?'

'He's all right, really.'

He lit a cigarette and blew the smoke through tight lips. 'You ain't told me your name yet.'

'It's Lil,' she said.

'Lil what?'

'Lil Perkins. What's yours?'

He told her.

'I'd better go in,' she said.

'How about Friday night?'

'I always stop in Friday nights.'

'How about Saturday?'

She considered. 'All right.'

'See you here?'

'Better make it somewhere else.'

'Outside the Post Office?'

'All right.'

'About six?'

She nodded.

He pinched her arm lightly. 'O.K. See you Saturday.'

It seemed a long while till Saturday. Arch didn't work on Saturday mornings, so he had the day to himself. Most of the time he was thinking about his appointment for that evening. He had arranged the programme. First house at the pictures, with a few sweets for her to nibble; a walk round for half an hour; treat her to a port, or a couple if she'd stand it; and then—but it didn't do to keep on thinking about that. He could hardly sit still as it was.

As far as Arch was concerned, Saturday was a wash-out. The pictures went down all right and Lil liked the sweets. It was a fine night, so she agreed that it would be nice to go for a walk. They wandered about for a time, and then, as they were passing a pub, he said, casually, 'I could do with a wet. Coming in?'

'No thanks,' said Lil.

'Come on,' he urged. 'Have a drop of port. Do you good.'

'No, thanks,' she said.

He kept on trying to persuade her, but she refused to go into the place.

'You go in and have yours,' she said. 'I'll wait outside.'

'It don't matter,' he said. 'I can do without.'

'Please yourself,' said Lil.

They wandered about for an hour or so longer, not saying much to each other, and then Lil said she'd better think about getting towards home.

That's cased it, thought Arch.

As they walked towards Price Street he kept his eyes open for a quiet gateway or entry where he could take her for a quarter of an hour, but before he knew where he was they had halted on the corner and Lil was saying that she'd had a good time and that she'd better go in now.

'Good night,' she said.

'Good night,' said Arch.

'What's the matter with you?' she asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

'You sound fed up,' she said.

He said nothing.

'You could have gone and had a drink,' she said. 'I shouldn't have minded.'

'I ain't worrying about *that*,' he said.

'What are you worrying about, then?'

'Nothing,' he said.

'Well, I shall *have* to go in,' said Lil.

'Doing anything to-morrow night?'

'Sunday? No, nothing special.'

'See you to-morrow night, then.'

'All right,' said Lil.

They began going out together regularly three or four times a week. Sometimes they went for a walk, sometimes to the pictures. Twice, on a Saturday, they went into town and visited a music-hall. Lil

enjoyed that. She hadn't been to a music-hall many times in her life.

They got on well together. Arch liked Lil. She was a good sort. She appreciated what he did for her and didn't want a lot of fuss. She didn't take him home. The old man might be a bit awkward, she said. They met and parted on the street corner.

Going out with Lil so regularly, Arch found that he was dropping all his old pals. It didn't worry him much. One night it occurred to him that he hadn't had any drink for over a week. He hadn't missed it, he was forced to admit to himself.

One Sunday evening they met early, got on to a tram, and rode out as far as the Lockley Hills. They climbed the north hill and stood on the top and looked down at the sprawling town on the one side and the wonderful panorama of woods, meadows and ribbon-like roads on the other. Lil took off her hat and let the wind blow through her hair. She kept laughing, apparently for no reason at all.

They wandered about the hills for a long time, got lost, and then suddenly found themselves in a spot they recognized. Lil kept laughing and saying what fun it was. Arch didn't laugh much, or say much either. He just walked beside her, or behind her when she ran ahead. He hardly took his eyes off her.

Presently it began to grow dusk.

'We shall have to go,' said Lil.

'Want to?' he asked.

She shook her head.

'Let's stop,' he said, 'and watch the lights come on down below.'

'We shan't find our way back in the dark.'

'We shall. You go straight down this path.'

'All right. But we mustn't stay too late.'

It was exciting watching the lights come on. Along the streets you could see them flash on one at a time in rows. A little later the lights outside the shops and other buildings were turned on, and soon in the growing darkness there was just a mass of tiny lights that danced and twinkled.

'Isn't it lovely!' cried Lil.

Arch did not speak.

'We'd better go,' she said.

'It ain't late,' said Arch.

'Are you cold?' she asked.

'No,' he said.

'I thought your voice trembled,' said Lil.

'Let's sit down for a bit,' he said.
'What for?'
'Have a rest before we start back.'
'You're not tired, are you?'
'No, but——'
'You'll have a good rest on the tram.'
'Come and sit down.'
'It's nearly dark. We shall never find the way.'
'We shall find the way all right. Come and sit down. Come on. Just for a minute.'
'We hadn't ought to stop——'
'Only just for a minute. Come on.'
'All right. But I don't know——'
'You can sit on my coat. That's it.'
'I don't think I like it up here in the dark.'
'You'll be all right.'
'It'll be ever so late by the time we get back.'
'It's only about nine.'
'It's such a long way, though. We ought to go, really.'
'We'll go in a minute. I——'
'Don't, Arch! Don't do that——!'
'It's all right.'
'No—please——!'
'It's all right. I shan't hurt you.'
'Arch——!'
'It's all right.'
'Oh, you shouldn't——!'
A long silence.
'There, I didn't hurt you, did I?'
'No.'
'I told you I shouldn't.'
'Hold me tight.'
Another silence.
'You do love me, don't you, Arch?'
'Yes.'
'Nothing's going to happen, is it?'
'Because of to-night, you mean?'
'Yes.'
'No, nothing won't happen.'
'Are you sure?'
'Sure.'
'All right. I don't care, then.'

'We'd better be going, hadn't we? Your old man might turn a bit crusty.'

'I don't care. I don't care about anything.'

'We'd better go, though, all the same.'

'Give me a big kiss. And then we'll go.'

'There you are, then. Now catch hold of my arm. Mind you don't slip.'

Several months passed. Arch and Lil still went out together three or four times a week, sometimes for a walk, sometimes to the cinema, once in a while to a music-hall. They still met and parted on the street corner.

One evening Lil seemed quiet, and Arch asked her what was the matter with her, and she said, 'Nothing.' But he could see that she had something on her mind, and he kept on asking her what it was until finally she told him.

'I'm going to have a baby,' she said.

'Oh, Christ!' said Arch.

'What had we better do?' asked Lil.

'I don't know,' said Arch.

'There's a woman up our street——'

'You keep away from her.'

'I know a girl as went to her and she said it never hurt her at all.'

'I don't care. You keep away from her.'

'And have the kid?'

Arch said nothing.

'The old man'll kick me out,' said Lil.

'He won't.'

'He will.'

'He won't. He won't have the chance.'

'What do you mean?'

'You'll go out on your own.'

'Where to?'

'We'll find somewhere.'

'Arch! Do you mean we'll —we'll——?'

'Sure thing. Where'd you like to go for your honeymoon?'

'Oh, Arch!'

'Think we shall hit it off?'

''Course we shall!'

'It's hurried things up a bit that's all. I thought about next year if things went all right.'

'Oh, Arch!'

'You're sure you're going to *have* a kid?'
She nodded.
There was a long silence.
'What're you thinking about, Arch?'
'I was just trying to think which night it was I——'
'It don't matter now, does it?'
'Not a lot,' said Arch. 'I just wondered, that's all.'

They got married about six weeks later. It was an exciting time. There was no chance of getting a house, but they managed to find accommodation in two back rooms, sharing scullery, wash-house, and lavatory with another family. They hadn't much money between them, but Lil admired and stroked the few bits of furniture that they bought as if they were pieces of Chippendale. They bought a roll or two of cheap paper and stuck it on the walls: it was wrinkled and the pattern varied slightly; but Lil thought it looked grand. They didn't have a celebration; they both agreed that they could find a better use for the money; after the ceremony they went straight to their new home. They got married on the Saturday, so that Arch shouldn't lose any time. Arch was only joking, of course, when he asked Lil where she would like to go for the honeymoon.

They settled themselves at once, and in next to no time, it seemed, the baby was born. It was a girl, and they called her Sal.

Arch thought the world of Sal. Sometimes Lil would pretend to be jealous and say, 'You think more of the kid than you do of me.' 'You know better than that,' Arch would say to her.

They were very happy.

Time went on. Arch rented an allotment, and every Saturday and Sunday morning he was there, digging, planting, weeding, lighting bonfires, thoroughly enjoying himself. Practically all the vegetables they ate they grew themselves. It was a great save, and the stuff tasted better than that you bought from the shops. Sometimes Arch would take a cabbage to the old people and say to his father, with pride, '*That's* how you want to grow 'em, mate.' The old man would smile and say that Arch had never seen anything.

One Saturday morning it was raining when Arch was ready to start out, and it looked as if it wasn't going to stop.

'I shouldn't go this morning, if I was you,' said Lil.

'It might clear up just now,' said Arch. 'I want to get them plants

in as old Peters give me. This is just the weather for the job. They won't want watering if I shove 'em in now!'

He put on his overcoat and went off with the plants. Before he had reached the allotment it had stopped raining, and he made a start on the job. But he hadn't been at it more than half an hour before the rain began to come down faster than ever. He sheltered in the little shed he had put up at the end of the path. It was no good. He'd have to pack it up and go home. As soon as the rain was falling a bit steadier he set off.

And then, when he was about half-way home, the rain started to come down again just as if somebody was pouring it out of a bucket.

'Christ!' thought Arch. 'It's a bloody cloudburst, I should think!'

The water came down in a sheet. You couldn't see anything. The drains couldn't take it, and the roads were like rivers. Nobody was in sight. People had darted up entries, in doorways, anywhere where it was dry. Arch began to run. He couldn't get in anywhere. Everywhere was full up. He kept on running, glancing into every opening that he passed. He came to the bar door of The Unicorn. There'd be room in there, anyway, he thought. In another moment he was inside.

'Morning, stranger,' the barman said.

'Morning,' said Arch.

'Nice drop o' rain.'

'*Very* nice drop o' rain.'

'Pint?' the barman asked.

Arch nodded, moved up towards the counter, and felt in his pocket.

By the time he had drunk the pint it had almost stopped raining. Just as he set down the glass and was about to go, a gang of men came in. They had left work and had called in for a drink on their way home. Arch knew several of them.

'Hello, Arch!'

'How goes it?'

'What are you doing in here?'

'Does the missus know about this?'

'You'll get your bottom smacked when you get home.'

'He slipped a tanner out of the packet this week, that's what he did.'

They started joking about his having to turn his money up every week, about his being a good lad since he got married. To show them that he had some money of his own, Arch treated three or four of them to a pint.

'Good old Arch,' they said.

Arch said that he had to be off, but they wouldn't let him go.

'You've got to have one with me, my lad.'

'And another with me.'

All those he had treated wanted to buy him a drink.

'I've got to beat it,' said Arch. 'See you some other time.'

But the barman had already drawn the first round of drinks. He pushed Arch's along the counter to him.

'Cheers, Bill,' said Arch.

'Good old Arch,' they said.

Arch had a drink with each of those he had treated. They kept on joking about his having to turn his money up, about his being a good lad since he got married.

'Good old Arch,' they kept saying.

'There's one thing about it,' one of them said, 'it's a nice bit o' stuff he's got to sleep with.'

'It is that,' said another.

'I know somebody else as thinks so, and all,' said a third, winking at the others behind Arch's back.

'What d'you mean?' demanded Arch, swinging round.

'Look up! You're spilling your beer.'

'I said what d'you mean?'

'I know what he means,' said another, joining in the game.

Arch swung round again. 'What're you getting at?' he wanted to know.

They kept him turning from one to the other, inquiring what it was all about. They could hardly keep their faces straight. At last one of them thought of something.

'If you didn't spend so much time at that allotment you might see something,' he said.

'See something?'

'You might see what I've seen.'

'Ah, and me.'

'And me, and all.'

It was a great bit of fun.

Arch was becoming bewildered. He banged his glass on the counter. 'What the hell are you on about, eh? What is it you've seen, eh? Come on! What is it you've seen?'

'Ask Tom.'

'Charlie'll tell you.'

'Ask Fred.'

'George knows.'

The barman was sniggering behind the counter.

'What is it you've seen?' shouted Arch.

'Well,' said the one who had started it, 'I've seen the milkman's cart standing outside your house a damn sight longer than it need.'

'Good-looking chap, your milkman,' said another.

'Young and all,' said a third.

'Come to think of it,' chimed in another, '*I* used to think it took him a hell of a time to serve a drop of milk.'

Arch said nothing. He finished his drink and without a word walked out of the place. He didn't hear the howl of laughter that went up the moment he had got clear of the door.

He walked unsteadily along the street. A pack of bloody fools, that's what they were. Wanted something to do, he should think. Thought they were funny. He ought to have thumped a couple of them under the chin. Learn 'em to keep their traps shut, that would. What did they think he was, anyway? A muggins? They could think what they liked. *They* were the mugginses, not him. They didn't know what they were missing. Trying to get a laugh out of him, were they? Well, let 'em laugh. Let 'em laugh their bloody heads off. The joke was on them. He knew who was best off——

The weight of the wet overcoat was making him sweat. He took it off and carried it under his arm.

That bit about the milkman and his cart—there was nothing in it, of course. They'd just been pulling his leg. There was nothing in it. There couldn't be anything in it. He knew Lil better than that. She was as straight as a die. Straight as a die, she was. The best little missus a bloke ever had. Right as ninepence, Lil was. Why, she'd told him not to go out this morning, so how could she have been expecting anybody? But it was all silly rubbish. They'd just been pulling his leg. They hadn't seen anything. There was nothing to see. They'd just been pulling his leg.

He kept on telling himself that there was nothing in it, that they'd just been pulling his leg, that Lil was as straight as a die, and then suddenly he looked up, let his jaw drop, and stood staring up the street.

'Christ!' he said to himself. 'Christ!'

The milkman's cart was standing in the street at the bottom of their entry.

For ten seconds, he stood staring, his mouth gaping.

'Good-looking chap, your milkman.'

'Young, and all.'

'Takes him a hell of a time to serve a drop of milk.'

'If you didn't spend so much time at that allotment——'

In less than half a minute Arch was in the house. The milkman

turned, looked surprised to see him there. Arch grabbed him by the front of his coat and began to bash his good-looking face. Lil screamed.

By the time Arch had finished, his fist was covered with blood and the milkman's face wasn't like a face at all.

They gave Arch a month's hard labour for assault. The milkman, in evidence, said that he had gone into the house, as was his habit, so that Mrs. Anderson could pay him. He did that every Saturday morning, he said. He had signed the book and was about to leave when Anderson came in and assaulted him. It was his opinion that Anderson was the worse for drink.

Lil said as little as possible, but was obliged to admit the truth of this statement.

Arch refused to say anything at all.

Lil was waiting for Arch when he came out. They walked home together. They didn't say much to each other. Arch was glad to see Sal. He said he'd thought about her a lot.

The next day he went to inquire after his job. They told him that they were sorry but in his absence they had set on another man.

He was out of work for eight weeks.

Then he got a job labouring at a timber yard. The wages were about half what he had previously been earning. One night some timber was stolen. They didn't find out who'd stolen it, but it was whispered that Arch had seen the inside of a jail, and he was told to go.

He got several jobs after that, but could keep none of them for more than a few weeks. As soon as they were short of work he was the first to get his discharge.

As time went on he was out of work more than he was employed. He hadn't any decent clothes. He began to hang about on street corners, waiting for someone to take him into a pub and buy him a pint. Once in a while he went home drunk.

Lil grew very pale and thin. She never reproached him for anything, for it seemed to her that, somehow or other, she was to blame.

J. BRIAN HARVEY

MEETING IN A VALLEY

'HERE's your post-office, boy.'

Shirley took the letter from his pocket, checked the address once more, and dropped it in the box.

'To Peggy?' asked the worker.

'Yeah,' replied the student.

They went on down the street. Evan had met Peggy at the Camp: she was Shirley's girl.

'She's a fine woman.' He wanted to draw the student out.

'Sure,' said Shirley. He didn't want to talk about Peggy. He wasn't sure: wasn't sure of Peggy, wasn't sure of himself.

'You going to be married?'—there was a touch of jealousy in the worker's voice.

'Money,' was the brief reply.

They'd talked about it before, so Evan knew what the student meant. 'You'll get a job: don't worry, man,' he said.

'Maybe,' laughed Shirley. 'But who'll give a job to a penniless petty-bourgeois Communist?'

Evan said Peggy was a good comrade too and the student nodded. After a while Evan said: 'You'll like May, I think—she's young—she could learn if she wanted.' But there was more to it than that: Evan knew that, and Shirley knew it too: they'd talked about it.

The street was a long one, running along the side of the hill, the 'mountain' they called it, into the neighbouring town. Rough streets and houses climbed up the hill one side, down it on the other towards the valley where the mines were: puffs of smoke and the grinding of wheels down there in the valley where the mines were: and the thoughts of the village and the neighbouring town, the thoughts of the wives and children and the husbands who were out of work, their thoughts there, down in the valley where the mines were. South Wales, and it was strange to Shirley, fresh from the text-books and the theory of surplus value: a student raw to politics, and this was Evan's world, his daily world, and Shirley couldn't get inside the skin of it. Somewhere he knew it touched Graham's work in Paris, John's trip to Russia, but he couldn't feel the touch. He said this was

real, and Evan's house was small and coming out for the walk he'd got up forgetfully and knocked his head against the ceiling, flakes of plaster making him into a bridegroom—bumping his head against reality, confetti for the wedding of fact and fancy. Bride and bridegroom were strangers it seemed. South Wales was real, down there in the valley where the mines were. The unexpected bride, cold, conception difficult.

Some of the men they passed, leaning against the doors of houses, knew Evan and shouted him a welcome back. They asked, was he coming to the meeting in the next valley to-morrow night? Evan said, yes he'd be there. He went to all the meetings, nearly all. And Shirley wanted to go especially.

The town looked more prosperous than the village: or rather, less derelict. May lived in the town. They were going to see May. She was Evan's girl.

Evan had been away for ten days. He was unemployed and had been to the holiday camp organized by the students. Shirley had been there, and when the first lot of men had come back from the camp to their villages by bus, Evan among them, he had come too. He was to see the people in Cardiff about one or two details of organization. He was going back the day after next, with another lot of men. Evan was putting him up for the two nights.

Evan guided Shirley down one of the side-streets in the town. He knocked on a door there, answered by a dog's bark. A young man came. He wasn't a miner; you could tell that from his clothes, not like the miners', even when they were dressed to go to church. He was a clerk in the Co-op stores.

He said: 'May's in the kitchen,' and went out with the dog.

Shirley followed Evan along the passage into the living-room.

May ran in from the kitchen.

''Lo, May.'

'Evan bach! You're looking well, man.'

Shirley was introduced. May's mother came in after that and there was handshaking and inquiries. Evan was telling the two women about the camp. May's mother made a cup of tea for them.

Shirley looked about him. There was a Bible on a stool by a male-looking chair, a hymn-book on the piano, framed quotations on the walls. May's father was a strong churchman, probably why he'd kept his job as foreman in the mines at his age. May was short and dark. Shirley liked the look of her: her body was firm, youthful and attractive. She was sitting by the window, her face catching the light.

She was in work too, at the hairdresser's on the main road. Together with her brother who had opened the door, there was a tidy bit coming in to run the house. It was needed. May had an aunt in hospital: cancer, they said.

'Well, are you coming for a walk, girl?' Evan asked.

May went upstairs to get a hat and coat, then the three of them set out. They took a path up one of the hills. Evan still talked about the camp, but May didn't seem to care much. He had to pull her up some of the steep bits and she let him keep his arm round her after that. She'd often walked up here with Evan and he'd told her of the things happening in the other valleys over the hills: and she'd lain back on the grass neither listening nor not listening, but just watching Evan. Now he was telling the student of strikes in the valley and in the other valleys over the hills, and she was neither listening nor not listening.

Evan had been courting May for three and a half years. The first fifteen months he'd been working and they were happy enough. He was in the Young Communist League then and her pa and ma had treated it as a sort of joke, and sometimes he'd come to church on Sunday and that pleased them. But then he came out on to the streets with fifty other lads for whom the mines had no use. May stuck to him and her people were sorry for him. He was a fine lad, and she'd be a fine woman for a man to marry. The mines couldn't find any use for him, nor for the fifty other lads. May was only eighteen then and she'd started a bottom drawer. But now, more than two years later, it was the sullen sarcasm of her father when he'd seen Evan canvassing the *Daily Worker*, it was her mother's heavy lack of enthusiasm when she opened the door to a daughter who'd spent the twilight hours with an out-of-work.

They reached the top of the hill, Evan and May and Shirley. There was a wireless building there that relayed programmes cheaply to houses in the valley. The man there was glad to see Evan and produced some beer from a cupboard. There was some questioning and information.

The music on the wireless stopped and the news-bulletin began.

The man's dog smelt something and trotted out. Shirley had been speaking, but stopped to listen to the foreign news. May hadn't been speaking: she followed the dog. Mussolini had made a speech which was being reported. Evan jeered and followed May. The wireless man was showing Shirley how the houses in the valley were hearing music from another station on another set while they listened to the news. Shirley stayed and talked to him.

May was sitting on the ground, stroking the dog and looking out over the valley. The sun was setting in a bath of pink behind a bank of smoky cloud. Coal-dust seemed to be seeping down from the sky. Yellow, garish lights in the town below poked their heads out of the dust. Down at the station was sound, like muffled brutality—trucks shunting.

Evan sat down by May, turned her towards him and kissed her. She broke away to settle herself comfortably. The kiss hadn't meant much, she hadn't meant it to.

'What's up, kid?' asked Evan, piqued.

'Nothing,' she said.

'Are you not pleased to see me again?'

'Of course I am.'

'How's it been while I was away?'

'All right. Ma hasn't been very well and Auntie's still bad.'

Evan kissed her neck. Her hands came round and pressed his head there. A gesture before, to hold him off. But she'd missed him and her flesh was hungry for his lips and hands. His fingers stirred her breasts as his arms came round to hold her close. Her mouth was open and he closed it with another kiss. Her skirt was tight beneath her, pinned by her, his legs. No words were spoken, except: 'Evan,' she said. 'Darling' would have been foolish. Down at the station, trucks swung to their own rhythm, topping the incline of the shunting-yard—the only noise except their breath.

But she was afraid, afraid of the strength and hunger of his love. While he had been away, it had been more restful. Now he was back again with the worry of his unemployment and his politics. His strong love made the worry stronger.

They lay there, pressed together: her head on his shoulder, his hands in her hair, their hearts one ache; her legs strapped down by the skirt, a shoe coming loose, his coat a bundle beneath his hip. 'Evan!' —and his breath forced in gasps along her shoulder, underneath her blouse. She could hardly feel her body any more. . . . Let me breathe . . . let me . . . your lips . . . they're hurting mine. . . . Evan, your knee . . . Evan, it's hurting! . . .

Suddenly her hands came to life, her heels dug into the ground. She fought away from him, struggled to win back breath. Evan limp as she gripped his neck, forcing her lips from his. She sank back on the ground, close to him, quite close, as if his shadow, but her body collapsed away from him. Silence now, as she turned her face away and he raised himself on one elbow, watching the elegant line of her back: silence, except for the trucks again, heavy with weight of coal,

clattering to and fro, bent to the engine's will, its momentum killing theirs, imposed, ordered, regular.

Shirley was waiting for them. The wireless man was a bit of a bore, but he felt he should be tactful both to him and to Evan and May. He waited and thought of Peggy. Peggy to whom he'd just written. She would get the letter in the morning ; Peggy, lovely, immaculate and conscientious, waiting till they were married, waiting till they both had jobs and could wed—an orderly, a planned life, a life with no loose ends.

May was crying now. Her hands pulled at a stone till it came dislodged, threw it weakly aside. Evan sat up and looked down into the valley, lit a cigarette. May gathered herself slowly and lay on her back again. He tossed her cigarettes and matches. Almost painfully she took the smoke, lit it, got up and wandered back indoors.

Evan rose, puffed at his cigarette, then threw it away. He walked to the fence, kicking stones down the hill.

That was the nearest they ever came. May was stubborn, couldn't let her body melt to his for fear of more. She didn't want him furtively. However magnificently the passion swept through you, like the wind stalking through fields of corn as she'd seen once from the train going for a holiday; however the lunatic tide swept over your limbs—it was the fact that the walk down the hill brought you nearer to saying good-night, the fact that the next morning would discover a chilly mile between your beds. It was the fact that inevitably one night they'd get lost in their joy, she'd be late getting home and everything pour out like a sewer bursting.

Not that he'd wanted her then, with it still half-light and Shirley there, but only for her body to melt to him, only to feel, coming back again after ten days, that there was someone who wanted him without reserve, someone apart from his work who wanted him for himself alone, because he was himself and no one else. He hadn't wanted her then, but it came to the same in the end: even made it worse.

He went back indoors and they made for home, the three of them, Evan and May and Shirley.

Evan started singing and Shirley joined in. Welsh hymns and revolutionary songs. May had a good voice, but kept silent. The worker and the student marched in step to the tunes. Gradually May dawdled behind. They took her by the arms, one on each side, but it wasn't any use. They broke up and each made their own time. May wouldn't speak, except 'Yes' or 'No,' she said. Evan was getting angry.

Once they stopped and Evan went into a fish-and-chips shop, for supper with Shirley when they got home. The student and the girl stood on the pavement outside. May felt he was the same as Evan. He asked questions about her work and South Wales, and 'Yes' or 'No,' she said. They fell silent. Then Evan came.

They reached the end of the street where May lived. She stopped there—a custom to do so, to talk there a minute or two before they went into the house and said a formal good night in front of her people.

Evan said it was fine to see May again and she said he probably hadn't missed her all that much. He laughed at her for a sour tart, then asked if she'd come to the pictures Saturday.

'Why not to-morrow?' she asked.

'We're going over the hill for a meeting, girl.'

'Do you have to go, then?'

'Sure. All the Labour chaps will be going. A fine working-class party we'll look indeed if we're not there.'

'Does that matter? Labour or Communist, it's much the same, and where does a girl come in?'

'Go on, you tell her, Shirley.' Evan had had the argument times before and was tired of it.

'I never heard such a fuss as you make of your politics,' she went on.

'Aw, come off it, kid!' said Evan.

Shirley wanted to speak for Evan, but he knew it was no good. At home, Peggy was in the party too: they went to meetings together.

May was standing with her back to the wall of a house. Evan stood, close to her, leaning his shoulder against it, shifting his feet. Shirley stood apart, hands in his pockets. May was entrenched firmly. They watched her, staring over the roof-tops into the dark, she was waiting for Evan, almost pregnant the pride of her body there as she waited asking a concession. Her brother came round the corner, bringing the dog home.

'Evan will be expected to go to-morrow, you know,' said the student.

'Gyp! Gyp!' she called and the dog barked back at her. She followed it with her eyes along the street. 'Gyp! Gyp!'—and it barked again. She didn't answer Shirley.

'Well, then, we'll go out Saturday,' said Evan.

'I don't know. Maybe I'll have to stay in.'

'Aw, don't be a little mut!'

'Leave the door open, Tom,' she called to her brother, and started moving down towards the house. Evan and Shirley followed her.

'Gyp! Here, Gyp, here!'—and the dog came running to her, barking, obedient at her feet.

Shirley and Evan were sleeping in the same room. They hadn't talked much on the way back. At supper Evan's mother monopolized the student. Now they were in bed, talking of the valleys and the mines, how things were going. It ended with a yawn from Shirley, and Evan pulling the bedclothes snugly round his shoulder.

'What d'you think of her, then?' asked Evan at last.

'May? She looks she'd give you a good time.'

'Yeah. Wish she'd come straight though, man. I've talked to her enough till I've tired of talking, almost tired of her. But it's her I want, not a woman as 'ld please any man indeed who asked. You don't worry though, you'll be married soon. I thought that three years ago, but then the pit closed down.'

'It's tough,' said Shirley, very self-consciously.

'Are you going on talking all night, Evan man?' came the mother's voice from the next room. 'Pipe down, will you, or we'll have no sleep at all!'

'A' right, ma. 'Night, Shirley. We'd better get to sleep.'

'Good night, Evan.' They heard the light turned off in the other room: father and mother were in bed.

The worker slept quickly. Shirley lay awake.

He was thinking, yes, in spite of his own affected scepticism he would marry Peggy. Peggy wanted to be married, wanted to be a wife and wouldn't live with him till then. And he knew next summer when they finished at the university they'd both get jobs of a sort all right, and then they'd marry.

He was thinking of nights with Peggy and the soft touch of her flesh. . . . 'Gyp! Gyp!' and the picture was sharp in his mind, the picture still of May, bold and statuesque against the wall, calling to the dog, casually, deliberately, annoyingly.

He was thinking how sweet it would be to wake in the mornings to Peggy, to watch her wake, watch her body wake to his. . . . 'Gyp! Gyp!'—and the dog barking, and Evan shifting his weight from one foot to another.

He thought, Evan's got a tough nut to crack. Evan had said he'd talked to May, had talked till he's almost tired of talking. Shirley had talked to Peggy too: 'Darling, it's only bourgeois prejudice: there's nothing wrong in it and maybe we won't have enough money to marry for years yet. It's natural and you're thinking in terms of bourgeois love.' That's what he'd said. Peggy would have his letter

to-morrow and he'd said it again in that. It made him feel uncomfortable. . . . 'Gyp! Gyp!'—that bloody dog. Shirley was almost asleep, and the dog was miles away, but very clear. Evan had a tough nut to crack, and it made him feel uncomfortable.

Shirley was almost asleep. Peggy would have his letter to-morrow. And to-morrow they'd go over the hills to the meeting and the men would talk about the bosses and profits and wages. And they'd sing on the way back, sing the words:

> 'For reason in revolt now thunders
> And at last ends the age of cant.
> Then away with all your superstitions. . . .'

There was the hell of a way to go. Superstition went so much deeper than wage-cuts, but it was the same. Profits and the cops standing by to watch, and superstition and love—they were all the same. To-morrow they'd go over the hills to the meeting and the men would shout about the National Government and someone would call for the 'Red Flag' and the 'International' and they'd sing till their throats were dry. And on the way back they'd sing the Welsh songs, 'Sospan Bach' and the Welsh hymns. And whether they talked about Baldwin or Citrine or about who'd be putting them to sleep that night if only they had jobs, whether they talked of politics or love, the age of cant or superstition—it was all the same, all the bloody same.

To-morrow they would go over the hills to the meeting.

To-morrow on his lips and in his mind, Shirley fell asleep.

T. C. WORSLEY

A BOY'S LOVE

MISS LEESE—the prim English monosyllable with its correct English sound, so very inappropriate to the flashing little woman now approaching middle age, who whistled in the kitchen that morning. And the kitchen of the flat in the drearier end of West Kensington, so inappropriate to her flaming red hair and the passionate air which hung about her. Not that she was pretty in the least—she was positively ugly, with her little turned up nose and her face irregular, and her screwed-up eyes, and her tiny body. But somehow her ugliness was attractive, and her passionate hair, and the air of gaiety and spontaneous excitement which might so easily turn into intense gloom, or even hate.

She whistled and sang, and went about her work, preparing a chicken to put in the oven, and peeling potatoes, and washing the salad: never staying at the same thing for very long on end, but darting from one to the other, singing and whistling. And then she would interrupt the preparation of lunch to see how the curling tongs were getting on, and, when they were hot, taking her straight red hair and sizzling it with the hot iron, and curling up the ends. And all the time she kept her feelings somehow all within herself.

Another woman, Mrs. Mailey, came into the kitchen, younger than Miss Leese; but already a mother. She was attractive too, but with a different gaiety, more brittle, less deep in her. Though equally her feelings were her visible attraction, they were more on the surface, bubbling up and spilling into the air; there was no saving of them; they shot away from her like electric sparks, and the supply seemed inexhaustible. She was always in good spirits, and she kept no claim on them: she lavished them to any comer, and, once gone from her, she bothered no more about them: they were gone: there were more to replace them. While Miss Leese had been storing hers, had been keeping them to herself, and when she let them out into the open, they were still attached to her, they were still hers; she let them escape only for the moment into the air out of their cage, and presently they would be shut back again. But while they were out, they made themselves felt and seen; they communicated themselves into the atmosphere and gave it all a sharpness and a point, a tang, which was part of herself.

She came into the kitchen and caught Miss Leese's mood at once; she adjusted her own, heightening it to the appropriate tension; and then took the edge off it by chaff.

They seemed almost to chant to one another in their quick Russian, whose flow was light and singing, and emotionally phrased, with none of the dead slickness of 'educated English.' Their Russian again —so inappropriate to their names; the one prim English, and the other Irish, these two, the smaller with flaming hair, and passionately personal, the other plumper, and filled with a nervous energy and excitement which she poured about the room.

'So, curling your hair, Lena? And the dinner? What's happening to the dinner? Look, the chicken will never be done in time if you don't get it into the oven. And you know what Michale will say if lunch isn't ready when he comes.'

'Ah, you, never you mind about the lunch. I'll see that that is ready in time. What would he say if my hair were all out of place?'

'Your hair, Lena. Your hair. Why you know he will never even notice your hair. You would get him through his belly before you would through your hair. Mind to the dinner, my dear, mind to the dinner.'

Miss Leese put down the tongs and turned round, and her smile creased and drew together her face, emphasizing more than ever the screwed-up eyes.

'Talk about getting him! An old woman like me doesn't want to get a boy like that. He is only a boy. But I must have my hair right: that must be right.'

Mrs. Mailey sat up on the dresser, and then in a moment got down, and moved over to the table; she fiddled with a knife, and sang, too; and then she began to cut up the salad.

Miss Leese turned round on her and snapped at her quickly: 'No, Olga, leave it alone. I do all the lunch; I do it all. You won't do it right; you'll spoil something. Let me alone; I'll do it. Don't you touch.'

'Certainly you do it,' said Olga, resuming her perch on the dresser. 'I thought I could help. . . . But don't you imagine that he'll notice whether you have done it all or not. And even if he did, you wouldn't get a word of thanks. Not a word. He will only tease you; he will only tell you that it is rotten, or twist your arm, whatever you do. I wouldn't take all that trouble and know that I wasn't to get a word of thanks. Not a word.'

'Let him tease: let him say nothing: let him not thank me.' Lena murmured almost as much to herself as to Olga. 'I don't care: that

is his way: he is like that. I don't want it different. He's only a boy; that's all. And I like giving him a good lunch. I shall cook it myself, very nicely. I don't want it different.'

She turned and put the chicken in; it had already, as a matter of fact, been in once before, and was almost ready, but it had to go in again to get warm. She had put it in too soon, and didn't want to dry it up.

'Oh, you're silly, Lena,' the other said gaily, and laughing at her.

'I don't mind,' she replied. 'I don't mind. All right, I'm silly.' And she moved about the kitchen doing a little to the salad, prodding the potatoes, sizzling her hair with the iron, or taking out a case from her bag and doing her face, marking her lips with a scarlet slash which flaunted itself on her sallow complexion.

Olga sat up on the dresser and watched her darting about the kitchen, and preparing everything at once. She rallied the little woman and her industry: but it was all playful: she didn't interfere. She didn't try to change Miss Leese's preoccupation. Really she was keeping it up, keeping up the tension at the height Miss Leese wanted it; reminding her by what she said that there had been a yesterday, and this and that had passed between her and the boy.

'What you do it for I can't think. There he was yesterday, late for breakfast, and keeping you hanging about to make the bed; and grousing, then, that the bacon was cold, and pinching your arm till it was blue: look, there's the bruise still. And only in again for a late dinner which you had to keep hot, and complaining that it was over-cooked. And hurting you, too, as he does, *really hurting*, with his kicks and his pinches and his twisting.'

And her chatter pleased Lena, glad to be reminded that yesterday he had been there, and that, things being what they were, he had taken so much notice of her. After all he might not have had anything to do with her at all, his eyes on people of his own age; might never have noticed her at all in other circumstances, she a middle-aged woman now, and he a mere boy. He would not have had time to turn and notice her, that she had red hair, that she had feelings, and that they might, for instance, be directed to him.

His mother and father were abroad, and he had to come and live with his cousin Mrs. Mailey when he had nowhere else to go. And here he had to take some account of her, for she did all the cooking and housework; and from being a drudgery, a dreary routine which she got through somehow, it became a pleasure, an offering which she laid down at his feet.

Of course he did not take any notice, or see it as she meant it.

Why should he, he only a boy, and she getting on to middle age? But that didn't matter. Devotion didn't necessarily expect an overt reward, certainly didn't look for gratitude. If one got it, then that was another matter, that was heaven. But you could hardly expect *that* every day. How did Olga know that all the devotion which she lavished on the child was going to be repaid? As likely as not the child would repudiate all that she had done in the end. But that didn't prevent her from lavishing her affection and asking, at present, no return.

Return! What an English way of regarding it all. As if one's affections were Capital which one should never invest unless one were sure of a good return. Rentier; bourgeois. She was not going to invest anything, least of all her life, to store it up so that it would yield a return in her old age. Certainly not her love; that was what she was richest in, love, and she was going to spend it and spend it as passionately as she could. If it brought no return, well then, it brought no return; but the pleasure was in the spending; that was its own compensation.

So she cleaned his shoes and pressed the suits that he took such pride in and cooked as well as she could. And if his only reply was that he must get his clothes properly seen to next time, and that, really, the food in this house was not worth eating, why then, he was only a boy. She didn't want things different. Besides, what people say is no indication of what they feel; least of all with this boy.

The bell rang; and Olga jumped down from the dresser with a little cry. 'Here he is; here he is,' she said excitedly, and rushed down the passage to open the door, shouting and laughing.

But Lena stayed in the kitchen and made sure of her hair once again, and her lips, and went on with the dinner. She heard Olga's shout turn to a little squeal of surprise, and she heard Michale's voice, and another. But she waited, contained, in the kitchen, and knew that presently he would come in, ostensibly to see how the cooking was getting on. She heard them go into the sitting-room, Olga, Michale, and the stranger, and, though she stayed in the kitchen, she was in the sitting-room with them; she was present there and knew all that went on, all that mattered to her, the way Michale spoke, and his manner, his lounging in the chair, and ragging Olga, his defensive aggressiveness, and his pale fine ungrown beauty.

Presently his steps came along the passage, and her heart contracted, and her voice felt uncertain, as she stooped in front of the oven door. And when she raised herself up, there he was looking down at her with a sidelong glance which pretended to be looking at the oven.

His manner was defensively aggressive; not even, any longer, very obviously defensive, as it had been at first. But now that it was only the aggressiveness which seemed to remain, she could detect the defensiveness there underneath, and with her knowing eyes discount the impertinence, the cruelty of his disregard of her as a person.

'Isn't lunch ready *yet*?'

'Yes, it's ready now, it's ready. I must just dish it up.... And whose is the voice I heard?'

'Oh, that's just a friend of mine; he is coming to lunch, if you've got enough.'

'I've enough, Michale; and you had better lay another place, or ask Olga to.'

'There's no need. There are three laid already; we don't need any more.'

'Yes, Michale, we do; we do want another. There are four of us.'

'But you are not coming in surely, Lena? You don't expect my friends to have lunch with the cook?'

Cook? She flushed at his cruelty, thrown off the poise in which she could usually discount his air of hurting in play. She flared up:

'Very well, then, I will go out. I will have my lunch out. Is that what you want?'

'Yes,' he said brusquely, uncertain of himself, uncertain how far he had gone. 'But you can serve the lunch first.' And he went out.

Indignation growled and rumbled, as she dished up the chicken, her hands trembling. She put on her hat and carried the tray into the sitting-room.

They were all talking hard and didn't notice her, though Michale's unconcerned gaiety seemed to her forced.

'Oh, he won't tell us,' Olga was saying to the stranger, 'there must be some girl; what is she like? Why won't you tell us? There must be someone.' And then turning and seeing that lunch was ready:

'Come on, lunch, let's have it before it gets cold. Who'll carve the chicken? Lena'd better. Where's Lena?'

But Lena, after setting it down, had gone out of the room and out of the front door.

'She isn't coming to lunch,' said Michale. 'You carve it, Olga.'

'Oh, but why isn't she coming? She must be. She was longing to come.'

'No, no,' said Michale hurriedly, and he seized up the carving-knife and began cutting, anxious only that the incident should pass off unnoticed. 'She doesn't want any. What do you like, Olga? A

wing? And you, Temple, a leg? Come on, let's eat. What is it, Olga? Why don't you sit down?'

Olga stood uncertain, puzzled, and then with a gesture as if leaving them to manage their own affair, she threw off her uneasiness and sat gaily down to the table.

Miss Leese returned shortly after lunch. She realized as soon as she got into the dreary road and had walked to an A.B.C. and ordered coffee, that she was being absurdly inconsistent, that she was cutting her own nose to spite her face. She was furious, but no longer at what Michale had said, but furious with bitter disappointment, since she had so looked forward to sitting down to lunch with him, and the time running past so quickly. She was furious that her pique had missed her even an hour, and then not to have seen the friend he went about with so much, so that her picture of him, as she sat in the kitchen, or ironed his suit, would be still incomplete.

And all that she had built up in the kitchen that morning, living so much as she did on imagination, her picture of that day's lunch, scattered. Carried away on a sudden gust of pique, she had put on her hat and gone out. But it was only temper and self-pity. She realized that as soon as she had ordered her coffee. And now she need not miss it all if she were sensible. So she finished her coffee and went back. She expected no apology from Michale, and didn't want one; the idea didn't enter her head. Her only difficulty was that she did not quite know how she should make her entry now.

But that was made easy for her by Olga, who heard her coming in, and jumping up, ran out with: 'Ah, here's Lena,' darting into the kitchen where she was putting down her hat and saying, 'Do come in Lena, do come, Mr. Temple's so nice; he's lovely,' not minding that the smallness of the flat and the loudness of her voice ensured that what she said was audible in the sitting-room, and that in her excitement she had continued in the language they had just been speaking.

Olga insisted on her coming in, and introduced her. But Michale refused to allow the conversation to begin again. 'We are going to a matinee and we must hurry. Come on, Temple. We mustn't be late.'

Olga hardly waited for them to go:

'But you shouldn't let him. You really shouldn't. It is intolerable that he should treat you like that. You let yourself be insulted, and you don't mind. You shouldn't let him. How can he, after all you have done for him?'

But Lena had had enough of it; she did not want to argue. She knew: she understood. Olga saw it in terms of insult, of 'ingratitude,'

'after all that you have done.' But that was not the way she saw it. You couldn't see it that way.

'He is only a boy; you don't understand. He didn't really mean it; he is so sensitive, so uncertain of himself. You don't know what love is, Olga, but I know: I know his way. We all have our ways, and this is his; that's all it is. I take what he means and not what he gives. I understand.'

'*Me* not know what love is? I know better than you.' They were on an old argument now. 'I know all right. Haven't I a child? It's you who don't know. That's your trouble. What you have isn't love. How could it be with his treating you like that? Pinching you so that you are bruised, and insulting you in front of the other. How could it be? How?'

'You don't understand, Olga, you don't understand. That's why you don't know what love is. You have only seen one single facet, and think that's the whole thing. But it isn't, I tell you. You're always wanting to make it fit your idea of it, putting it into the straight-waistcoat of your own experience. What lies outside, isn't love, in your view. Michale doesn't know his own mind yet, he covers it up even from himself. He's afraid of himself, distrusts himself, and won't let his feelings have their head; that is the English part of him; and no one can undo that except himself. He will grow up and then he will understand. Meanwhile there's nothing to do except to understand and accept . . . though it's difficult sometimes to be consistent. But that's all one can do, and it is what he wants. . . .

'And you, blundering in with your desire to teach him your feelings, you would set him right back. He would never recognize himself as you presented him to himself; he would shy away; and that would delay him even more.'

'Well,' said Olga, rather petulantly, 'I think you only spoil him; that's what you do.'

'No, no, *you* would spoil him. I will help him to grow.'

Lena sat, three days later, her attention divided between the letter she was looking at, and the thought of what she had just finished doing. The letter was from an old friend whom she had known in Russia, and not seen for more than ten years, and it was asking her to go and keep house for him. His wife had died and he was left with two children to bring up, and he wanted someone to look after his home for him and to manage the children.

She was pondering this. The time here was coming to an end; Michale was going away, and she had just finished packing his things.

An episode was almost finished and done with. There was still the last scene of all, but that was merely painful. The thing was really done. She was not complaining and she was not pitying herself. She was accustomed by now to the episodic nature of her life; it was bound to be like that. There could in the nature of it be no continuity; she expected none and she had the power of quick recovery, not grieving over what could not be changed. When an episode was finished, she screwed up her face and her courage as she would at the dentist, and endured the pain that was coming; it would pass.

There was always the slightest chance that even now this might be prolonged a little longer or end less inconclusively. It was very unlikely, but while there was even the remotest possibility she was not going to close the door finally. So she held the letter in her hand and pondered; she could answer it later: that would be time enough.

And her mind strayed back to the packing. Was everything in? It would be fatal to make any mistake about that. There would be no consideration for even the slightest slip. There would be none perhaps even for perfection. She got up and went into Michale's bedroom again to look round. Two cases were on the bed, fully packed, waiting to be strapped down. She pulled out the drawers and opened the cupboards; they were all empty; there was nothing left out. The packing was beautifully neat.

Olga had stood and watched her while she did it.

'I was right,' she had said, 'you are only spoiling him, and you won't do yourself any good. Do you think he will appreciate it? But you go on doing everything you can, and nothing to show for it. What you do it for, I can't think. You give and give, and he only takes; you will never cure him of taking. . . . Oh, I know he is a nice boy . . . I like him too, and so handsome. . . . But at the end you can't help spoiling him . . . and he will probably go without saying good-bye.'

But Lena had not minded what Olga said; she had gone quietly on. It gave her pleasure to handle his things, let alone anything else.

'I don't want a reason for doing it,' she said. 'I do it because it pleases me; that's all. You needn't interfere. You needn't watch if you don't want to, and it doesn't hurt you if I do it all for nothing. I should be the only loser if you were right. But you're not. You let me be.'

But Olga had gone on to get annoyed; it annoyed her to distraction to see Lena doing all this, and for nothing, nothing at all.

'You fool, you little fool,' she burst out at Lena. 'How you've wasted yourself all the time, throwing yourself away on people who

don't care a rap. And you won't see it; you're so obstinate. Think what you could have had, if only you had been sensible. But, no, you refuse it all in your obstinacy.'

'Let me be,' said Lena tired of all this. 'Let me be; I know what I do.'

But Olga couldn't; the intensity of Lena's preoccupation with these silly suits and shirts of the vain young man infuriated her. Why couldn't Lena take love as she did, and be gay? She started, in play, to disturb Lena as she packed, and when Lena snapped at her, to seize the things and fling them out on the floor. 'You shan't make a fool of yourself, Lena,' she shouted, 'allowing yourself to be trampled on by a mere boy.'

Lena in cold anger pushed her down on to the floor, and then summoning a tremendous energy into her tiny frame, she drove her out along the passage and out of the front door. And she returned and put the cases in order and finished the packing and locked the bedroom, before she let Olga in again.

But Olga only came in again to put her hat on, and then to go.

'I'll leave you. That's what you want. I'll leave you and you can do what you like with him. Tell him I shall be at the station to see him off.'

And Lena was glad to see her go and to know that she would have him alone at least for the last time, if it was to be the last.

Assuring herself that everything was ready in the bedroom, and that everything was packed, she returned to the sitting-room, and waited there, picking up the letter abstractedly, and looking at it without seeing it. He ought to be here at any moment.

The bell rang. That was he. She jumped up and went to open it. There he stood smiling sideways at her, looking, she thought, at his best.

'Where's Olga?'

It was a surprise to see Lena; she always stayed in the kitchen, and it was always Olga who came to the door.

'She has gone out, Michale. She said that she would go to the station to see you off. So I'm alone.'

'Well, I shall have to hurry if I am to be off in time. I'll go and pack.'

He pushed past her and went down the passage to his bedroom. She said nothing, but went into the sitting-room, where she heard him open the door and then stand for a moment looking at what had been done. Then he shouted:

'Who has been touching my things? Is that you, Lena?' And he

came back to the sitting-room. 'You know I always like doing my things myself. I shan't know where anything is.'

But she knew what he meant really, what he could not bring himself to say. He was so desperately afraid of himself that he did not dare to go even that far. She could read him, she could see him so curled up inside himself that he did not know what he did want. This was his only defence against himself. For her it was simply a matter of translation.

She merely smiled at him through narrowed eyes and let him approach it in his own way. He went back to his room, and stayed a few moments longer than was necessary to strap down the bags—long enough to justify his remark. Then he came into the sitting-room and sat down.

'I needn't go for another ten minutes yet.'

'Look at this,' she said, and she handed him her letter. 'It's from old Gregor that was a friend of your mother's. Shall I take it on?'

He took it and read it silently through, and then handed it back as if it did not interest him at all.

'Yes, if you want to.'

'It really depends. I don't think that there is any more interest for me here. . . . It really depends. . . . Will you ever come back here, Michale?'

'I don't suppose so. I probably shan't be in England again for years.'

'In that case I think I shall accept.'

But he refused to take up her words, as she had thought he would refuse; but it had to be tried.

He got up and stretched himself, and yawned, but it was not with tiredness.

She stood up, too, and they faced each other, a few feet apart.

'It's very sad, your going, Michale, so sad.'

She stood waiting while he looked at her with his sidelong smile, and they stood uncertain for a few seconds, she willing him, with her little screwed-up eyes, and her passionate hair, and he, uncertain, with his smile, and his ungrown handsomeness, not quite able to dismiss her, to turn away.

The moments were silent and breathless, and she ended the strain by giving the faintest little shrug of her shoulders and spreading out her hands with their splayed fingers.

And he, released from the tension by her movement, broke into a low laugh, and seized a finger of her right hand, and began to bend it back so that she twisted her body involuntarily under the pain. But she kept back her voice after the first little hiss of surprise and pain,

and locking her body took the whole strain on her finger. He bent it and bent, laughing gently, and she said in as firm a voice as she could:

'Michale, you're hurting: you are really.'

'I know.' He said it laughing, and bent the finger more, exerting pressure so that she should yield.

But she resisted, holding upright until with a crunch and a jar the joint slipped out of its socket. Then he let go suddenly and went out of the room, picked up the bags in his own bedroom and went to the hall-door.

From there he called to her, 'Good-bye, Lena,' and there was a trace of anxiety in his voice, as if he were expecting reassurance; he paused for an answer. But she was in too great pain to reply, and crying, as she looked at her finger sticking out at an obscene angle from her hand. She heard him pause, and then his low uneasy laugh, and she heard the front door open and slam behind him.

'But I must hide this from Olga,' she said, as she tried to wrench her finger into the joint. 'She would not understand, would say, Why do you let yourself be treated like this? That sudden movement of arms and hands. The nearest of all; so little different from what he meant.' And looking down with her eyes screwed up at her swollen finger, she jerked it with a final little snap into place.

W. H. AUDEN

TWO BALLADS

MISS GEE

(Tune, St. James' Infirmary)

LET me tell you a little story
About Miss Edith Gee,
She lived in Clevedon Terrace
At Number 83.

She'd a slight squint in her left eye,
Her lips they were thin and small,
She had narrow sloping shoulders
And she had no bust at all.

She'd a velvet hat with trimmings
And a dark grey serge costume,
She lived in Clevedon Terrace
In a small bed-sitting-room.

She'd a purple mac' for wet days,
A green umbrella too to take,
And a bicycle with shopping basket
And a harsh back-pedal brake.

The Church of Saint Aloysius
Was not so very far,
She did a lot of knitting,
Knitting for that Church bazaar.

Miss Gee looked up at the starlight,
Said: Does anyone care
That I live in Clevedon Terrace
On a hundred pounds a year?

She dreamt a dream one evening
  That she was the Queen of France,
And the Vicar of Saint Aloysius
  Asked Her Majesty to dance.

But a storm blew down the palace,
  She was biking through a field of corn,
And a bull with the face of the Vicar
  Was charging with lowered horn.

She could feel his hot breath behind her,
  He was going to overtake,
And the bicycle went slower and slower
  Because of that back-pedal brake.

Summer made the trees a picture,
  Winter made them a wreck.
She bicycled down to the evening service
  With the clothes buttoned up to her neck.

She passed by the loving couples,
  She turned her head away,
She passed by the loving couples,
  And they didn't ask her to stay.

Miss Gee sat down in the side-aisle,
  She heard the organ play,
And the choir it sang so sweetly
  At the ending of the day,

The Vicar stood up in the pulpit,
  He took away her breath,
He took as the text for his sermon;
  "The Wages of Sin is Death."

Miss Gee knelt down in the side-aisle,
  She knelt down on her knees:
"Lead me not into temptation
  But make me a good girl please."

The days and nights went by her
  Like waves round a Cornish wreck,
She bicycled down to the doctor
  With the clothes buttoned up to her neck.

She bicycled down to the doctor,
  She rang the surgery bell,
'O, doctor, I've a pain inside me
  And I don't feel very well.'

Doctor Thomas looked her over,
  And then he looked some more,
Walked over to his wash-basin,
  Said: 'Why haven't you come before?'

Doctor Thomas looked her over,
  He shook his well-groomed head,
'You've a cancer on your liver,
  Miss Gee, you'll soon be dead.'

Doctor Thomas sat down to dinner,
  Said to his wife: 'My dear,
I've just seen Miss Gee this evening
  And she's a gonner, I fear.'

They took Miss Gee to hospital,
  She lay there a total wreck,
Lay in the ward for women
  With the bedclothes right up to her neck.

They put her on the table,
  The students began to laugh,
And Mr. Rose, the surgeon,
  He cut Miss Gee in half.

Mr. Rose he turned to his students,
  Said: 'Gentlemen, if you please,
We seldom meet a sarcoma
  As far advanced as this.'

They took her off the table,
  They wheeled away Miss Gee
Down to another department
  Where they study anatomy.

They hung her from the ceiling,
  Yes, they hung up Miss Gee,
And a couple of Oxford Groupers
  Carefully dissected her knee.

VICTOR

(*Tune, Frankie and Johnny*)

VICTOR was a little baby
  Into this world he came,
His father took him on his knees and said:
  'Don't dishonour the family name.'
Have mercy, Lord, save our souls from Hell.

Victor looked up at his father
  Looked up with his big round eyes,
Father said: 'Victor, my only son,
  Don't you ever, ever tell lies.'
Have mercy, Lord, save your soul from Hell.

Victor and his father went riding
  Out in a little dog-cart,
Father took the Bible from his pocket and read
  'Blessed are the pure in Heart.'
Have mercy, Lord, save their souls from Hell.

It was a frosty December
  It wasn't the season for fruits,
Father dropped dead of heart disease
  While lacing up his boots.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

It was a frosty December
  When into his grave he sank,
His uncle found Victor a post as cashier
  In the Midland Counties Bank.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

It was a frosty December,
  Victor was only eighteen
But his margins were straight and his figures neat
  And his cuffs were always clean.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

He took a room at the Peveril
  A respectable boarding-house,
And Time watched Victor day after day
  As a cat will watch a mouse.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

The clerks slapped Victor on the shoulder,
  'Have you ever had a woman?' they said,
'Come down town with us on Saturday night,'
  Victor smiled and shook his head,
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

The Manager sat in his office,
  Smoked a Corona cigar,
Said: 'Victor's a decent fellow, but
  He's too mousey to go far.'
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

Victor went up to his bedroom,
  Set his alarum bell,
Climbed into bed, took his Bible and read
  Of what happened to Jezebel.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

It was the first of April
  Anna to the Peveril came,
Her eyes, her lips, her breasts, her hips
  And her smile set men aflame.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Her skin was like cream from the dairy,
  Her scent was like new-mown hay,
Her kisses were like the best champagne
  When she gave herself away.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

It was the second of April
  She was wearing a coat of fur,
Victor passed Anna upon the stairs,
  And he fell in love with her.
Have mercy, Lord, save their souls from Hell.

The first time he made his proposal
She laughed: 'I shall never wed.'
The second time there was a pause,
Then she smiled and shook her head.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Anna looked into the mirror
Pouted and made a frown,
Said: 'Victor's as slow as a wet afternoon
But I've got to settle down.'
Have mercy, Lord, save my soul from Hell.

The third time he made his proposal
They were walking by the Big Reservoir,
She gave him a kiss like a blow on the head,
Said: 'You're my heart's desire.'
Have mercy, Lord, save our souls from Hell.

They were married early in August,
She said: 'Kiss me, you funny boy,'
Victor took her in his arms and said:
'O, my Helen of Troy!'
Have mercy, Lord, save our souls from Hell.

It was the middle of September,
Victor came to the Bank one day,
He was wearing a flower in his button-hole
He was late but he was gay.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

The clerks were talking of Anna,
The door was just ajar,
One said: 'Poor old Victor but where ignorance
Is bliss etcetera.'
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

Victor stood still as a statue,
The door was just ajar,
One said: 'God, what fun I had with her
In that Baby Austin car.'
Have mercy, Lord, save my soul from Hell.

Victor walked into the High Street,
  He walked to the edge of the town,
He came to the allotments and rubbish heaps
  And his tears came tumbling down.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

Victor looked up at the sunset,
  He stood there all alone,
Said: 'Father, are you in Heaven?'
  And the sky said: 'Address not known.'
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

Victor looked up at the mountains
  The mountains all covered with snow,
Said: 'Are you pleased with me, Father?'
  And the answer came back: 'No.'
Have mercy, Lord, save your soul from Hell.

Victor came to the forest,
  Said: 'Father, will she ever be true?'
But the oaks and the beeches shook their heads
  And they answered: 'Not to you.'
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Victor came to the meadow
  Where the wind went sweeping by,
Said: 'O, Father, I love her so,'
  But the wind said: 'She must die.'
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Victor came to the river
  Running so deep and still,
Said: 'O, Father, what shall I do?'
  And the river answered: 'Kill.'
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Anna sat down at a table
  Drawing cards from a pack,
Anna sat at a table
  Waiting for her husband to come back.
Have mercy, Lord, save his soul from Hell.

It wasn't the Jack of Diamonds
  Nor the Joker she drew at first,
It wasn't the King or the Queen of Hearts
  But the Ace of Spades reversed.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Victor stood in the doorway,
  Didn't utter a word,
Anna said: 'What's the matter, darling?'
  He behaved as if he hadn't heard.
Have mercy, Lord, save their souls from Hell.

There was a voice in his left ear,
  There was a voice in his right,
There was a voice at the base of his skull
  Saying: 'She must die to-night.'
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

Victor picked up the carving knife,
  His features were set and drawn,
Said: 'Anna, it would have been better for you
  If you had not been born.'
Have mercy, Lord, save your soul from Hell.

Anna jumped up from the table.
  Anna started to scream,
But Victor came slowly after her
  Like a horror in a dream.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

She blundered into chairs and tables
  Like a June bug in a room,
But Victor came slowly after her,
  In his face she read her doom.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

She dodged behind the sofa,
  She tore down the curtain rod,
But Victor came slowly after her,
  Said: 'Prepare to meet your God.'
Have mercy, Lord, save your soul from Hell.

She managed to wrench the door open,
  She ran and she didn't stop,
But Victor followed her up the stairs
  And he caught her at the top.
Have mercy, Lord, save her soul from Hell.

He stood there above the body
  He stood there holding the knife,
And the blood ran down the stairs, and sang:
  'I'm the Resurrection and the Life.'
Have mercy, Lord, save my soul from Hell.

They tapped Victor on the shoulder,
  They took him away in a van,
He sat as still as a lump of moss,
  Said: 'I am the Son of Man.'
Have mercy, Lord, save my soul from Hell.

Victor sat in a corner
  Making a woman of clay,
Said: 'I'm Alpha and Omega, I shall come
  To judge the earth one day.'
Have mercy, Lord, save their souls from Hell.

POEM

UNDER the fronds of life, beside
The flowers' soundless hunger,
Close to the trees' clandestine tide,
Close to the birds' high fever,
Loud in his hope and anger,
Erect about his skeleton,
Stands the expressive lover,
Stands the deliberate man.

Beneath the hot incurious sun,
Past stronger beasts and fairer,
He picks his way, a living gun,
With gun and lens and bible,
A militant inquirer;
The friend, the rash, the enemy,
The essayist, the able,
Able at times to cry.

The friendless and unhated stone
Lies everywhere about him,
The brothered one, the not-alone,
The brothered and the hated,
Whose family have taught him
To set against the large and dumb,
The timeless and the rooted,
His money and his time.

For mother's fading hopes become
Dull wives to his dull spirits,
Soon dulled by nurse's moral thumb,
The dullard fond betrayer;
And, childish, he inherits,
So soon by legal father tricked,
The tall and gorgeous tower,
Gorgeous, but locked, but locked.

And ruled by dead men never met,
  By pious guess deluded,
Upon the stool of madness set,
  Or stool of desolation
  Sits murderous and clear-headed;
Enormous beauties round him move,
  For grandiose is his vision,
  And grandiose his love.

Determined on Time's honest shield,
  The lamb must face the tigress,
Their faithful quarrel never healed,
  Though, faithless, he consider
  His dream of vaguer ages;
Hunter and victim reconciled,
  The lion and the adder,
  The adder and the child.

Fresh loves betray him; every day
  Over his green horizon
A fresh deserter rides away,
  And miles away birds mutter
  Of ambush and of treason:
To fresh defeats he still must move
  To further griefs and greater,
  And the defeat of grief.

SAM ROSS

YOU'RE COMING FOR A WALK

SHE joggled on to the dance floor. A loud blare followed her. In her eyes the lights hurt, and the steel rafters above and many faces swayed and jumbled together. She heard a garbled announcement. Probably about her coming out again after that last twenty-minute grind. She had passed out four times. Plucky girl. Her ears held the scattered applause and some indistinct words of encouragement. Then she trudged back to her room: her fifteen-minute rest period. After the midnight grind the rests would be shortened to thirteen minutes. Then less, and less. The contest had to end soon, soon. Why not now? Never. Soon. Oh, Christ, she did not know what she wanted. She felt numb inside and would not lie down. She might never wake up again. She tried to fight off the deadness seeping through her making her feel limp and dry as though her blood were being drained. She shuddered, I ain't got anything in me. I'm just bones and meat. I'm wrinkling up. Oh, Jesus!

It started six months ago. It was almost fun at the beginning. There were games then, jumping rope with the girls, and the boys did look funny with the rope revolving over them, and there were dances and naked swimming in the creek every nice morning. One morning Charley took her away from the creek. They laid down under a tree with the sun breaking through the leaves. Alongside the creek flowed and above the trees flowed; the ground smelled good and morning-fresh.

'I can't stand it no more,' he said. 'Me with you together all the time I go nuts. I keep touching you and feeling you even when I'm resting.'

'We got to wait, Charley. We can't take chances.'

He did not say anything.

'We got to win, Charley. After we're married.'

They had the dew from the ground on their backs when they returned. From then on they visited the snakeroom where the married couples went. They were only allowed seven minutes there. She did not like it.

She had felt strong watching one contestant after another drop out. But soon now, soon, she and Charley would win: the thousand-

dollar prize, part of the kitty money, the admiration of thousands of people, friends some of them who said she had plenty of guts. Soon, soon. Only three couples left, only hours before someone else dropped, another, and then she and Charley would leave the floor in triumph with a thousand dollars and a whole life before them. She and Charley would get married after the finish. They were not like others who got married on the floor, putting on a grand show for the management before a bunch of wisecracking strangers. She wanted it like her girl friends, with showers and ceremony and the church.

She and Charley wanted to marry before this walkathon. But she lost her nine-dollar-a-week candy factory job. Charley was out of work for some time too. The family nagged and told her to quit wasting her time on a dope. She was with him on the streets and in the parks. They loved each other on benches and in her hallway.

'Christ, babe, I'll knock over a bank or something.'

'Don't be nuts.'

But his bitterness was in her. She felt uncomfortable. Then one night they got free passes to see a walkathon. After it was over they kidded each other about how strong they were.

'Your legs were built to stamp out forest fires, baby.'

'You could stop a sixty-mile-an-hour train with a punch.'

They had the prize money. They spent a half-million dollars on each other and not a penny on themselves. The next morning they hitch-hiked to Kalamazoo. They were going to win.

After that the days became countless without end, filled with falling asleep and passing out, face slapping and dragging each other around to the last second of their strength. Couples collapsed and were eliminated. They grew closer and closer to each other.

The night before her chest became heavy when she saw Charley pluck imaginary flowers from the floor. He admired the flowers, he plucked the petals, he said, nice daisies. Look at the sunshine on them, like on gold. And it's hot on me too. Nice daisies.

She was rolling along in a bed of sunwarmed daisies; the petals were like loving fingers softly stroking her body; and from a distance she heard, 'Get up, kid. You have to go out again.'

'Get up, kid. You have to go out again.'

'Get up!'

Her eyes opened. Get up, she said inwardly. Get up! Get up!

'It's going to be easy this time. No grind.'

Nurse's voice. Easy this time. Get up! Oh come on. Get! She felt arms wiggling under her armpits, folding around her breasts. She was sitting. Her head was being shaken and her cheeks were

slapped. White blinking spots were before her shuttering eyes. She was on her feet. Finally. Forty-five minutes of easy walking. Aaaah. But another grind after that. Worse than before. Move.

On the floor she walked silently beside Charley. They separated, they walked together. They did not have to be close to each other: they felt each other. They did not have to talk to one another: they had undergone too much of the same suffering to find it interesting. Now she understood why her father and mother had remained together many years.

One of the comedians ran across the floor, chased by his stooge who had a bucket of water in his hands. The audience yelled and laughed and jumped aside to make room for the comedians who were running through the stands. Finally the one chased slipped in front of the orchestra stand. He rose to his feet dripping wet. Everybody screamed and laughed. She tried to laugh, she wanted to laugh, but she found her face would not crease. It felt like sunburn, crinkly and feverish. But she forgot about trying to laugh: her mind was fighting to stay awake.

Her weariness suddenly seemed to fall away from her body and she became covered with a satin evening gown. The dress blended into her curves and her body flowed. The party was in her honour and the room was filled with the best society people. She was speaking to the hostess, Mrs. Van Dyke, who was commenting on the spunk she had shown in winning the world's championship walkathon, when the handsomest man there asked her if he could have the pleasure of dancing with her. He was dark-haired with sideburns that daggered down his suave olive-skinned cheeks, like George Raft. She said she would be delighted to dance with him if Mrs. Van Dyke would excuse her. Then she glided on to the floor into George's arms. They danced as one with the music. Inside of her tremored in the rhythm of their movement and she expanded, sucking in his soft intense voice. Discords suddenly arose as of someone laughing harshly. She could not understand this jarring noise, in this company; but she shrugged her shoulders and cocked her head rapturously and continued flowing. She showed her good breeding by not minding a common laugh. George said he wished all women had her poise, and that was why he was quickly and passionately falling in love with her. Did she believe in love at first sight? Her long eyelashes drooped softly upon her cheeks, her arm was a soft pressure on his shoulder. She hoped she expressed her depth of feeling but she couldn't really allow this man to sweep her off her feet. He should be made to appreciate what he was getting. Only the hard things you

get you appreciate most. But the laughter strayed into the music. She looked into George's fiery dark eyes.

'Shall we stroll through the garden?' he asked.

'It would be pleasant, wouldn't it?'

'The moon is out, the flowers lovely.'

'You suggest the finest things.'

They strolled down the walk. It was surrounded by bushes and flowers. Their thighs touched, so enwrapped were they in each other. The night was sprinkled with stars. The moon sprayed a subdued metallic tone on the flowers. The fragrance melted through her, the music made her wilt inside. He plucked a flower and gave it to her. She raised it to her nostrils and sighed. She became filled with an intense desire to throw herself upon the grass, with George beside her, and to sink deep into the earth. But somehow it wasn't becoming a lady with evening clothes. She like all ladies had to suppress her emotions in order to keep her dignity. She continued to glide along the walk with her arm on his forearm, and she strained her fingers angrily because her dignity made her deny her real feelings. But she felt George's arms draping her shoulders. Trying to kiss me, she thought. She would have allowed him but she must have him understand that there were plenty of men who would have torn off their arms for her. She pushed him coyly away. Her face stung. Why, the dirty lowdown sonofabitch, her treating him like a gentleman and going all moony over him, slapping her in the face. She swung back but hit nothing. She felt her temples being pounded. She hit nothing. Then suddenly she saw Charley: haggard, lip-drooping. She wondered if she looked as bad. But her wonder turned to embarrassment when she heard laughter coming from fresh full faces and when Charley said, What's the matter, you gone squirrly? Within her shrunk and shrivelled, like drying clothes. The audience was laughing. What had she done? What did she say? Was it like being nuts? Nice daisies. Was she going crazy?

The whistle blew.

'Try to get a little sleep before the next grind,' Charley said.

'Yes.'

'We got to come through this one. It can't last long now.'

She looked at the other two couples sagging across the floor. They were all friends now.

'No. They can't last.'

After the rest she came on to the floor and met Charley in the centre. The three couples dragged along in grand march fashion, unlike the opening grand march when she had felt springy, when she

talked to hide her shyness, when she smiled like a chorus girl; the floor felt empty, no more wisecracking, just tenseness. She and Charley were facing each other, holding forearms, waiting for the pistol to go off. The master of ceremonies was talking, '. . .' and the gun went off, from within her it seemed, spreading into fire. The lolling music became louder, louder, faster, faster, rushing her first backward, then forward, back, forth, faster, faster. The lights above fired closer and closer to the floor. Shrill whistles drove the music from her ears. She turned her head away from the beefy-looking judge who kept blowing the whistle in her ear shrilly until everything became a scene of her standing on a lonely darkened street corner late at night listening to the monotonous shrills of a popcorn stand. Faces and music and whistles blurred. She tried to kick over the popcorn stand. Pounding, on her temples, her cheeks, her back wilting in weakening arms. Her muscles moved apart from her. Her body moved away from her and there was no pain. But the body behind her wanted to cry but could not. Maybe it was crying and yelling but she could not feel it, she could not hear it. Beside her silver exploded into flesh and the flesh swelled into a living mountain. Shrilly. Something turned over like a fast-turning wheel, and dropped, still spinning.

It was dark outside. A glazed globe glinted over her. She looked dazedly at it. Under she felt clean and rumpled and warm. She felt tears smart on her cheeks. It felt good.

'You're only human,' the nurse said.

'And Charley?'

'He's a solo now.'

'How long did I last?'

'You had only two minutes to go.'

'And I couldn't last?'

'Don't let it get you.'

'But the others took it.'

'Not for long they won't.'

She plopped against the pillow. It felt good to cry.

'Come now,' the nurse said. 'You're coming for a walk.'

F. LORCA

THE DAWN

Translated from the Spanish by A. L. Lloyd

THE New York dawn has
four columns of mud
and a hurricane of black doves
that dabble in stagnant waters;
The New York dawn moans
upon the tremendous stairways,
seeking amidst the ledges
the nards of clear-etched agony.
The dawn arrives yet none receives it in his mouth
for in this place there is no morrow, nor can be any hope:
At times come furious swarms of coins
that riddle and devour abandoned children.
The first to rise feel in their bones
that here shall be no paradise nor love stripped of its leaf:
they know their destination, a heaven full of laws and numbers,
the artless games, the fruitless sweat.
With chains and rumours is the light entombed
in the shameless challenge of a rootless science.
In the suburbs are people who sway sleeplessly
like those new-risen from a bloody shipwreck.

MORTON FREEDGOOD

LAST OF HIS TRIBE

LITTLE Rose-Apple looked in at each of the town's three saloons before he went on down the street to the poolroom. He stood in the doorway and whistled. He could see Arthur's head bobbing under the suspended light over a table in the rear. A man walked over to the door, chalking his stick.

'Can I go in there, mister?' Little Rose-Apple said.

'Go home and grow up, sonny.'

'That's my brother in there. Get him out so's I can talk to him. Tell him Little Rose-Apple is here—he'll know.'

'You the Injun's brother?' The man turned inward: 'Hey, Chief, there's a papoose out here wants to see you.'

Little Rose-Apple watched Arthur turn his head upward from leaning over the table. He straightened up and laid his stick along the table and walked out to the door.

'Go on home,' he said. 'I don't want you hanging around here. . . .'

'There's a guy down from New York to see you. From a art gallery. He drove down tonight and he gotta go back tonight.'

'What's he want?'

'How should I know?' Little Rose-Apple looked down the street. 'He looks like big dough. Come on and find out, Arthur. He don't want to sell you anything.'

Arthur waved back into the poolroom. 'Be with you in a second, boys.' He turned and put his hand on Little Rose-Apple's shoulder. 'Go back to the white stranger. Go back to him, Little Rose-Apple, and tell him Chief Antijian tell him he should take flying jump to the moon. Say Chief Antijian too goddam busy playing kelly pool.'

'Aw come on, Arthur. Maybe it's something good. He got a car big as a house, he looks like big dough.'

'To hell with him. I'm not going. Beat it home now or I'll fan you.' He turned and went inside, walking down the aisle towards the rear of the poolroom.

Little Rose-Apple stood for a moment, poised in movement half through the door, and then he ran quickly inside. He came up behind

Arthur, and punched his fist into the small of his back. Arthur lurched forward, catching hold of the edge of a table. He turned around swearing, and Little Rose-Apple ran to the door.

He stood in the doorway, braced against the jamb for quick flight, screaming, 'You cheap Indian louse. You dirty red bastard. . . .'

Arthur moved towards him quickly, and Little Rose-Apple pushed away from the door, running with the same motion. He ran down Main Street, turning his head to thumb his nose. Arthur came after him, running heavily and spitting and swearing out of the corner of his mouth.

At the edge of town, where Main Street sloped off into darkness, Little Rose-Apple went off the pavement into the road. Arthur was losing ground, breathing heavily and pulling at his tie to loosen it, when Little Rose-Apple tripped and fell. He rolled over to his knees, still in forward motion, and Arthur fell on top of him, bearing him back to the ground with his body.

'Get up, you little creep.' He took Little Rose-Apple by the collar and lifted him, cuffing his head with his free hand.

'Leggo. Leggo me, you big heel——' Little Rose-Apple shuttled his head away from Arthur's swinging hand, screaming and running in Arthur's grip. He twisted in his loose jacket until Arthur's hand came under his chin. He lifted his head quickly and put his teeth into Arthur's wrist, pulling away at the same time. Arthur's hand came free, and Little Rose-Apple ran out of his hold, pounding hard down the road.

Arthur sucked his wrist, watching Little Rose-Apple disappear up into the dark road, and then he turned and walked back to town, swearing through his teeth over his wrist.

By the time he reached Main Street the hurt in his wrist was gone and he stopped nursing it. He went on down the street to the pool-room. He stopped in front of the open door and looked in. The rear table, where he had been playing, was dark. He went back along Main Street and down into a side alley to a saloon.

'Charley and Ben been here?' he said to the bartender. He walked in and leaned against the bar. He watched the bartender pour a drink. 'Give me the same. Charley Hawley and Ben Mosher been here?'

'They left about a minute ago. Might be you could catch up with them if you hurried right out of here.'

Arthur threw his money across the bar. He picked up the liquor and held it against the light. 'The same old pee.'

'Charley Hawley and Ben Mosher left about two minutes ago,' the bartender said.

'Say where they were going?'

'Yeah. Laura's.' The bartender turned away. 'You oughta catch up with them and tag along. Do you a lot of good.' He grinned at a man standing against the bar.

Arthur glared. 'That ain't funny.'

'Sure it ain't. That's the best place in the world for you, a canhouse. That's if they'll let you in.'

'What do you mean?'

'I hear they draw the colour line in those joints.'

'You cheap Irish bastard.' He said it quickly, going backward, away from the bartender's sweeping palm. He turned and ran for the door, slamming it behind him.

He came back on to Main Street and slowed down to a saunter. He looked behind him. There was a girl in a red hat walking in his direction. He stopped to scratch a match against a lamp-post, and when the girl went by him he brushed against her, dropping his match and catching hold of her sleeve.

She faced around and he took his hat off. 'Beg pardon. Aren't you Larry Nandemeen's sister?'

'Why, yes, I am. . . .'

'I'm Arthur Antijian. Larry's scoutmaster. Didn't I see you at one of our Boy Scout Meetings?'

'Hello, Mr. Antijian. I didn't recognize you in street clothes.'

'Were you going my way?' He took her arm and began to walk her. 'Larry's a swell kid. He's the best little woodscraftsman in the troop. I'm giving him all I know of Indian lore. It's a pleasure to work with one so eager.'

'Larry adores you. He calls you Chief Antijian. Are you an Indian chief?'

Arthur laughed. 'The last of my tribe. We were once a very great people. I am descended from a long line of Sagamores.' He laughed again. 'But I'm quite modern, I assure you, and quite civilized.' He squeezed her elbow. 'You weren't going anywhere, were you?'

'Just home. We live out of town—about a half-mile out of the North end.'

'Do you mind if I accompany you?'

When they got off Main Street Arthur tightened his grip on the girl's elbow. 'I didn't know Larry had such a nice-looking sister,' he said.

The girl giggled and Arthur put his arm around her waist. They came to a black patch of road where the moon caught behind the trees, and Arthur stopped. He swung the girl around to face him.

She giggled. 'Don't.'

He pulled her into him and kissed her. He drew her off the road and kissed her leaning against a tree. She put her hands on his shoulders and leaned against him.

'How about it?' Arthur said. He held her tightly, moving her against his middle.

'How about what?' She pushed hard against him. 'Who do you think you are?'

'Aw come on.' He reached down for the bottom of her dress, and she pushed away from him, frightened, her fists clenched against his chest. Arthur pulled her arms, bringing her over to him. 'Come on, sister.'

She fought out of his grip and slipped on to the road. Arthur came after her, panting. She walked very quickly down the road. Arthur came after her and took her by the arm.

'You can't leave me like this, you goddam teaser.'

'Get away from me.' She jerked her hand away and began to run down the road. Arthur followed her for a few paces and then he stopped, watching the movement of her body. He turned around and walked back to town, breathing hard and swearing aloud.

By the time Arthur reached Main Street the town was closing down. Store lights were going out, and traffic along the street had practically ceased. There were a few cars parked in front of the Blue Cat, the only saloon that was permitted to operate on Main Street. Arthur was attracted to it by the sounds of music and the quick movement of women's dresses seen through the open door.

He went into the Blue Cat and ordered a drink at the bar. He stood with his drink in his hand, leaning his back against the bar and watching the dancing on the small tile floor to music from a radio. He tried without success to catch the eye of one of the girls who was dancing. He turned around and ordered another drink and drank it quickly. Then he walked out on to the dance-floor and tapped a man on the shoulder. The man turned his head.

'I'm cutting in,' Arthur said.

The man stared at him. 'Who said you were?'

'I'd like to dance with the young lady if it's all right with her.' Arthur looked past the man and smiled at the girl.

The man said, 'It ain't okay with her, and it ain't okay with me. We don't know you, fellow.'

'I'd be glad to introduce myself,' Arthur said, still smiling at the girl.

'We don't want to know you,' the man said. He pushed Arthur's

shoulder and turned around to his partner and began to dance. A few people laughed, and Arthur flushed. He looked around him, furious at the laughing, and then he went off the dance floor. He had another drink at the bar and then he went out. He went back to the pool-room. The owner was fitting his key into the lock.

Arthur watched him, and when he straightened up he said to him, 'You beat the Y.M.C.A. to the close to-night, didn't you?'

'Good night, Minnetonka.'

'You a smart guy?' Arthur stepped closer to him.

'Go on home, mudhead,' The owner brushed him aside and walked on down the street without turning his head.

Arthur watched him go, leaning against the store front and clenching his fists. 'That's twice I've been pushed,' he said. He came away from the store front angrily. 'I might as well go up to Laura's and make it an even three. . . .' He repeated it again, laughing and slapping his thigh.

It was one o'clock when he left Laura's. He smoked his last cigarette walking along the black road. He threw it away before he came to where his house showed dark above the road.

He turned in and started up the gravel towards the unlighted house. He heard wheels crunching down the incline and he jumped back quickly as an auto-horn sounded and a pair of headlights switched on, cutting across his body and head and blinding him. He heard the brakes of the car squeal and he threw himself back off the gravel. He fell on his hands and knees in the bushes. He heard his name called.

When he got up there was the sound of a door opening. Then there was a rustling in the bushes and Little Rose-Apple and a man were helping him to his feet. 'You're not hurt, are you?' the man said. 'I'm sorry, I guess I should have had my lights on.'

Little Rose-Apple's voice spoke bitterly: 'He's blind as a bat, the drunk Indian bastard——'

Arthur jerked his arm out of the man's grip. 'You goddam slob . . .' he brushed himself off. 'I got a good mind to push your face in——' he pushed closer to the man.

'Take it easy,' the man said. He took Arthur's arm again, gripping into the biceps. 'I said I was sorry. You're not hurt. It won't do you any good to get tough.'

'It was your own fault,' Little Rose-Apple said. 'I was on the running-board and I seen it.'

Arthur turned to him, bringing his free arm back. Little Rose-Apple shied away and the man jerked Arthur back. 'I told you not to get tough,' he said.

'Sure. My lawyer'll take care of that. Let's see your license.' He walked in front of the car to look at the plate. 'New York, hey?'

'Look here,' the man said. 'Don't start anything. You weren't hurt. The car didn't hit you. What do you want to start trouble for?'

Arthur grinned. 'Who said I wasn't hurt? I broke every goddam bone in my body. Besides you were trespassing. This is my property. . . .'

'No, he wasn't,' Little Rose-Apple said. 'He was waiting for you.' He tried to hold Arthur's face with his eyes, and he spoke very quickly, trying to get his words in under Arthur's fog. 'He was waiting for you. He comes from a art gallery. He wants to give you a job. I told him that you were at the Boy Scout Meeting'—he stopped and winked ponderously—'he said he'd wait till you got home from the meeting. . . .'

The man was watching, amused. 'I'm Harben. From the Denison Galleries.'

Arthur looked from Harben to Little Rose-Apple and then back again to Harben, and the fury died slowly out of his face. 'I'm happy to see you, sir,' he said. 'And I'm sorry I performed the way I did.'

Harben looked at him closely. 'The Foundation in New York recommended you to us. They gave us all the dope. We're sending some Indian canvases on tour and we wanted a real Indian chief to tag along—press stunt.'

'Oh, I see. Very interesting. I have quite a collection myself of Indian paintings. I do some water-colours myself. Perhaps your gallery would be interested in them. They are all on Indian subjects. . . .'

'Yeah. I saw them. You know . . .' he leaned over to look at Arthur's face. 'You don't look very Indian.'

'I assure you, sir . . .' he paused to look aggrieved. 'The Foundation would have told you if you had cared to listen . . .'

'They told us. You're the real thing all right, Antijian, but you don't look very Indian. . . .'

'I have many confreres on the staff of the Foundation. They consult me on matters of Indian history. Another of my confreres in the Anthropology Department at Yale is . . .'

'He's Indian all right, mister,' Little Rose-Apple said. 'He can handle the job.'

Arthur turned to him. 'I can take care of this myself, Sour Puss. Go on up to bed.' He turned to Harben. 'You see, I am the last of my tribe. We were once a very great people and I am weighted with

the honour of perpetuating it. In order to do that I must find a woman of royal Indian blood. . . .'

'He don't want to know that,' Little Rose-Apple said. 'All he wants is for you to wear Indian clothes and let out a war-whoop.'

Arthur turned to him with dignity. 'Please permit me to handle my own business. Return to the house.'

Harben threw him a coin. 'Go on, kid. Thanks a lot.'

Little Rose-Apple grinned at him and started running up the incline towards the house.

'I would prefer it, Mr. Harben, if I didn't have to do the war-whoop. My voice isn't very powerful. . . .'

MIKHAIL SHOLOKHOV

THE FATHER

Translated from the Russian

THE sun gleamed faintly through the grey-green bushes fringing the Cossack village. Close by was the ferry, by which I intended to cross the Don. I ploughed my way through the wet sand, from which rose a putrid smell as of sodden, rotted wood. The path wound through the bushes like the tracks of a maddened hare. The crimson, swollen sun dropped into the churchyard beyond the village. Behind me the azure twilight came on, through the dry brushwood.

The ferry-boat was moored to the landing-stage. Under her gurgled the lilac-coloured, shimmering water. The oars drifted lazily to and fro, from side to side, creaking in the rowlocks.

The ferryman was baling water from the moss-grown bottom of the boat and emptying it overboard. He raised his head, glanced at me with his yellowish, squinting eyes and grunted morosely:

'Want to cross? I'll be done in a minute. Unmoor her while you're waiting.'

'Shall we be able to manage the boat, just the two of us?'

'We'll have to try. It'll be dark soon. Someone else may come along, perhaps.' Turning up his wide-legged trousers the man gave me a second look and remarked:

'You're a stranger to these parts, I can see. Where do you come from?'

'From the Army.'

The man put his cap down into the boat, jerked back his hair, which resembled the black-streaked Caucasian silver, and winked at me, showing his decaying teeth.

'Going on leave, eh? On the quiet—I know——'

'I've been demobilized. My class is released from service.'

'You don't say. You've got a clear conscience, then.'

We sat down to the oars. The Don drove us, as though in jest, into the young branches of the waterlogged undergrowth that came right down to the river bank. The water sucked noisily at the splintery keel of the boat. The ferryman's bare legs, streaked with blue veins,

displayed massive lumps of muscle. The soles of his feet, blue with the cold, were slippery from pressing against the slimy thwarts. His arms were long and bony, his fingers thickened into knots at the joints. Lean, with hunched shoulders and bowed back, he seemed to row clumsily. But the blades of his oars cut smoothly and expertly through the crests of the waves and dipped deeply into the water.

I could hear his regular, untroubled breathing. From his knitted woollen jersey came to my nostrils the acrid smell of sweat and tobacco and the insipid smell of water. Suddenly he leaned on his oar and, turning his head towards me, said:

'It doesn't look as if we're going to get any further. We're stuck here among these trees. Bad business!'

A strong current gave the boat a violent buffeting, swung the stern round dangerously and drove us straight towards the tree-trunks.

Half an hour later we were stuck fast among the waterlogged branches. Our oars had broken off short. The splintered shafts dangled forlornly from the rowlocks. There was a leak in the bottom of the boat and water was trickling in with a gurgling sound. We settled down for the night in a tree. The ferryman crouched near me, his legs wound round a branch. He was sucking his pipe, talking, and listening to the whirring wings of the wild geese as they sped through the almost palpable darkness above our heads.

'Well, well. So you're going home, eh? And your mother's already waiting for you there, of course. Her son, the support of her old age, is coming home. It'll be warm for her now at home, there'll be warmth in her old heart. Ay—but, of course, that's nothing to you, your mother spending her days in heart-rending anxiety for you and shedding bitter tears all through the night. You're all like that, you mother's darlings. That's what you're like—so long as you've no rising generation of your own you've no sympathy with your parents' sufferings. And yet, the pain that every mother and every father must endure for their children's sake!

'It sometimes happens that in gutting a fish the woman crushes the gall. Then, when you take a spoonful of fish-sauce, it's too bitter to swallow. That's my case. I live, but at the feast of life every mouthful I take is bitter. I put up with it, I can stick it. But sometimes I think: Life, Life, how much longer now before you do your last and worst?

'You don't come from these parts. You're a stranger. Tell me, if you don't think the best thing for me is to put a rope round my neck . . .

'I have a daughter. Her name is Natasha. She's just seventeen.

Seventeen years old. She says to me: "Father, I can't bear to sit down to table with you. When I look at your hands," she says, "I remember that you killed my brothers with those hands, and my gorge rises."

'But the hussy doesn't realize that it was all for her sake, hers and the other children's.

'I married early. God sent me a wife who bred like a rabbit. She brought me eight mouths to feed, one after another. The ninth did for her. She was delivered all right but died five days later of fever. So I was left alone. Yet God took none of the children to Himself, pray as I would. Ivan was the eldest. He took after me. He was dark-haired, with regular features. He was a handsome Cossack and a good worker. The next boy was four years younger than Ivan. He was more like his mother, a little fellow, but a big belly. He had flaxen, almost white hair, and grey-blue eyes. His name was Danilo and he was my favourite. Of the other seven children the elder were girls and the younger mere babies.

'I arranged a marriage for Ivan in our village and soon he, too, had a little one. I was just beginning to be on the look out for something suitable for Danilo as well when the "troubles" started. The people in our Cossack village revolted against the Soviets. Ivan came running to me. "Father!" he cried. "Come away with me to the Reds! I beg you, Father, in Christ's name! We must stand by the Reds, for their cause is right and just!"

'Danilo, too, started lecturing me. They begged and cajoled me for a long time. But I said to them: "I don't propose to force you in any way. Go wherever you like. But I stay here. I've seven mouths to feed apart from yours, and every one of them has to be filled."

'So off they went. People were arming in the village. Each man took what he could get. But when they seized me, shouting, "To the front!" I told them, in the Square:

'"Countrymen, fathers, you all know that I am the father of a family. I've seven children lying in bed at home. If I die who'll look after them?"

'It was no good. I was seized without the slightest consideration, and packed off to the front. The lines ran not far from our village.

'One day, just before Easter, nine prisoners were brought in. Danilushka, my favourite son, was among them. They were taken across the market-place to be brought before the captain. The Cossacks came running out of their houses. God help us! There was a to-do. "Down with them, the cowardly rascals! When they're brought back from their cross-examination we'll put them to sleep all right, without any solemn nonsense!"

'I stood there with my knees shaking. But I wouldn't let them see how my heart was beating for my boy Danilo. I noticed the Cossacks whispering to one another and nodding their heads towards me. Arkasha, the sergeant-major, approached me. "Well, Mikishara, will you join us in doing in these Communists?"

'"Of course I will, the damned ruffians!" said I.

'"Well, then, here's a bayonet for you. Stand here, close to the entrance." As he spoke he gave me a queer look. "We shall keep an eye on you, Mikishara. Be careful, my friend. Or it may go hard with you."

'So I stood there in front of the entrance and the thought whirled through my head: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, must I actually kill my own son?"

'More and more noise came from the guard-room. The prisoners were brought out. Danilo was the first. When I looked at him I froze with horror. His head was swollen like a barrel and the skin had been torn off. Blood was flowing from his face in thick clots. Thick woollen gloves were stuck in his hair. After beating him they had staunched the flayed places on his head with the gloves. They had sucked up the blood and dried on the hair, sticking to it. This had been done while the prisoners were still on their way to the village. My Danilo reeled across the passage. He caught sight of me and stretched out his hands towards me. He tried to smile. One of his eyes was completely stuck up with blood.

'It was clear enough to me that if I didn't set about him the villagers would kill me on the spot, and my little ones would be cast out on God's wide world as forsaken orphans.

'When Danilo reached the place where I was standing, he said: "Father—dear father, good-bye." The tears were running down his cheeks and washing the blood away. And I—well—I couldn't raise my arm, it had grown so heavy. It was like a piece of wood. The bayonet was pressing hard against my arm. I fetched my youngster a crack with the butt-end of the rifle . . . just here—behind the ear. He gave a cry that sounded like: "Ooh—ooh——" covered his face with his hands and fell. My Cossack friends laughed fit to burst. "Give it him, Mikishara, give it him! You seem quite cross with your Danilo. Give it him again! Otherwise we shall have to let a little of *your* blood!"

'The captain appeared on the threshold of the house and, for appearance sake, yelled something at his men. But there was laughter in his eyes.

'The Cossacks rushed at the prisoners and began to bayonet them.

It grew dark before my eyes and I ran away down the street. But I had seen my Danilo rolling about on the ground. The sergeant-major stabbed him in the throat with a bayonet. But all the sound Danilo made was: "Krr——"'

The boat's timbers creaked under the pressure of the water and the alder-trunk bent beneath us, groaning.

With his foot Mikishara groped for the keel of the boat, which had appeared above the surface of the water, and said, as he knocked the glowing ashes out of his pipe:

'The boat's sinking. We shall have to sit here on this tree till to-morrow midday. Damn our luck!'

He was silent for a long time. Then he went on, in a low and muffled tone:

'They put me in charge of the police-section for that day's work. Much water has flowed down the Don since then. But at nights I still hear the sound of a gasping death-rattle, as if someone was choking. The same sound as I heard that day when I ran away, my Danilo's death-rattle.

'That's how my conscience takes its revenge.'

'We held that line against the Reds until the spring. Then General Sekretyev joined us and we chased them far across the Don, right into Saratov province.

'As my sons had gone over to the Reds, things weren't made any easier for me on service, although I was the father of a family.

'We got as far as the town of Balashor. I'd had no news of my son Ivan and did not know where he was. But suddenly a rumour started among the Cossacks—the devil only knows how they had found it out—that Ivan had deserted the Reds and joined the 36th Cossack Battery.

'The people from our village threatened me: "We'll catch that Ivashka of yours and make him eat grass."

'We came to a certain village and found the 36th quartered there. They soon fished out my Ivan, bound him and dragged him to the guard-room. He got a fearful thrashing there. Then they said to me:

'"Take him to Regimental Headquarters!"

'Headquarters were about twelve versts from the village. The commander of our company gave me the authorization papers and said, avoiding my eyes:

'"Here are the papers, Mikishara. Take the lad to headquarters. He'll be safer with you. He won't run away from his father."

'Then I realized in a flash what their game was. They'd ordered me to take him to headquarters because they believed that, as I was his father, I'd be sure to let him go. Then they would catch him and put us both out together.

'I went into the room where Ivan was a prisoner and said to the men on guard:

'"Hand over your prisoner to me. I've to take him to headquarters."

'"You're welcome to him," said they. "We've nothing more to do with him."

'Ivan slung his greatcoat across his shoulder. He fidgeted with his cap for a time, then threw it back on the bench.

'We left the village. Our road led up a hillside. I did not speak, neither did he. I kept turning round to see whether we were being watched. In this fashion we covered perhaps half the distance. We passed a shrine. There was no one to be seen behind us. Ivan turned to me, saying—and how plaintive his voice sounded: "Father, they're sure to kill me at headquarters. You're taking me to my death. Is your conscience still asleep?"

'"No, Ivashka," I answered. "It isn't."

'"Then have you no pity for me?"

'"So much, my boy, that my heart is dying for grief within me."

'"Then, if you are sorry for me, let me go. Think! I have had so short a life, till now, in this world!"

'He fell on his knees and bowed three times to the very ground before me. Then I said to him: "Let us go as far as the slope, my boy. Then run for it. I'll fire a few shots after you for appearance sake."

'Well, you know, when he was a little chap you couldn't get an affectionate word out of him. But now he flung his arms round my neck and kissed my hands. . . .

'We went on a couple of versts. He did not speak. Neither did I. We came to the slope. Ivan halted.

'"Good-bye, then, father. If we are both spared I shall watch over you to the end of your days. You shall never hear a rough word from me."

'He embraced me, and my heart seemed near to breaking. "Off with you, son," I said to him. He ran down the slope. He kept looking round and waving his hand to me. I let him run some forty yards, then unslung my rifle, knelt down so as to keep my arm steady, and pulled the trigger . . . the bullet struck him full in the back.'

Mikishara groped for some time in his pocket, searching for his

tobacco-pouch, struck a spark from his flint with a deliberate movement and slowly lit his pipe, puffing clouds of smoke from his lips. He kept the tinder glimmering in the hollow of his hand. The muscles of his face quivered. From under his inflamed eyelids the squinting eyes stared, hard and remorseless.

'Well. He leapt high in the air and ran on a few yards further in his agony. Then he clapped his hands to his stomach and turned to look at me. "Father . . . why . . ." He fell to the ground and began to thrash about with his legs. I ran up and bent over him. His eyes were rolling, and bloody foam was coming from his lips. I thought, It's all over, he's dying. But he seemed to pull himself together and suddenly murmured, as he groped for my hand: "Father, I have a child and a wife. . . ." His head sank sideways. He was looking for the wound, to close it with his fingers. Where was it . . . but even so the blood kept spurting through his fingers . . . he groaned. Then he turned over on his back and gave me a terrible look. But already he could only move his tongue with difficulty. He wanted to say something more, but all I could hear was: "Fa—ther, fa—ther . . ." The tears poured from my eyes and I spoke to him. "Ivan, my boy, bear this crown of sorrow for me. I know you have a wife and child. But I have seven helpless children lying at home. If I'd let you go the Cossacks would have killed me, and my children would have had to beg their bread."

'He remained conscious for a little while. Then he was done. His hand still clasped mine. I took off his overcoat and boots, covered his face with a piece of cloth and went back to the village. . . .

'Judge me, in the goodness of your heart. I took so much suffering on myself for my children's sake. It has turned my hair grey. . . . I work for them, that they may not lack a bite of bread. There is no peace for me by day or by night . . . and they say to me, like my daughter Natasha: "Father, I can't bear to sit down to table with you. . . ." Can a man stand that sort of thing?'

Mikishara the ferryman let his head fall forward. Then he fixed a grim and steady stare upon me. Behind him the melancholy and misty light of dawn was coming up. From the right bank of the river, among the black masses of the poplars, a sleepy voice, hoarse from the cold, made itself heard through the discordant cackling of the ducks.

'Mikishara! Damn you! Ferry, ho!'

ALFRED KURELLA

THE TAKING OF PSKHU

Translated from the German by J. L.

This story is from a remarkable story-sequence, the scene of which is laid in a remote valley of the Western Caucasus, in a little village whose healing springs are known only to a few initiates. Round a camp-fire one summer night, Russian workers on holiday, German exiles exploring the country, Russian colonists of the valley and earlier settlers gather, and relate all they know or have experienced in the valley. It is one of the settlers, an old Abkhasian peasant, who tells the story translated here.

SILENCE lay over the circle round the fire, the deep silence of the mountains. The faint rustling of the stream, that came up from the depths of the valley to us, and the gentle gurgling of the spring made the stillness only more profound.

It was the voice of Daniel which broke the silence. The old man was sitting nearly opposite us, and his lambskin cloak gleamed in the firelight. The little cap which he carried was pulled down so low on his forehead, that it was not easy to distinguish whether it was the fur of the cap which almost covered his deep-set eyes, or bushy eyebrows. Under the narrow hook-nose a grey moustache hung over the sunken mouth, and made his naturally quiet voice still quieter.

'One fights and fights,' he said slowly. 'And one day one is defeated. . . . When a wrestler is thrown, and the winner gets up, and moves back and leaves him free, then the loser gets up too. But at first he sits down and stays without moving. One hears his heart-beat and his breath coming and going. All is quiet, but one hears his heart and his breath, first loud, and then more and more softly. So he sits, and collects his strength. For he means to go on fighting. . . .' The words came as if from a remote distance, and they sounded like some old ballad.

'He fights and fights, and the day comes when he wins. The day comes when we win. We too had our struggle, a hard struggle and a terrible struggle, and we were beaten. Terrible was our defeat. Not one stone was left standing upon another among our houses. We had

to leave our country, to go out into strange countries and strange peoples,—like you we had to go. But we went on fighting. And in the end we were victorious. Lenin was victorious and Stalin was victorious and the Bolsheviks were victorious. All of us, together, we were victorious. Yes.'

The old man fell silent. No one spoke a word. Only the fire crackled as its flames shot up.

Old Daniel understood the silence.

He lifted his eyes, and looked slowly round at the circle of his listeners. Then his glance rested on us:

'So you're going to Pskhu? Ah, no, you're not going to Pskhu, That's not Pskhu where you're going, no, no. Few are those who know what Pskhu is, what Pskhu was. But I know.'

He paused again. Then he turned his glance to the two young Russians.

'You've come from Pskhu, but have you seen it? Not down below in the valley, down there one can see nothing. But from the mountain, when you come up here, from Tamassu, at the edge of the forest, did you take a look from there? There's nothing of Pskhu to be seen, not a trace. Everything is forest, forest. It's like a bearskin cloak. But an old cloak, with the moth in it; here a bald patch and there a bald patch. That's what they call Pskhu nowadays.'

He shook his head.

'. . . But I saw it, Pskhu, as it was. These eyes of mine have seen it. I was only a boy then. I used to watch our flocks on the Ochubyr. From there one could see everything, the whole valley. There was no forest there, not a single tree growing wild as far as one could see, the whole way down the Baul as far as the Dsyschra. Only gardens and cultivated fields and up on the slopes of the mountains meadows and pastures. We had to go far to fetch our wood. In the valleys, along the Baul, the Betaga, there was nothing but houses, beautiful houses, big houses, a thousand farms. And above all the other farms the great farm, all built of stone, with stone walls and towers. Did you see that? No, you could not see that. Only scattered stones lie there now, and there's nothing to see. But in those days no trees were growing there either. From the towers one could see everything, up and down all the valleys, and everyone who came or went. And all the people in Pskhu could see the fortress. And no one could take that fortress, no, no one.

'That was Pskhu. That was where we lived. My father and his father, and his father too, we had always lived there, since the first men came down from the Dsyschra. We were free. We had no

masters. And we had everything. Cattle in plenty, on all the mountains, and maize enough for everyone and honey and apples and pears. . . . But Safir Bey was in Sukhum, and there were strangers there too, Russians. Safir Bey sold Abkhasia to the strangers. He went from Sukhum to the silver mountain. But he did not come to Pskhu. He took silver for himself from the mountain. His dagger was mounted in silver, and he ate from silver dishes, and the dresses of his women were worked with silver. But that wasn't enough for him. So he sold our country to the strangers. And now his dagger was inlaid with gold, and the dishes were of gold off which he ate, and his women carried golden ear-rings in their ears. Strangers began to come to the mountains and take away the silver. But no one came to Pskhu, neither Safir Bey nor the strangers. For no one was able to come to Pskhu. The mountains are high and the passes are narrow, and the muskets of Pskhu hit their mark with every shot. No one could come to Pskhu. But Abkhasians came to us, Abkhasians from other valleys, from Gagri, and Gal. The strangers were there already, they told us. The Abkhasians stayed in our houses and ate with us. I was only a young boy, but I saw it all and I know it all.

'One day more Abkhasians came. And they said: now the strangers are marching against Pskhu. The strangers, the Russians, are already everywhere in the mountains. They have taken everything and have built fortresses and have put their fighting-men in them. Now they want to take Pskhu too. For Pskhu is rich and Pskhu is free. . . . That was what the Abkhasians said. But we said: They will not come to Pskhu, no one comes to Pskhu.

'And then one day the Great Horn sounded. My father took his musket, my uncle took his musket, everyone took his musket and went into the great farm. My father also took me with him. All the men of Pskhu were there with their muskets. And the Elders of Pskhu said to us: The strangers, the Russians, are marching against Pskhu, thousands and thousands of them. They are coming from the north, from the Kuban, and from the south, from Sukhum. And with them is Safir Bey, the traitor. They have muskets, muskets like ours, and big muskets, muskets on wheels. But they must not come to Pskhu, no one comes to Pskhu. Four passes lead to Pskhu, and in the four passes they will die.

'That was in summer. The maize was ripe and yellow. And all the men went up to the passes. I was not allowed to go with them. I had a musket, and could shoot the chamois as they sprang from rock to rock. But no, said my father, you're too young: stay at home. All the men were up in the passes. It was a long, long time they

were there. And no one came to Pskhu. I went up to the pass, too, where my father was, and my brother. They were on the Dou, where the track leads up from Sukhum. I brought them maize-bread, and meat, and honey and pear-wine. We all knew: the strangers would not come to Pskhu. Many days passed. We cut the corn, and we dried the fruits, and the summer came to an end. Soon snow fell on the mountains, and covered the passes, and then no one came, no one came to Pskhu any more.

'But then, one day, I was with the oxen, in the fields. I was driving the plough, as my father was on the Dou. And suddenly there was a great uproar, which came from Rigsda way. Shots fell and women screamed. Then came a mighty bellow like thunder: it echoed again and again in the mountains. I saw earth and smoke in the fortress. Then a boy came running towards me, little Anschba from the farms of Pschiza. He was covered with blood. "They've come!" he cried. "They've come, the Russians are in the valley. . . ." And he fell to the ground.

'It was true, no stranger could come to Pskhu: but treachery came to Pskhu. There was a traitor among us. Accursed be his name: it is forgotten already. He went to Safir Bey and the Russians. He showed them the way, the way over the Holy Dsyschra. No stranger could go that way, but the traitor went. He led them over the mountains to the Bsyb. No stranger could find the path, but the traitor found it. The Bsyb flows through a deep gulf in the rocks, so deep that one cannot see it. But there is a place where the cliffs above come so close together, that a goat can leap across. To that place the traitor led the strangers, and they cut down trees and laid them across the cliffs. Then they marched over, thousands and thousands of them, and they had their great muskets with them. And then they were in Pschiza. And Pschiza was turned into a mass of flames.

'Again the Great Horn sounded. And all who were not on the passes took their muskets and went to Rigsda. The women and the children went into the fortress, and they took the new maize with them and the dried fruits and the cattle and sheep. But as for us, we made for Rigsda as fast as we could. And we slew the strangers who were already there, and drove the others back, down along the Bsyb to the place where the track leaves the valley. And on the cliffs, at the spot where the "Ladder" is now, we caught the strangers, and we shot them down, one after the other, and their great muskets could not reach us. Then the men who had been placed on the passes towards the Kuban came to our help. Deep snow had fallen, and the strangers could no longer cross the mountains there.

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'But they came all the same. From Pschiza they marched across the Antschaka and fell upon us from the rear. They dug themselves in on the Achubyr, just where I had watched our flocks. Forest grows there now, but even to-day you can see where they dug themselves in. . . . And then they came still closer. They captured the mountain by the Achey, and placed their great muskets there. The "Holy Mountain" the Russians have called it since then. The "Accursed Mountain" it should be called. For that was the end.

'Shot after shot fell in the fortress. The fortress burst into flames. And the women and children fled from it into the houses. But the houses burst into flames too. Then our fathers came back from the passes, and behind them, over the Dou and the Abgalara, came the Russians. My father did not come back. He lay dead, up there, on the Dou. That was the end. They drove us together, they bound our hands behind our backs and led us away. They took everything with them, the cattle, the sheep, the fruits and the cheese, they left us only the maize. All those thousand farms were one mass of flames. The houses were burning and the farms were burning, and we saw how the Russians tore everything down. Many of our men met their death there, even before they left the valley of Pskhu, all who would not be driven out as captives. Half of us they drove out to the Kuban, the others they took with them to Sukhum. Then they marched away from our country, out to the country of the Turks. They took me with them to the Kuban. They dragged us through the deep snow. Many more died on this journey.

'The valley of Pskhu lay hidden in smoke. But the wind blew the smoke away, and the stones grew cold. And then snow fell on the stones. When spring came, grass began to grow, and it covered the stones of Pskhu. And so the years passed. The beeches crept down from the mountains, the chestnuts and the alders spread themselves on the river-banks. The whole valley was filled with young leaves and branches.

'I was far away, on the Kuban steppe, where there are no mountains and where the earth is as flat as the palm of your hand. I watched the strangers' flocks. I never came up to the mountains. But once I met a shepherd, who had been with his goats in the Makara valley in summer. He had climbed high up into the mountains, and from there he had looked down at the valley of Pskhu. And he had seen nothing but forest.

'That was Pskhu, and that was its end. . . .'

While he was telling his story, old Daniel Dsukhva had often made long pauses. Spellbound by the images which he conjured up from

times long past, we had listened without sound or movement. Even now all was silent in the circle round the fire; we scarcely knew whether Daniel had finished his story or not.

He sat, sunk into himself, only looking at the circles and lines which he drew in the sand in front of him with his stick.

TIZIAN TABIDZE

FESTIVAL SONG

Adapted from the Georgian by J.L.

ARE you my brother? Lift your glass, and sing,
And I will kneel before you: world I love,
Hail to you; hail, life's ecstasy, in song!
I will be yours, your bondage never leave.

Who gave Muchranian vines their purple bloom?
Who steeped Aragva's grassy banks in green?
Is there a place the sun's gold makes sublime
Where no corn waves, with gifts of ripened grain?

Strangers may die in peace, who never saw
The Georgian peaks, these giants haunting dreams,—
But I, the Georgian-born, what can I say
To match these blazing phantoms, in my rhymes?

How many thousand vineyards have you seen?
Who planted all these vines, this burning prize?
Better to have no home than be the son
Born of a land no poem can fitly praise,—

Always beside her, always, like a slave
Bearing as chains her beauty, let me sing:
Hail to you, hail, world's wonder that I love,
I will be yours, I'll never end my song.

M. DJAVAKHISHVILI

THE CUP

Translated from the Russian version by STEPHEN GARRY

IT was twelve o'clock when yet another man came out of the two-storeyed house at No. 12 Rue Levert and angrily slammed the door of the Soviet consulate behind him.

Standing a moment, he smoothed the soft felt hat in his hand as though it had been crumpled, in reality only crumpling it still more, looked at the house as a plaintiff who has just lost a good case would look at a Court of Justice, and, after a momentary hesitation, turned in the direction of the Jardin du Luxembourg.

Suddenly he again halted, nervously rummaged in his pocket, and, evidently finding what he was seeking, went his way once more with a hurried step.

The police agent stuck at his usual post on the pavement opposite the consulate followed the man with his eyes, and decided: 'Obviously it hasn't come off.' He pulled out his notebook and made a note on a page which already contained the remarks: 'No. 86. . . . Dark, bristling hair, forty years old, thick-set, ungainly, 170 centimetres tall, left hand burnt. Arrived alone.' Then he thrust his hands into his pockets and quietly strolled away without removing his eyes from the troublesome house.

Nodar Shubidze walked past the Senate, and halting at the Odeon before a great emporium, stared at the new books. But none of them interested him, for to-day he did not feel like reading. He pulled out his gunmetal watch, the colour of his beard, and looked at it. It was time for lunch, and the streets were growing more crowded. He turned into the Boulevard St. Michel and halted again. What café should he lunch at? All around him were the well-known cafés Souffleau, Darcourt, Voltaire, Pascal, and many others, but . . .

But he would not enter any of these. He would be sure to meet some of the Georgian emigrés, who would start arguing: 'No, don't do that!' 'For whose benefit would it be?' Nodar knew by heart what each of them would say and what plans each would make, taking fire himself and inciting the others. And Nodar knew how he himself would behave: a distrustful smile flickering on his lips while

he let fall not a word, though a painful yearning clutched at his heart. And for the hundredth time he thought: 'Blessed is he who believes; but I . . .'

But he himself had long since been classed among those 'eaten up with the canker of doubt,' and behind him stretched eight long years —longer it seemed than the distance from Paris to Tiflis—years of a road overgrown with poisonous thorns; and far behind him too was that enigmatical something or someone, like a decapitated body, flung down somewhere 'over there,' far, terribly far beyond three times ten lands, beyond three times ten seas: the man who at one time . . . But who can say when and how that disintegration had begun? And to-day Nodar clearly felt that it was not that thing severed from his body which had been left behind on that shore, but he, Nodar himself, the flesh of flesh and blood of blood of that great and living something. And he was a stump so tiny and insignificant that it would not be seen through a telescope (through that telescope which aimed at the sky like a cyclops' eye at the end of the Luxembourg Garden). Everything had begun after that.

No! He would not go to the Café Pascal, nor to the Souffleau, nor to the Darcourt.

And he strode swiftly towards the Panthéon. Crossing the street, he jumped onto an autobus and dropped like a lunatic into a seat. Only that morning, as he travelled from Sèvres to Paris, he had been thinking: 'The consul will grant me a visa. And then I shall telephone and send letters by post to all, literally to all my comrades and old friends. Let them all turn up to see me for the last time. Just for once I'll have a good banquet and. . . . But I shan't be able to say to them: "You're lucky to be left behind." They'd kick up a terrible row and might begin to plead with me to stay.'

By the evening he had planned to go all around the Latin quarter, looking up his Georgian friends at the Sorbonne and inviting them all to dinner. And that evening he was to have taken them across to the other side of the Seine, and, somewhere close to the Opera, possibly at the 'Grand Hotel,' to have treated them to a sumptuous dinner. Thence they were all to have gone to the Champs Elysées, looking in at the 'Caucasian Select.' Then back again, wandering along the boulevards, going up to Montmartre, and about midnight finding themselves at the Place Pigalle.

'Some Georgians keep the night cabaret "Château Caucasien" there,' he had thought. 'At the entrance we'll be welcomed by porters in red Cherkessian coats, and inside we shall have all Georgian food, tobacco, and red Bordeaux, which is like our Kakhetian wine.

'Red Bordeaux, the sweet-sounding pipes, and a frenzied Lesgian girl, the truest of the true: on the tips of her toes, hawk-like impetuosity, burning with flame, beating like a fountain. Let my friends unburden their souls, let them drink and eat like dragoons! Let them sing and dance and turn everything upside down if they want to.'

Nodar was well off now. He would have paid all the bills, and then returned to Sèvres, to load himself with baggage and take the same well-known road which once—'thence'—had seemed endless and sown with broken glass, but which now—'hence'—would seem shorter than an arm, softer than down.

Such were the plans he had made in the expectation that he would be granted his passport. But now . . . He would jump off at the Théâtre Chatelet, would eat something or other wherever he happened to find himself, and return to Sèvres this very day. And then. . . Then he would see what happened.

The autobus crossed the Pont St. Michel and halted before the Chatelet. Nobody got out, and the bus continued its journey.

Reason eats into belief as the sun eats into ice.

'It will begin this year, in the spring,' Nodar had always heard on all sides. 'Without fail! Undoubtedly!' everybody had agreed.

But Nodar himself had lost all faith in the possibility of war, and instead, another conviction had begun to take root within him: the conviction that in this world the desire for peace is stronger than the lust for war.

'One's reason eats into belief like warmth into snow, but . . . but . . .' The thought stuck in his mind like a nail: 'Anyone who's once known the horrors of war can't be got to march a second time.'

'A diplomatic note is being prepared . . .' someone would grow excited. And those around him would explode like gunpowder.

'It's beginning! It's coming!'

'Of course it is! It can't be avoided.'

Once more Nodar Shubidze would smile distrustfully, and say to himself that all the notes and threats were at present only serving the god of peace, and afterward . . . who knows? Who could say? Why, old 'Noi' Jordania himself had once admitted that possibly the reds would hold on for another twenty years, or even thirty. And in that case it was possible that they would hang on for a full fifty years, or outlast a century. That was an old story: the old world had always been hostile to the new and had tried to smash it. A thousand times they started up to devour each other, but always . . . almost always they were reconciled to each other, and the new world lived for thousands of years and went its own ways. The same thing was

happening now, or maybe would happen. And for that reason, for that very reason, Nodar had now lost all hope; his patience was exhausted. When or how? What did that matter?

Reason eats into belief like the sun into ice, and the snow, once deep and impassable, had gradually grown thinner. Then here and there thawed patches of bare earth had appeared, and at last it had melted away entirely and had flowed off with the Seine. And now Nodar found it humorous to remember the past. From morning to morning he either sat over his books, or, bent double, worked at the china works. From time to time he caught a whisper from somewhere, and, growing agitated, like others he began to pack his things. Everybody bustled around, talked big, made ready. Then the rumour died down again, and Nodar had only wasted several weeks and had to laugh at himself.

The days would pass. A bird fluttered in the air, or somewhere in Laville was heard the distant shot of a hunter, but in the Boul. Mich. everybody again grew agitated. And Sèvres was only a little way down the river. To Sèvres flew the rumours, for the hundredth time forcing Nodar to start up and break off his usual work.

'Have you heard? . . . Have you read? . . .' someone would fierily ask him.

He had heard, and he had read, but he would calmly answer with a question:

'Why, what's happened?'

And, listening to his companion's story, he would avidly seek for an extra word, a new shade of meaning, a new tone, a new note.

So it had been with him formerly, some years previously. But now, if anyone asked him: 'Have you heard?' 'Have you read?' he answered confidently:

'Yes. I've heard. I've read.'

And with all the strength of his will he closed his ears, while his thoughts were always away in Sèvres, in the china works, in the laboratory, in the crucibles, the ovens, and the various kinds of clay.

'Are you returning, Monsieur?' the conductor awoke him from his reverie.

'Returning?' he exclaimed in astonishment. 'Where are we then?'

'At the Gare St. Lazare,' the conductor replied with a smile.

Nodar looked around him. The autobus had emptied, and was filling up again. He felt suddenly ashamed. He hurriedly got out, crossed the square, halted before a shop, again groped in his pocket, and sighed with relief when he found everything as it should be.

'I was woolgathering,' he thought. 'But so long as nothing has happened. . . .'

And, truly, of late his thoughts were frequently woolgathering. When of a morning he began to mix the clays and caolines for analysis and firing he grew oblivious of time, food, routine.

'Time for lunch, Monsieur Shubidze,' his fellow-workers would frequently remind him.

'In a minute,' he would mumble.

And at times that minute hardly arrived before midnight.

His landlady was everlastingly angry because the soup had grown cold; but Nodar himself had almost grown unused to hot food.

Sometimes, instead of working he would sit for hours on end in a kind of torpor, or would go for a walk and unexpectedly, to his own surprise, would find himself at Versailles, or in the forest of Medun, or the park of St. Cloud, or still farther away, in some unknown village or little town.

The works manager grumbled, but he gradually grew accustomed to Nodar's ways, and in the end gave 'that anarchist' Shubidze complete freedom to do as he liked. And if he wanted to, he slept; if he wanted to he kept awake, ate, went hungry, roamed, or stuck himself in some corner like St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar, or sat in an attitude reminiscent of Rodin's statue 'The Thinker,' and was as silent.

And so now: he had intended to get off at Le Chatelet, have something to eat close by, and then return to Sèvres by steamer. Instead he had blindly travelled three quite unnecessary kilometres, and now did not know whether to lunch or not. Perhaps it would be better to return without eating and have dinner in the evening?

Shubidze was made more for the chemist's laboratory than for active politics. But when, after brilliantly finishing his training, he had prepared himself for entry into that isolated and self-contained little world, the family of chemists, the noise and bustle of the street had caught him up and carried him away as though he were a speck of dust.

'A healthy science must be preceded by a healthy constitution,' he had begun to think from that time on, and because of this prerequisite he had always been in the front rank of the 'fighters.' But the ninth wave had flung them—whether front line or reserves—all over the world, and had thrown Nodar on to the boulevards of Paris. Then willy-nilly he had remembered that he had a chemist's training in reserve, and, with the aid of foreigners and friends, had quickly obtained a position as laboratory assistant in the Sèvres china works.

Instead of his comfortable office, a poor little room filled with evil-smelling smoke and poisoned with fumes; instead of his document-case an oven and a white-hot crucible; and instead of state problems an earthen mould, raw clay, caoline, china, majolica.

But Nodar was a chemist, and knew well that clay is a material more important than gold, and frequently more valuable. And in addition he possessed an iron perseverance, a buffalo's patience, and ability to work like a well-ordered clock.

He quickly won his seniors' notice, and at first they valued him like silver; but afterwards they would not have exchanged him for gold. He laboured day and night, up to sixteen hours a day, sometimes asking for nothing except permission to work. While others haphazardly leapt up the ladder of service, Nodar raised himself unbrokenly upward; and he was gradually entrusted with more and more important tasks. And more than once he made new compositions for mosaics, new blends of china clay, and brought the works large profits. In reward for all this he asked to be granted a small laboratory for himself, which he was given immediately, and was then left in peace.

Since that date three years had passed. Shubidze was almost forgotten, for he forgot the works and everything else in the world. Only once did they remember him, thinking: 'Has that Georgian gone out of his mind?'

One morning he had run hatless out of his laboratory and hurried off to the forest of Medun. For five days he disappeared. They sought for him by telephone, by telegraph, and through the police. Someone had seen him in Barlareine, where, with bent head, he had trodden down highstanding corn, and the peasants had driven him off with sticks. In Charenton he was all but put into the asylum. In Juranville women chased after him with brooms, after which he turned up in Aubeville, and a report was made in regard to a dinner he had not paid for. Finally he was arrested in Romainville, as a tramp without passport, and the police took him to Sèvres. His colleagues hardly recognized their chemist: he looked like an apache, and talked amazing gibberish.

Once more 'Le Georgien' locked himself in his laboratory. A week later he emerged again and made his way to the Soviet consulate, where he had now, three months later, received a chilly refusal.

Now he was calm, and only did not know where to go and what to do. He stood thinking for a moment, then suddenly ran out into the road, back across the square and on to the same autobus which had just brought him from the Boulevard St. Michel. Some twenty

minutes later he alighted at the Pont au Change, took the steamboat along the Seine, and about three o'clock in the afternoon was closeted with the director of the Sèvres works and quietly saying to the bald-headed official:

'I've worked here almost eight years . . .'

'Quite right, Monsieur Shubidze. Well, and what do you want?'

'I've not had one holiday in all that time.'

'And that's true. Do you want one now?'

'Yes, I do. . . . I want to go to England, to look over the ceramic works there. I don't ask for either salary or travelling expenses while I'm gone.'

'Splendid! A good idea!' the director approved. 'You must see the Minton works in Staffordshire in any case. And don't forget the Copland works.'

'I'd like to see Wedgwood's.'

'Splendid! Excellent!' the director waxed enthusiastic, for the English firms' competition tormented him like toothache. 'Pay particular attention to coloured tiles for walls and floors. And don't forget the porcelain and stone ware made by the firm of Doulton in Lambeth, but above all find out all you can at the porcelain works at Worcester.'

'Certainly! I was thinking of going to . . . Worcester.'

'You may be able to find out something. And . . . I hope you'll write us a report.'

'Of course I shall.'

The director rejoiced. Without losing anything, he might learn something. Who knows? Perhaps this 'anarchist' Shubidze might ferret out some secret and bring it back.

'When are you thinking of going?' he asked Nodar.

'To-morrow morning.'

'For how long?'

'For a month, or perhaps two.'

'Excellent! Perhaps you'll find someone to take you up and you'll get a position at one of the works?'

'It's possible. I shall see.'

'Need I say I hope you won't forget our good relationships and will return to us?'

'Of course I shall return and report everything to you.'

'Well, I wish you a good journey and success. We'll keep your place open for you, of course.'

'Thank you very much. All the best, Monsieur director.' And Nodar left the room.

'You slept very well last night, Monsieur Shubidze,' his landlady said to him next morning. It was a long time since she had known her lodger to sleep at all. 'What's happened? Did you take something to help you?'

Nodar certainly had slept like a log that night. 'What's happened?' That was nothing to do with the old woman; in any case she wouldn't understand.

'So you're going away for a month?' the landlady asked.

'Yes, I'm going away for a month.'

He paid her a month's rent in advance and told her:

'If I'm delayed . . . you never know what may happen. In a word, if I'm not back to time store my things away somewhere, or hand them to the man who will bring you a letter from me. After a month you can let the room to someone else.'

'Very good, Monsieur Shubidze. Very good.'

'Well, good-bye.'

'No, not good-bye; au revoir, Monsieur Shubidze.'

'Au revoir, madame; au revoir.'

An hour later Nodar with his single suitcase was not at the Gare St. Lazare, from which trains leave for England, but at the Gare de Lyon, and on his ticket were the words: 'Paris—Marseilles.' When he had taken his seat in the coupé he again hurriedly felt in his pocket, and faintly smiled. One of the other passengers stopped reading his paper and fixed his eyes on him.

He was disconcerted, and thought: 'Who knows? He may be a pickpocket. He may think I've got something valuable.' He pulled out of his pocket something wrapped in a silk handkerchief, carefully unwrapped it, and revealed a small cup of the type used for coffee, made of material resembling china, but of a strange tint: rose, and red, and straw, perhaps five colours in one. He gazed at it as fondly, tenderly and carefully as if it were the eye of the world and he were afraid of damaging it. He turned it over and over, and deliberately showed it to the other passengers. Then he repacked it as though it were a valuable, and put it back in his pocket. But his real wealth, the bitter fruit of seven years' labours and savings, the thick wad of thousand-franc notes which he had drawn from the bank that morning, was carelessly thrust into a side pocket, and he had almost forgotten it.

The passenger once more eyed Nodar, and thought as he noticed the newspaper *Humanité* in his hands: 'Ought he to be travelling first-class?' Then he buried himself in his *Figaro*.

But Nodar read the flaming headlines: 'Capitalistic Europe is

making ready to attack the Soviet Union. War is at hand. An ultimatum is being prepared. . . . But we shall not allow . . .'

He laid aside his paper and reflected. They were thinking of war, and he was travelling to the very country where, possibly, it would soon break out. Had he gone out of his mind? 'Walking into trouble with his eyes open.' If it were really true that if not to-day then to-morrow, or maybe within a year war would break out, then mightn't it be better . . . ?

And resolutely he thought: 'No. I don't believe it. My friends in Paris need war, they think of it as a refreshing thunderstorm . . . only a victorious war will save them. But these others, the Soviets . . . they want peace. . . . They won't let themselves be dragged into war.'

But Nodar Shubidze could not go on waiting for ever. He could not chase any longer after chimeras, wander in the clouds, and everlastingly struggle with spectres. Around his neck hung a heavy, the highest, sweetest of responsibilities, and he would only breathe freely when he threw off the burden and took a worthy gift back to his country. He would go and gladly present his gift to that great something from which he had torn himself away, almost perishing in consequence, eight years previously.

If the door was locked, he would get in through the window; if the window was fastened, he would make his way down the chimney; if the chimney was stopped up, he would crawl through a mousehole. But somehow he would return to his family, his house, his fatherland, where for eight years his wife, his all-but widow Sidonia, had waited for him, exhausted and wearing herself out with the separation. He would return to his mother Marta, who was on the brink of the grave, and had but one desire: to see her only son Nodar once more.

He would return to his son Gaioze; he had left him a three-year-old child eight years before, and had not seen him since. He would return home to his country, where eight years previously he had left innumerable friends and relations and his own toiling people, for whom he had sacrificed almost everything, and who were now studying the most difficult of all sciences: the science of labour, and the most difficult of arts: the art of standing on their own feet. And was there a sweeter and greater task or a finer repayment of debt than the gift which he, Nodar Shubidze, was bringing his country?

'No, there is none!'

Trebizond is a pretty little town extended like a great white horseshoe at the foot of the mountains.

From the steamship of the company 'Messageries Maritimes' Nodar transferred to a launch, and stealthily, quietly slipped into one of the corners of the horseshoe. Then he made his way to a café, rested there, gave the waiter some small orders, handed him ten liras instead of one, and added:

'Don't bother about the change, Osman.'

After a brief talk the Turk vanished. Half an hour later he returned, squatted on his haunches in front of Nodar, and reported on his commission.

And within another hour Shubidze, dressed as a Georgian moslem, was in a sailing ship which raised its sail at dawn and turned its nose towards Khope.

It was dangerous to leave Khope in the daytime; one might be followed and brought back. To avoid such a contretemps the effendi with the burnt hand spent the day in the town. In the darkness of the night he mounted a horse, and, like a nocturnal thief, made his further way in the company of several Adjarians.

It was winter. Nothing was visible except the snow-covered mountains and forests. At times the road passed into a track; then the track would disappear, and not a trace of a path was to be seen. But that was just what the smugglers of Coty perfumes and 'Victoria' stockings needed. Like bloodhounds they seemed to scent out the road. And each carried more than half a hundredweight of goods.

Breathing heavily, panting, sometimes walking, sometimes sliding like bears down a precipice, after some three hours, towards dawn, they came to the end of their journy at Maradid. There Jemal the owner of the contraband dismissed his previous assistants and engaged new ones. In the early morning for a couple of hours at least they shouted, wrangled, and chaffered furiously.

At last the first group of carriers snorted and went off, taking with them the odour of Coty perfumes, the liras they had gained with such difficulty, and an equal amount received as bakshish from the effendi, who had carried his own baggage.

They stayed a long time in Maradid. Nodar was allotted a separate little room in an upper storey, dark even in daytime because of the closed window-shutters.

Jemal sat on his goods, smoked his hookah, sipped coffee, and waited for news. An Adjarian skipped up to him from time to time, whispered something, chaffered with an innocent look on his face, went off, returned, and with every fresh return drank five cups or so of coffee. The men seemed ill at ease in the effendi's presence and talked in Turkish, occasionally letting fall a word in Georgian.

'What's the matter, Jemal?' Nodar asked the leader of the smugglers. 'What is that man saying about me?'

'Nothing, effendi. Nothing important.'

'But what was it?'

'Ibrahim says the others declare that the effendi has something valuable in his pocket.'

'But how do they know?' Nodar asked, agitatedly rising to his feet.

The smugglers laughed.

'Ibrahim said that the others say the effendi is always feeling his pocket, as though making sure he hadn't lost something.'

Nodar sighed with relief, smiled, and thought: 'They might have done me some injury.' He turned out both pockets, pouring the small articles out of them, and also produced the cup wrapped in the handkerchief.

'Is that a valuable?' he asked, as he showed it to them.

Jemal took the cup, carelessly glanced at it, handed it back, and led away the disillusioned Ibrahim. He returned to his hookah. He was a long time silent. At last he asked Nodar in Georgian:

'What news do you bring from France? Are they thinking of paying us a visit?'

'No, they aren't,' Nodar answered, and changed the subject. 'What's happening on the other side of those mountains? What stories do visitors bring back? How are the poor people living? Have they unveiled the women?'

Jemal proved to be more orthodox than the author of the Koran. He at once went into a frenzy, started up, and flooded the room with a full river of bile. Nodar nodded and urged him on; but he laughed in his soul, for he was convinced that 'there' on the farther side of the range in reality an immense, unforgettable work was being achieved.

Ibrahim soon returned and made Jemal look out of the window. They both stared at the snowy range and the sky, animatedly discussing something. Over the clear azure floated a fragment of dark cloud, and the upper ridges were smoking with white dust.

'We're going to have good weather, effendi,' Jemal heartened Nodar, rubbing his hands together.

Nodar also looked out, and realized that for these men the best of weather was the heaviest of snowstorms.

Before an hour had passed the mountain crests, the dangerous and almost impassable boundary of the 'Red Devils'' country, were wrapped in heavy clouds, and with a howl and whistle the storm burst over Maradid.

Ibrahim ran out into the yard, and Jemal, pleasantly smiling, said to Nodar:

'Allah is sending us good weather, effendi: very good weather. Well, hand over half here, and the rest when we get there.' He pointed towards the mountains hidden in the storm.

Nodar counted out half the agreed sum and made ready for the journey, having in truth nothing to make ready. The landlord brought seven white felt Caucasian cloaks, received his due, and went out. Then the five Adjarians entered. They wrapped themselves in the white cloaks, fastened their skis to their feet, helped Nodar to put on his cloak, took long staffs in their hands, hoisted the bundles on to their backs and, looking like white geese, began to make their way up the white slopes.

The cold whirlwind beat in their faces, or seemed to be graciously stroking them, then furiously raged as though seeking some opening through which to penetrate beneath the clothes, and went roaring down the bare slopes. The loaded party continually moved forward, floating like the wind itself, winding a white serpent around the turns. Occasionally they halted under a cliff, changed their skis for grappling irons, took breath and, panting and stumbling, made their way onward towards Gurdjistan, towards Georgia.

The Red frontier guard has keen grey eyes. He can stand snow and cold more easily than can a bear. In such wild weather even a crow would freeze, but he stands like a post up to his breast in snow, and, like a wolf, scents out his prey.

But Jemal's hounds were not fed on honey either. Like goats they sprang from stone to stone, like balls they rolled down the slopes, clinging to bushes on the innumerable ascents, crawling like spiders; like lizards across a wall they slipped between the fingers of the Red guards.

'Tired, effendi?' Jemal asked Nodar.

'No, but . . . but this path was made only for devils and Adjarians.'

'Allah be praised!' Jemal frequently thanked Allah, who had created this frontier, some stranger named Coty, the heavy customs duties, and Jemal himself. And he did not know how he would live, or who would build him his two-storeyed house in Borchke, if the frontier were suddenly to be abolished together with its customs duties, or if Coty turned up his toes.

The bushes grew denser, and the travellers kept a still keener look-out. Anxiously glancing around, they halted frequently and made the advance patrol, a man as nimble as a white rat, clamber up a tree or to the top of a rock, or thrust his nose among bushes, or they sent him ahead and waited impatiently for his return.

The snowstorm had stopped, but a heavy mist had descended and concealed the heights. The travellers huddled into themselves, and in places all but crawled on hands and knees.

Now they had come to the frontier: it ran along the ridge. And just about there should be the Turkish frontier patrols, friends of Jemal's, with the 'Red devils' a little farther on.

Now they had passed the Turkish posts and were sliding down into a ravine. The snow lay deeper, the going was more difficult. But that was nothing: under a lofty cliff they would rest and adjust their bundles, then make one more effort and slip through the chain of Red guards. After that they would rest and rejoice: filling their pockets with liras and chervontsi, buying their wives or lovers kerchiefs, boots, beads and maize bread.

'Carefully, Mahmoud! Make sure your feet don't slip!'

And now they had arrived. Somewhere about here. . . . Suddenly the leader waved his hand. The band halted and held themselves tensely. Several hands involuntarily reached for weapons, which at such moments are liable to slip of themselves out of their cases, and to begin to bark without their owners' permission.

Nodar stood like a stone, not moving even a finger, for in his pocket was nothing but the little cup. But his heart beat violently. 'Surely my luck hasn't deserted me?' he thought.

He was at once put at ease: the leader called in a hoarse whisper:

'They're ours. Come on.' And he emerged from his bush.

The others followed him. They reached a rock, and beckoned to the men seated there. Five strangers had hidden behind the bare rock. They also had made ready for a fight, but now, recognizing their friends, they smiled confidently, helped the arrivals to remove their burdens, and quietly asked after their friends across the frontier. Only one stood apart from the rest. He was wearing a felt cloak, but instead of a cowl he had a town hat on his head. The new arrivals paid no attention to him, for they had seen such travellers before, and they themselves had just conducted one such effendi, a Georgian, across the frontier.

But Nodar trembled with agitation.

'No! It can't be! It isn't he!' He rubbed his eyes and stared. 'It can't be!'

With a smile the stranger approached Nodar, stretched out both hands in their warm gloves to him, and muttered:

'Nodar? Is it you?'

It was Sardion Glurdjishvili.

'Man! Sardion! And is it really you?'

The two friends threw themselves into each other's arms. Then, smiling, they fixed their eyes on each other as though they wanted to be quite convinced that they were not dreaming. And they embraced once more.

'Is it really you?' they broke in on each other. 'Where have you come from? How did you get here?'

Seating themselves on stones, the Adjarians wiped away the sweat and stared in amazement at the two effendi friends who had met here, in this drowsy forest on the confines of two worlds, and in the most dangerous spot of all.' But still more astonishing to them was that one was fleeing from 'Red Georgia' in the direction of Anatolia, while the other was making his way from Europe to his own country.

'Where are you going?' Nodar asked.

'I'm getting out of it.'

'Where to? Why? What for?'

'You know well enough why a man flees from hell.'

'Wait! I warn you, keep strong language out of it. Explain clearly.'

'I tell you briefly and clearly, I'm escaping from hell. Yes, from hell.'

'Again . . .'

'Man! Understand and believe! I'm not a madman, to cut myself off for ever, or almost for ever from my wife, my mother, children, relations, friends, and emigrate into a foreign country.'

'Have you been working underground? Have you been fighting them?'

'No.'

'Were they going to arrest you?'

'Why, no.'

'Then I don't understand. Explain!'

And Sardion briefly explained. In a furious tone, with frequent resort to strong expressions he bemoaned his own fate and that of his native land.

'Stop! Wait!' Nodar interrupted him yet a third time. 'Wait a minute. I've heard those strong and picturesque words a thousand times before. You're quoting a White proclamation to me. But perhaps you've gone White too!'

Sardion seized his hand and cried almost imploringly:

'Nodar! If you'd been in my place you'd not only have gone White, but, believe me, you'd have turned black also.'

'I don't believe it, Sardion. It's almost eight years since I fled from our native land, but I can't believe it.'

'Why can't you?' The refugee took Nodar's words to heart like an injured child.

'Because there exist two extreme views. "It's hell!" you cry, and "It's heaven," others assure me. But the truth lies somewhere between those two extremes. I'm going to find it out for myself.'

'Well, up you get!' Jemal said, turning to the friends. 'Effendis, it's time to go.'

'Stop, Jemal! Do wait a moment,' they both pleaded, and ardently continued their talk.

Nodar declared that even if it were all true, even if the people, 'our toiling people,' were really in such need, then Sardion also was bound at such a time to display spiritual steadfastness, resolution and love, and to work for their sake.

'Yes, but who'll give you work, man? You don't know them; you don't know anything at all,' Sardion retorted.

And so fervently did he try to persuade his old friend to turn back that Nodar might have been making his way straight to hell, while he, Sardion, risked his life to save him. For a fifth time he asked:

'Who's going to let you get anywhere near the people? No one! Not at any price!'

'Effendis, it's time to go,' Jemal again reminded them.

'Wait, man! Let us finish our talk,' Sardion demanded.

'This isn't the time for talk, effendi!' Jemal grew angry. 'If the Russian guard comes on us you'll talk all right!'

The Adjarians also jumped to their feet and began to pick up their bundles. But the two friends seized each other's hands and pleaded:

'Sardion, don't be so imprudent.'

'Nodar, you're going to your death!'

'I tell you, Sardion, you have no special qualifications, and you'll die of hunger.'

'But Nodar, even though you have special qualifications you'll go under.'

'I shan't let you go.'

'Nor I you.'

And they clung to each other, while the Adjarians bared their dazzling white teeth and urged them to come on.

At last Nodar said: 'Listen, Sardion. Come back with me. I'll see for myself, and if you prove to be right then we'll both clear out. Do you agree?'

Sardion wavered. They stood holding each other's hands, and their eyes assayed each other. After a brief hesitation Sardion said:

'Do you give me your word?'

'Yes,' Nodar firmly replied, adding: 'You won't be left to starve.'

'Where do you mean?' Sardion demanded.

'Neither on this side nor the other. You can rely on me.'

'Well, come on then.' Sardion wiped the cold sweat from his face, and in a weary tone said to the men who had come with him: 'I'm going back. You can go.'

With a rumble and clatter the morning train panted into Tiflis station. The two friends alighted. They walked glumly, one behind the other, past the ticket-collector, went out on to the square and halted at a corner.

'So you're going straight home?' Sardion asked uncertainly.

'First I must see my folk at home, and. . . . Aren't you keeping something from me, Sardion? They are all well, aren't they?'

'I've already told you I haven't seen them for the last five months. They were well then.'

'I've asked you about them more than once, and each time I caught a note of uncertainty in your answer.'

'What note of uncertainty?' Sardion protested. 'Go and make them happy, and then come along to my place and we'll talk over our plans further.'

'No, you come to my place.'

'No, my friend. During the next two days I shan't go out of the house. You'll learn why later. And so from your house you'll go straight to "them"?'

'Yes, and it'll be very inconvenient if I'm arrested before.' For the hundredth time he touched his pocket with his burnt hand.

'You haven't lost it?'

'No.'

Sardion paused, then seized Nodar by the arm and pleaded: 'Nodar! Think it over even now. Don't give it to them! I know these people better than you do. They won't know its value. They'll leave you with empty hands.'

'Enough, Sardion. You won't dissuade me now. I shall never be left with empty hands. I am a specialist, and I can always find work.'

'It's your business,' Sardion humbly said. 'I've warned you, and the rest is for you. Well, good-bye for a little while.'

And they parted.

Sardion turned left, while Nodar went to the right, avidly looking at everything around him: the crowd, the buildings, the footwalks, the shops. What was in the eyes of the passers-by, he wondered. Despondency, or cheerfulness? Were they worse or better dressed

than formerly? Were the buildings painted and in repair, or were they shabby-looking? Were the roads in holes, or had they been repaired? Was there more mud or less?

And when he noticed improvements, he rejoiced. And when he saw signs of decay, he did not grow angry as others would have done, but felt as much pain and shame as if he were personally responsible.

On the left hand, at the side of the railway offices he noticed a large new building of hewn stone. He turned to it, satisfiedly examined the spacious façade, and thought: 'That's splendid. We're acquiring our own features again. People who haven't got their own style haven't their own culture either.'

He walked along the newly paved road. 'This is fine!' he rejoiced. But when he saw some hovels he burst out: 'I don't understand this. What are they turning the centre of the town into a village for?'

A gleaming goods-tram went past him. 'Fine trams!' he reflected. 'But . . .' He remembered having read in Paris that every such tram cost thirty thousand roubles. And he thought: 'You could buy three large houses here for the price of one tram. That's abnormal.'

It was daytime, and he could not see the town lighting system at work. But as he noticed the row of electric lamp standards he thought: 'Very good!' And he recalled his conversation with Sardion as their train had passed the Transcaucasian State Electric Power Station. He had stared excitedly at the station, and exclaimed with delight.

'You needn't be so pleased,' Sardion had thrown cold water on his enthusiasm. 'First reckon up what all this has cost, and then talk.'

'Keep your spleen to yourself, Sardion,' Nodar had answered. 'Even if you're right your calculations are superfluous. Now we've got to think out ways of exploiting all that colossal source of energy.'

'You never will. They made the roof first, and they're only now talking about the foundations.'

'Believe me, before long a dozen such stations will be insufficient.'

'Why do you think so?'

'Have you forgotten my cup?'

'Ah, yes, I had,' Sardion admitted.

'And even if that didn't exist, all the same the energy could be used. Don't be in too much of a hurry. Wait another dozen years, and then remember my words,' he had closed the conversation.

Suddenly he noticed that a man had halted and was staring at him. 'I'm being a fool,' he thought. 'I'll have plenty of time to look at everything later.' And he jumped on to a tram.

Nodar's, or rather his wife's house, for it had been part of her dowry, was a one-storeyed building of five rooms, spacious, clean

and light. Behind the house was a little garden where in the old days Nodar had enjoyed planting flowers and dwarf trees.

Now he had arrived in the quiet street. And there was the white, cheerful little house. Fine curtains hung in the windows. It was still early: not yet eight. But without doubt everybody was already up. His mother Marta always rose at dawn in the old days, and while her Nodar and his wife Sidonia were getting up she and the servant bustled around getting breakfast ready.

And everything should be ready now: the rooms tidy, the samovar hissing on the table. Sidonia would be up, and their one little son, the swarthy, mischievous Gaioze, almost eleven now, would be hurrying to get off to school.

Would the boy recognize his father? But of course not. That was nothing, though: both Sidonia and Marta would have seen to it that he did not forget his father during all these past eight years.

'Gaioze, my child!' Nodar would say to him with a smile, 'do you recognize your father?' And at first the boy would be confused, but then he would smile and run to fling his arms around his father's neck.

And soon now a tumultuous delight would spurt like a fountain in that little house.

His mother Marta, a bowed and energetic little woman with lean arms, her head as grey as the moon, would cling to her son returned from the dead, and water him with her tears. While Sidonia, his faithful, long-suffering wife, for eight years all but orphan, all but widow, would run with dishevelled hair to embrace him.

Great joy, like great sorrow, brings tears to the eyes. And all four would weep, easing their hearts with their weeping.

Trembling with the joy of expectation, Nodar ran up the steps, impatiently tugged at the bell and, with a shiver in his heart, waited for the door to be opened.

But the moment lengthened into a minute; the minute began to seem an hour.

What did this mean? What had happened? 'Open the door quickly. Let me in, or my heart will burst!'

And he began to knock violently. He heard the creak of the inner door, the sound of footsteps. Then the key rattled. The door opened, and an unfamiliar, elderly servant appeared.

'Who do you want?' she rudely muttered.

That was Nodar's business. Why send messengers of joy ahead of him? Inform the woman who he was and wait in the hall? No! He would go straight in, fly in and rejoice his family with the transports of his exultation.

He put his finger to his lips for the woman to keep her peace, opened the inner door, and went into the dining-room as one customarily walks in on one's own family: freely and boldly, radiant with joy.

But he stopped at the door, as though paralysed. For the joy of his expectation was transformed into astonishment, and that astonishment recoiled and pierced him from head to foot.

At the table three people were seated drinking tea: Gaioze, Sidonia, and . . . the friend of his childhood, Levan Shabrishvili. Gaioze sat with his mouth gaping. Sidonia's lips quivered, her hands dropped, and instead of joy a mortal terror stared out of her dilated eyes. For one moment she gazed at her husband as though sentenced to death, and quietly groaned:

'Ai!'

Then she started up, rushed like a wild goat into the other room, and locked herself in.

Nodar fell back against the wall. He stood motionless, turning his astonished eyes from his fleeing wife to Levan.

Was Levan a guest or the master here? Nodar's friend—or former friend—the engineer Levan Shabrishvili had risen to his feet, and was smiling disconcertedly, senselessly moving his arms and awkwardly shrugging his shoulders, not knowing what to do or say. And it was at once obvious to Nodar that he had not just arrived in this house, but was at home, a member of the family, and probably even the master.

For twenty years the two men had been friends, and they knew each other as they knew themselves. And into Levan's ears and eyes was borne the one sign: the forefinger of Nodar's left hand was knocking on the wall against which he was leaning, tapping ten times to a second, as though counting out the moments. That convulsive finger was always in movement when Nodar was mastered by terrible agitation, it was always a faithful index to his mood. And dozens of times in past days Levan had said to him: 'Show me your thermometer. I can tell how you feel, by that finger.'

And now the finger was beating like a freshly killed chicken, violating the menacing silence with its ruthless tapping.

'Perhaps he's just come to live here as a lodger, and that's all,' the thought occurred to Nodar, and he was about to smile hopefully. But then he remembered Sidonia's 'Ai!' and her flight, and he himself groaned in spirit: 'Ai!' And his head whirled.

The boy Gaioze sat frozen to his seat, turning astonished eyes first on 'Uncle Levan,' then interrogatively to the 'stranger.' And his little heart felt that this 'man' who had just entered and was so furiously

tapping on the wall with his finger had brought a storm into their quiet family, and had filled the previously clear air with lightning and soundless thunder. He saw the lightning clearly in the stranger's face. Who was this black-haired man? Why had he burst in like a robber? What was he tapping with his finger for? And even Uncle Levan, who was always so calm and unemotional, was distracted and embarrrassed. Why did he not say something to the man? If he was an enemy, then meet him as an enemy. And if he was a guest, why did not Uncle Levan shake hands and offer him a chair?

But the two men stood silent, each struggling with himself.

'Gaioze,' Uncle Levan turned to him at last, 'you'll be late for school. Run off now.'

The boy still had half a glass of tea to drink. He glanced at the clock; it was still early to go to school; another twenty minutes to his usual time.

'Off with you!' Levan told him. 'Get a drink on the way somewhere.'

He silently obeyed, and a minute or two later he ran out of the house. Levan shut the door behind him, and glanced at Nodar, who was now standing a little bowed, with both hands gripping the back of a heavy chair. His finger was drumming now on the table, while his eyes were fixed on the wall in front of him.

Levan had recovered his self-control. He slowly walked round the table, and halted in the spot where he had stood originally. He felt that it was for him to say the first word: to relieve the tense atmosphere and quietly, noiselessly to release the cocked hammer. He wanted to say in a warm, friendly tone, as of old: 'Greetings, brother Nodar! Where've you come from? When did you arrive?' and to hold out his hand. But instead something prompted the harsh, cold, spiritless words:

'Sit down!'

And they were both reminded of the investigating judge, who says 'Sit down' as drily to a prisoner brought before him for examination.

Nodar's finger knocked on the table still more vehemently. Levan had sought to use a certain tone of voice, but unexpectedly to himself he had spoken in quite a different tone. It was too late to change it now. Now he could not say warmly: 'Greetings, Nodar. Where've you come from? When did you arrive?'

Levan mentally washed his hands of his icy 'Sit down,' and, with a forced smile, asked:

'Where did you burn your hand like that?'

The burned finger knocked still more strongly, and Levan again realized that he had chosen an unfortunate way of attempting to clear the air. He made a vain attempt to adopt a suitable tone, and it would have been simpler to ask: 'What of your travels, Nodar? What news do you bring from the emigrés' camp?'

Nodar gave him a venomous smile, as though saying: 'Couldn't you think of anything better?' and hoarsely asked:

'First of all tell me . . . what is your position here in this family? Are you guest, or . . . master?'

The question tore away the veil of mystery as though it were paper. It was time to reveal the secret. Levan made no attempt to postpone the moment, and only sought for the right words. He thought simply: 'Now there must be no faltering.'

'I am here as master.'

He said the words so resolutely that he surprised himself. But let it pass! He was even satisfied that he had spoken thus, for he was resolute of character, and if he had been a surgeon by profession he would have treated catarrh with a lancet.

Nodar's finger beat like a motor-boat engine. Levan stood motionless, with one eye watching that finger, while the other stared at Nodar's face, which was twitching and grimacing as though from pain.

'This moment determines all,' thought Levan.

Nodar drew away the chair. The finger danced in air. A shudder took charge of his jaws, and his fists clenched involuntarily. He was itching to say something rough, biting, angry. But at that moment a strange sound came from the locked room. They both listened and understood: it was Sidonia weeping. They froze motionless. Not a sound! It was as though that muffled, spasmodic sobbing were soothing, softening, muting the tightly stretched strings. Nodar's finger immediately moderated its twitching.

'Your mother . . . your mother left something here for you,' Levan abruptly spoke.

'Mother?' Nodar exclaimed, amazed that he had only now remembered her, at another's prompting. And he looked around the room as though seeking someone. 'Where has she got to? Where is mother?'

Levan's head drooped and he was silent. In the next room Sidonia's sobbing grew louder.

'Where is my mother, Levan?'

Levan raised his head, gazed into his eyes, and quietly said:

'Nodar!' He paused, then added: 'It's three months now since she . . . fell ill with inflammation of the lungs and . . .'

Nodar pressed his burnt hand to his chest, sighed deeply, and, swaying, dropped into a chair. Already Levan had instinctively realized that Sidonia's weeping had half released the cocked hammer, but now the news of Nodar's mother's death had flung windows and doors wide open, and had let fresh, clean air into that poisoned room.

'Wait here!' He lowered his voice. 'I'll go and see to Sidonia.' And he went towards the other door.

As he left the room he saw Nodar shaking his head as though reproaching his fate, and heard him say:

'Yes, go and help Sidonia.'

There was whispering behind the locked door. The whispering grew louder; the weeping passed into sobbing, and was followed by silence.

When, a few minutes later, Levan returned to the dining-room, the guest was again standing as though carved in wood. And it was evident that he was awaiting his former friend. Trembling from head to foot, he haltingly said:

'I wanted to see you even before . . . before I learned that you are . . . in this house. Well . . . we'll postpone that.'

'Yes, we'll postpone it,' Levan at once agreed.

'And so . . .' Nodar was on the point of bursting out 'Good-bye.' But he let fall the words: 'And so I'll go. . . .'

'Yes, go.'

And Nodar went: went like a sick man leaving a hospital.

An hour later he called on Sardion and told him:

'I want a room.'

And he almost fell into a chair.

Sardion looked at him, and went without a word. A few minutes later he returned and briefly said:

'It's ready.'

He was unable to say more.

Staggering, Nodar went and locked himself in, as Sidonia had that same morning. Then he pressed his hand to his constricted heart as though trying to halt it, swayed a little and crumpled up on the bed. And, like him, it groaned, and at times moaned and sighed as though it were bewailing a precious dead body laid on it.

'And so he had had a mother . . . but now she was gone. His son had grown up, and did not recognize him. He had had one friend, beloved, faithful, irreplaceable . . . and they had taken her from him. Yes, taken her. And not even sent him the news.

He had received his last letter from Sidonia three months before, when his mother was dying or already dead. He had read it a dozen times, yet he had never noticed any hint in it. It was still in his pocket.

He again concentratedly began to read the crumpled paper.

'Dear Nodar. . . .'

Only now did he notice that she did not say 'My darling,' 'My beloved,' or 'My life.'

So something had happened, something had snapped. Something had so bemused him back there in Paris that he had not noticed this soulless, freezing form of address. Yes, true, at that time he had been engrossed in something else. 'My patience is exhausted, I can stand no more,' she had written. Now the words were clear, but he had not realized it then, because not once during the past eight years had he received a letter of hers which did not contain that same phrase: 'I can stand no more.'

And the cup was to blame. Curse it!

'If you prefer your phantoms' ('Hm, phantoms!' he thought) 'to me and our child, then you must answer for it. . . .'

Only Nodar must answer for all, and that, too, was clear. He was answering now; he was locked into a strange room and was struggling alone with his yearning. Again alone, alone as before.

'The money you send I spend only on Gaioze's education, and I do not take a rouble for myself. . . .' (Aha, that's clearer than daylight: so previously she had been taking it) . . . as now I can manage without your help.'

Why, of course she could. Very easily she could. She had found herself a new husband or lover (who distinguishes between them these days?) and was living on him. But what had benumbed him, Nodar, to such an extent that he had not realized all the significance of those lines, and had not understood what was so very comprehensible?

'The cup! That accursed cup!' he cried. He turned again to the letter.

'It is time to end, and to set bounds between us and the past. . . .'

What? What had she written? Time to end? Well, then, it was ended. And that was that! And the bounds were set, were measured out. A couple of hours ago we had set them up—no, not set them up, but dug them out, dug them deeply between us, digging such a boundless and bottomless abyss that even an eagle could never cross it.

'What a simpleton I am! What a gawk! That accursed cup!'

And he threw the china cup on to the table. Like a little bell it laughed, rolled, and came to rest. Trembling like an aspen leaf, Nodar could hardly bring himself to finish the letter, for his burned finger drummed a furious tattoo.

He threw the letter down, huddled into himself, and turned to the wall as though hiding from someone.

At dinner-time Sardion knocked at the door.

'I don't want anything,' Nodar answered, and seated himself at the window.

Towards supper-time there was another knock. He angrily shouted: 'I told you I don't want anything.'

Three days he sat there like a prisoner, bawling from time to time: 'Haven't I told you I don't want anything? Leave me in peace. I don't want anything, I tell you.'

But on the fourth day he reasoned:

'My mother had grown old; she caught a cold and died of inflammation of the lungs. Nobody could be blamed for that. Even if I had been here I couldn't have done anything. . . .'

'. . . And nobody's taken my Gaioze from me. Poor Sidonia had to bring him up for eight years without my help. And now she's taken another husband she may have a second child, and a third . . . So then . . .'

Then Sidonia would not dispute his claim to Gaioze.

'But then there's Sidonia herself. . . .'

There was nothing he could do there; he could not bring her back. And even if it were possible, he would never allow himself to do it: what did he want with a woman kissed and caressed by another? Even a vagabond would renounce his estranged or former wife, so why bring shame on the name of Nodar Shubidze? . . . In a few days that name would sound thunderously all over the world.

And with both hands he firmly seized his cup, as though afraid it would fly away, or be stolen by someone.

But no. Why had Sidonia turned to Levan? Why had she taken up with Levan Shabrishvili of all men, the man whom, even in Paris, he had decided upon as his representative and assistant? A jest of fate indeed! A simple accident. When a loosened brick falls on someone, or an unfortunate is found under a train, then all his friends and relations say: 'That's just his luck!'

And now Nodar was the unfortunate, and the fortunate one was his former friend Levan, who had avoided so many storms because he had always worked only at his profession, burying himself in it wholly and arduously, like a buffalo.

Yet how could that be called happiness? What difference did it make whether Sidonia took Levan or someone else? On that first day he had abandoned himself to the passion of his heart, not asking his reason. He had seriously decided to return to France. But now

he was almost laughing at the thought, and accusing himself: 'You're a fool! You've got the cup in your hands, and because you've lost your wife do you intend to damn yourself, your name, your people and the future you will bring them?'

And it was clear to him that he had lost his reason, temporarily gone mad.

'To the devil with Sidonia, and myself too!' he exclaimed with utter conviction.

He looked pale, but he had already fully recovered; he stood firmly on his feet, his eyes glittered, and his voice was strong when at last he let Sardion into his room. He gave him money and said:

'Don't stint either yourself or me of anything. Order a good dinner to-day, and . . . Yes, I wanted to tell you to go along to Sidonia about three o'clock and bring Gaioze to me. Tell her I'll send him back this very day.'

'And no other message?' Sardion asked uncertainly.

'Nothing else. Oh, yes. Apologize to my wife for me. I've already been four days here and haven't paid her a visit. But I'm in a hurry now. I'll call myself before dinner-time and plead with her to forgive me. Well, so long. I'm going out.'

'Wait a moment,' Sardion halted him. 'I suppose you haven't seen reason yet? We're not going on our travels, perhaps?'

'Where to? Europe? You've lost your senses. Don't say another word to me about that,' Nodar answered, and calmly went out.

An hour later he entered Levan's spacious office. Levan was now a man of authority, he had discovered. For a moment he halted at the door, looked at his friend sitting at the table, smiled, then walked towards him with outstretched hand and the words:

'Hallo, Levan!'

Shabrishvili rose, answered with a similar smile, and strongly squeezed Nodar's hand.

'Hallo, Nodar. How are you?'

'Very well.'

'I was afraid you wouldn't come.'

'To tell the truth, for one second, just for one little second, I felt the desire to slip off again. But I mastered myself, and here I am.'

'But why didn't you come before?'

Nodar shrugged his shoulders, laughed, hesitated, and said with some embarrassment:

'I had to digest it.'

Levan turned his eyes away and, after a brief silence, asked in a lower tone:

'And then?'

'Of course . . . I digested it,' Nodar answered still more quietly. 'I digested it because . . . because this business . . . my personal affairs, seemed to me only a very tiny point in the boundless steppe, the steppe which we must, which we are bound to plough up.'

Face to face they stood, piercing each other with their eyes. In Levan's eyes shone sparks of joy and trust.

'So . . . you don't hold me guilty in any way?' he asked in a whisper.

'Not in any way,' Nodar sincerely declared.

Levan stretched out his hand, and Nodar welcomed it with a grip. They stood a long time hand in hand, silently smiling. Then Levan said two words:

'Sit down.'

And Nodar remembered how those same words had been said four days previously. Involuntarily he compared them, and felt the warmth and sincerity in their new tone.

They sat down opposite each other, and were silent. An oppressive, awkward silence reigned in the room. Each waited for the other to say the first word.

At last Levan asked:

'Well, what have you to tell me?'

'Why . . . I've come back. I came back secretly,' and he lapsed into silence.

'Did you? But then?'

'I knew that I could be severely punished, but I could not stand any more, and so I came back.'

'Couldn't stand what?' Levan again fixed his eyes on him.

'Wanderings in foreign lands. I don't believe in that any more. I've come back to our people.'

'To what people?'

'Obviously, to the toiling people. No other people exist now; among hundreds a couple or so don't count.'

'And your purpose?'

'To work with you for our toiling people, and to share their sorrows and joys, especially their sorrows. For "in times of happiness even the Africans come here," and only a madman would run away from a happy life.'

And again a silence. Levan sat holding himself erect, not turning his eyes from Nodar. A faint smile trembled on his lips, and his black, cold, piercing eyes gazed right into his friend's soul.

Suddenly he turned his gaze to Nodar's burned hand, and at

once noticed that the 'thermometer' was only very slightly quivering.

'If he were acting,' he thought, 'that finger would be jumping for all it's worth.' And he asked:

'And so it appears. . . . What have you brought us?'

Nodar understood him in his own way, and replied:

'For nearly eight years I was working in the famous Sèvres pottery works. I am a chemist and ceramist.'

'I know. But what about political issues?'

Without hesitation Nodar firmly declared:

'Complete loyalty and fidelity.'

With a faint smile Levan turned his penetrating gaze from Nodar's face to his finger and back again, then said as though to himself:

'At one time that was all that was demanded, but now . . .' And he stopped.

'But now that is insufficient?' Nodar said in surprise, fixedly gazing into Levan's eyes.

But he could read nothing in them, for nobody had ever read anything in his friend's eyes or his smile. In that silence his thoughts, his 'yes' and 'no,' anger, joy, agreement and rejection had always been locked behind nine doors, and was never revealed on his face.

'But now it's insufficient?' Nodar asked again, and his finger jerked more violently.

Levan noticed that the 'thermometer was rising,' but he remained silent, with the same smile on his lips.

'Levan, listen!' Nodar exclaimed, and the trembling of his finger was reflected in his voice. 'Fidelity isn't straw. If anything should happen to-morrow I shall be bound to take up the rifle and shed blood: my own as well as the enemy's.'

'But proofs of that are required to-day,' Levan coldly declared.

'I shall supply those proofs when the time comes.'

'I tell you those proofs are required to-day,' Levan repeated.

'Reckoned in our money I received two thousand a month in Paris, and here . . . I don't know what awaits me. Possibly they'll caulk me up in Siberia.'

'Very possibly,' Levan nodded.

'And despite that, I've shown myself here.'

'But your proofs?' Levan insisted.

Nodar was silent. His finger increased its spasmodic jerk.

'I tell you, proofs!' his former friend once more reminded him, holding out his open palm as though he wanted to receive the facts in tangible form.

'Proofs?' Nodar asked, and rose.

His burned hand revolted. He thrust it into his pocket, drew it out, and laid the little coffee-cup in Levan's outstretched hand, saying:

'Then allow me!' And his face took on an expression which suggested that he had handed his friend the destiny of the world.

Levan looked at the cup, then turned uncomprehending eyes on Nodar and thought: 'Gone out of his mind?' He again threw a glance at the cup, and a shade of fear slipped over his smiling face.

'Obviously out of his mind,' he thought, and mentally added: 'Poor Nodar!' He began to reflect how he could free himself of 'poor Nodar' without a scene. And he suddenly smiled amicably at him and said:

'Charming! A very pretty little cup!'

'Not charming, but a genuine treasure. The greatest of treasures,' Nodar corrected him in a tone of deepest conviction.

'Why, of course,' Levan hastened to agree. 'A treasure! The greatest of treasures.'

'Something absolutely priceless,' Shubidze agitatedly cried. 'Within two years it will transform the world and bring us in thousands of millions.'

'Poor fellow!' Levan thought again, but at once assented:

'Unquestionably; absolutely!' He handed back the cup. 'Take and preserve it carefully. Don't show it to anyone, or . . .'

Nodar realized that Levan thought he was mad. He took the cup and said:

'Levan! You're a well-informed and intelligent man, and you will soon understand what I'm driving at. Well, watch this and guess.'

He swung his arm and with all his force threw the cup against the wall.

It gave out an extraordinary sound, flooding the room with a new, unearthly ring and, flying off the wall, rolled over the parqueting with the same enigmatic ringing. Like a madman Nodar flung himself upon it, jumping on it with all the weight of his heels as though crushing a snake, while he triumphantly cried:

'There, Levan! You watch and be convinced.'

Then he seized the undamaged cup with quivering fingers, and handed it to the astonished Levan with the question:

'D'you understand? Did you hear? Do you realize?'

Levan was keen-witted and possessed the requisite expert knowledge, and he at once saw Nodar's point.

'What's it made of?' he asked.

'Clay.'

'What?' And never before in all his life had he opened his eyes so wide and in such amazement.

'It's made of clay,' Nodar confirmed with joyous pride.

'Of clay?'

'Of clay, of ordinary, common clay.'

'Of clay . . . and what else?'

'It's nine tenths clay, in other words material that costs nothing, plus something else. . . . Something that's very cheap. . . . Listen, Levan!' And he leant with both hands on the table. His finger beat like a sleigh-bell. 'Listen! That cup is stronger than steel.'

'Impossible.'

'You'll believe in a minute. Give it to me.'

He took the cup, laid it on its side on a little table, and, setting it against the wall, said:

'Take your revolver and shoot at it. Shoot straight at the bottom.'

Leven hesitated.

'Shoot, I say! Don't be afraid!'

'One minute. We can't here. We'll go down into the cellar.'

'Good! Come on.'

Three minutes later they were in a lighted cellar. Nodar again laid the cup against the wall, and stepped aside.

A black pistol gleamed in Levan's hand.

'But you must aim slightly at a tangent, otherwise the bullet will ricochet off and hit you. That's right. Now fire.'

The barrel described an arc in the air, slowly descended, and was still. The cellar was filled with thunder.

'Now look!' And Nodar held out the completely undamaged cup to Levan.

Unable to believe his eyes, Levan examined it. There was only a hardly visible dent in the very centre of the bottom.

'And look where the bullet ricochetted to.'

Levan followed the direction of Nodar's finger, and saw a tiny depression on the wall.

They went upstairs again. Levan locked the doors, sat down in his chair, and demanded:

'Explain to me clearly.'

Nodar explained in detail, explained in a restrained yet fiery and enthusiastic tone. At the end he said:

'Soon this material will be in use all over the world, because it's beautiful and it can't be broken. . . . All the world will throw itself upon it as though it were food. But the main thing is that they won't discover the secret.'

'Are you speaking the truth?'

'It's the truth I'm speaking. Our country will smoke with factories. The millions will flow in from all countries. Within ten years we shan't know ourselves. We'll cover all Georgia with a network of factories, roads, canals; we'll sow schools, hospitals, and the people will wash away their dirt and their boorishness at last.'

'Wait! Stop!' Levan halted him, as though afraid to believe his delirium.

But the excited inventor halted only when he had expounded everything, and added:

'Now do you understand?'

'I understand, but.... Does anybody else except me know anything about this?'

'No-one at present. Not a single soul.'

'And nobody knows abroad?'

'Nobody knows abroad either. I could have heaped up millions easily there, but ... I've already told you ... You understand me now, Levan?'

Levan mutely listened to him, not knowing whether to believe one-tenth, or even one-hundredth of what he was saying. But he possessed a quick, clear, practical mind, and, even more, he had seen it with his own eyes, and tested it with a bullet. With all his soul he listened to his happy comrade, with all his being he listened: listened and did not even think of 'proofs.'

They went on talking for a long time. A thousand times they weighed, estimated, and summarized all they had said. At last Levan announced:

'Come, Nodar. Come with me to "them." We'll acquaint them with this matter, and hear what they have to say.'

As they went to the door, Levan halted and turned to his friend.

'I want to ask you one thing, Nodar,' he said.

'Ask on, Levan.'

'If you hadn't had this ... this cup, would you have ... have come back just the same?' And his penetrating gaze tried to pierce to the very bottom of Nodar's soul.

'Of course I'd have come back,' Nodar replied at once. 'I'd have returned even earlier.'

Nodding his head, Levan thought: 'Yes, he'd have come back.'

He turned the key in the lock, and they went out, with a radiant, almost triumphant, look on their faces.

REX WARNER

THE TOURIST LOOKS AT SPAIN

Is it anything like sea, Spain, above your body?
    Are limbs and eyes distorted,
hair plucked, and features magnified by water
and flood of war? Is what is real drowned?

All cupolas, all storks, all holy virgins,
    curious uniforms, oranges,
what every tourist knows, both the flowers and the dancing,
pompous processions are dim as seen through gauze.

And is that the face and image of our living,
    what is cosy, queer, or lovely?
Was the walk wonderful? Was the stolen kiss perfection?
Was what we saw the thing, or do we see it now?

All those of us who loved, who read the classics,
    who were pleased when with friends,
who enjoyed nature or drinking, had views on life,
followers of football, holding up the mirror;

and those who believed in miracles or in understanding,
    who had dignity in some profession,
who read the daily papers, whose eyes were honest,
who deplored disaster, holding up the mirror,

holding the mirror see what we did not think,
    see sierras indistinct,
see something like sea over the comfortable scene,
hear hiss of water and find the whole view moving.

What we saw dead was all the time alive,
    and what we see is living.
It is over our own eyes that the mist holds.
Say clearly: Spain has torn the veil of Europe.

Truth stared the untrained mind in the face. Courage
    came through the drawn veil.
The emotional, the stolid, the frank, the suspicious,
hear what the people say who speak in deeds.

Hear what they say who came from farm and factory,
    the few-weeks soldiers slain
or kept in the cruel wire, for fear and fury,
the tragic joke or abject surrender of the cracked nerve:

'The comfortable doctrine is now open war.
    Christ is crowned with bombs.
The most saintly have become most noted for their lies.
They have wept and handed out the guns for slaughter.

'It is against mankind those guns are loaded.
    Slowly and subtly the defenders
of saint and artist king and religious leader
changed, and in our time have become the aggressors.

'What was their truth became our poison. Their love
    is aimed at man's destruction.
But our hate is love, and even our inaccuracies
are nearer truth than their finest syllogisms.

'Late and at last we knew hope, heard like the wind
    that blows the dust and grasses
the same words spoken by many different voices:
"There is a world to win: we know the oppressors."

'Not the long hands that fingered the fearful mystery,
    not the bland and soothing voices
can bring us peace, nor the roar and rant of bullies
declare decision or disguise the ferret's temper.

'It is we who feel future flowing in our veins,
    the past and the pressing present:
what was stifled stirs: what was hoped is in our hands:
what betrayed in the dark is now the desperate visible foe.

'What we have of the frayed nerve, hate, and the poor abandon,
stupidity, vanity, cunning,
taking fire, fusing, fixing to the correct end
have become more estimable than our foes' best manners.

'It is the aim that is right and the end is freedom.
In Spain the veil is torn.
In Spain is Europe. England also is in Spain.
There the sea recedes and there the mirror is no longer blurred.'

Listen. Look. There is nothing at all like sea
on Spain's real face.
It is rather around us that the mist is clinging,
and our oldest landmarks that have become a veil.

See in the mirror rather our most holy buildings,
our smoothest kindest words,
our most successful pageantry, our parades
as trash and blots and blurs on the moving truth.

Behind the solemn sentence, and behind the grin
of the dressed peace-maker,
behind the eyes that are pasted to what is venerable
the rat-mask waits and odour of what has long gone sour.

War without heralds is waged now and in our boundaries.
It is peace that is pretended.
Chiefly on Spain light falls, but in the ambient dark
already are creeping the same aggressors from their misty towers.

Not for many years now will love be guiltless,
or boating or autumn leaves.
The tense communion of sympathy with panic,
and indignation will replace the promenade.

See Spain and see the world. Freedom extends
or contracts in all hearts.
Near Bilbao are buried the vanguard of our army.
It is us too they defended who defended Madrid.

RAFAEL DIESTE

THE NEW SPECTACLE OF WONDERS

A MASQUERADE IN ONE ACT
Translated from the Spanish by A. L. Lloyd

CHARACTERS:

THREE LABOURERS
FANTASIO—A mountebank of varied talents: charlatan, acrobat conjurer.
MONICA—his wife, a dancer and colleague of Fantasio.
RABELÍN—his lad, versed in everything his master knows, and quite a good musician. He carries an accordion.

PEASANT AND PEASANT WOMAN	MAYOR
LANDOWNER	YOUNG GENTLEMAN
THE PRUDE	THE DRAGON
THE CURATE	THE MARCHIONESS
THE GENERAL	THE BUGLER

The road up to the village. On the far side of the road is a green, used as a fairground, and sometimes as a camping-place for gipsies and puppet-showmen. On the green are some rammers, spades, empty tar-barrels and other roadmending materials. On the edge of the road, three labourers, who look like peasants, are breaking stones.

FIRST LABOURER: Time up yet?
SECOND LABOURER: By the way the sun's gone down, I'd say it is.
THIRD LABOURER: A few minutes short in our work gives 'em all the excuse they need for a row.
FIRST LABOURER: Three more smacks with the hammer and we'll leave them. For a few beans and dry bread we've done more than enough.
SECOND LABOURER: Take it easy. Let's bash a few more. It'll cheer you up a bit. One for the noddle of all the bloody rogues who become bishops and generals! One in the jaw for judges and narrow-minded dames! A crack on every bone that comes into your mind! Come on, boys!

(*Rapid hammering*)

FIRST LABOURER: That's enough. Even kidding ourselves like that, I'm not going to break another stone!

(They straighten up, yawn loudly and start to walk off)

SECOND LABOURER: You hammers that bend us down, if only you were guns!

(The three labourers go off.)

Enter Fantasio, Monica and Rabelín, the latter with his accordion under his arm, hanging from a strap over his shoulder. Fantasio carries a huge valise, very showy, which he gently places on the ground as the trio halts, a little puzzled and confused.

FANTASIO: Do you think we've come to the right place? What do you say, Monica? Are you still angry? Speak up, my pretty, my sweet, my sour-puss.

MONICA: What a thing to call me in front of the lad!

FANTASIO: The boy gets nothing from me but good examples. (*To Rabelín.*) That's how you must be when you're married. Flattering, patient—and the rest you know already.

(Rabelín licks his lips and rolls his eyes.)

MONICA: Nowadays, nothing is hidden from these meddling brats. They poke their nose into everything too early in life.

RABELÍN: I only poke my nose into things that concern me. I know what I should for my age, and that's more than you think.

MONICA: Remember you're no better than a strolling player.

RABELÍN: That's my job and my business, and the sum of my capabilities as good apprentice and eminent disciple of Señor Fantasio.

FANTASIO: Bravo, Rabelín, smallest Demosthenes, Cicero's sparrow, shaver of Castelar, chip off Fantasio's block! What do you think? Are we on the right road?

(Rabelín scratches his head doubtfully. He pretends to hold a telescope in his hand, and with it to spy around. Fantasio laughs.)

MONICA (*taking no notice of Rabelín's joke, to her husband*): You wouldn't pay any attention to my advice, to ask the way discreetly every couple of miles or so. And now you're in doubt, you want to shift the responsibility by asking me. I'm staying mum as a tomb!

RABELÍN: Quiet! Someone is coming!

FANTASIO: Don't greet them till you see how they greet us. But let's smile, however.

(Enter a peasant and his wife. They stop, a little startled at the dumb, questioning, flattering attitude of the minstrels.)

PEASANT WOMAN: They look like ghosts! What are they looking at? Why are they staring at us?

PEASANT: Don't be the first to speak. We don't know who these people may be.

MONICA: You needn't be frightened of us. We've no more strength than a falling feather. We've been tramping so many roads. . . .

RABELÍN: We are artistes.

MONICA: Acrobats, reciters. . . .

FANTASIO: Artistes or madcaps, whichever you like. Everything loses its balance, turns somersaults at our tricks and at my jokes.

RABELÍN: And at the sound of my Noah's ark. (*Showing the accordion.*) I've got linnets, roosters, pigs and all in here.

PEASANT: It's very small to have all that.

RABELÍN: I should have said warblings, cacklings and the music of all lands.

(*Peasant and peasant woman laugh.*)

FANTASIO: Frankly, friends, what greeting do you use about here?

PEASANT: If your business is perchance to earn some bread, God grant I have enough to give you some.

FANTASIO: I understand that greeting . . . and I could weep to hear it.

MONICA: And I could dance!

RABELÍN: Quiet, linnets!

PEASANT WOMAN: You've come to a bad place. They're still in command here.

MONICA (*sharply*): They. . . .

PEASANT WOMAN: Yes, the others. By your face I see we needn't explain. (*Confidentially*) Take care. Not even in nightmares could you see such horrors. First they humiliate, then they kill, then they insult the dead.

PEASANT: My head is turning to dust!

PEASANT WOMAN: Quiet! I hear the gate creaking. Do you see them? They're coming this way!

PEASANT: Let's go. It won't do for us to be seen with strangers. (*He holds out his hand to Fantasio.*)

FANTASIO: Salud!

(*The peasant and his wife quickly go off.*)

MONICA (*to Fantasio*): Think of some trick to get us out of this fix.

RABELÍN: There's no limit to his cleverness.

FANTASIO (*quickly and confidentially*): Open the valise, Monica. You Rabelín, bring those barrels over here. (*Rabelín does so, and Fantasio puts them mouth down a little apart.*)

FANTASIO: The decorations!

MONICA: Coming! (*She decks the barrels with coloured ribbons that she takes out of the bag.*)

FANTASIO: The tricks! The gear! (*Rabelín hands him a lot of incomprehensible apparatus, little telescopes, balls on footed sticks, etc., that Fantasio sets up on the two improvised stands.*) Now, alley oop! (*He stands by one barrel, Rabelín by the other, Monica in the middle.*)

(*Enter from the back the Mayor and the Landowner, the latter pompous, the former servile, both of them boors. After them come two young women, the Prude and the Dragon, accompanied by the Young Gentleman, and finally the General, an old Marchioness and a simple, beaming and shy Curate, followed by the Bugler. When the first group enter, they are astonished to see the mountebanks, who have begun their act, pretending to be unaware of them.*)

FANTASIO: Press down on that meridian!

RABELÍN: Like this?

FANTASIO: More! More!

MONICA: Careful, I think it is going to break.

FANTASIO: A little more! Enough! Now, adjust the sights . . . can you see Taurus?

RABELÍN: Aries, Taurus . . . ah, he's escaping.

FANTASIO: Hold him!

RABELÍN (*Gives a leap, and makes as if to dominate a bull by seizing his horns. Then he returns to his place. He resumes his observations*): Now I've got him!

MAYOR: Don't you know how to salute authorities? (*Rabelín and Fantasio give a leap, smile and take off their tall hats. Monica bows.*) Where are you from? Where are you going? (*To the landowner*): As a first precaution I think it would not be a bad thing to clap them in gaol.

LANDOWNER: Whatever you think fit, Señor Mayor. There's no harm in trying. Two constables with shot-guns ought to accompany us wherever we go, to deal with cases like this. With a hundred and fifty acres of land, one deserves an escort.

MAYOR: I don't deny it, Don Zoilo; I'll have that attended to . . .

YOUNG GENTLEMAN (*addressing the two women*): What's happening in Cadiz?

FANTASIO: I'm glad you've come at this moment, young man. Are you a lawyer?

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Precisely. What an extraordinary thing! How do you know?

FANTASIO: Experience of the world, physionomic science, telepathy, animal magnetism and other arts in which I was instructed in Munich, confirmed in Bologna, certified in Coimbra, blessed in Rome and aspergilated in Burgos.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Aspergilated? You use such a word?

FANTASIO: Why not? Aspergilated . . . from aspergilium, the aspergill, aspergo, aspergere, aspersum, and all the other derivatives.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Yes, Yes! Never mind that. (*To the women*): You see he's a well-informed man.

MAYOR: What's that talking-bird saying?

PRUDE: He seems to be a learned man.

DRAGON: And very distinguished.

LANDOWNER (*running towards the General*): General! Come quickly! Magnificent, magnificent! A magnetic physiognomist from Germany has come to visit us.

CURATE: What heresy is this?

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: They are the first steps of the new science.

MARCHIONESS: I don't believe in science.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: There's a great deal of truth in these things, Señora Marchioness. When I was in Madrid . . .

GENERAL: What's going on here?

RABELÍN: May I be allowed to speak?

MONICA: It would be better if you spoke, Fantasio.

RABELÍN: He is too modest. He won't tell half of what he can do. I know him.

FANTASIO: Be quiet, Rabelín, it is not your job to explain or to add to my fame, but to be useful.

RABELÍN: Well . . .

FANTASIO: Silence! Mind your own business! Attend to the zodiac! (*Rabelín returns to his post with great haste.*) I'm not here to waste my time in boasting! (*Modestly.*) My latest invention, which has rendered inestimable service to the police, and on which Salazar Alonso has warmly congratulated me, is this little stage that I had just finished setting up as you arrived to honour me with your presence.

MAYOR: You should have asked permission from the Town Hall.

FANTASIO: We had not thought to show it here nor anywhere else without permission and without first seeing the authorities to whom it can be so useful. (*Confidentially.*) Only those untainted by Marxism, syndicalism, anarchy and such plagues, can see the incidents and characters of my little play. There are more Marxists than there seem to be, and some people, perhaps the most dangerous, are Marxists, without knowing it.

RABELÍN: It is a terrible poison, often unnoticeable, but always fatal. . . .

(*Monica sighs. All listen, intrigued.*)

FANTASIO: Just as with tuberculosis, those who deliberately ignore their illness so as not to frighten themselves, feel a horrible chill when at last they realize it has a hold on them, so may anyone among these present die of shock if, faced with my little play, they suddenly realize they also are afflicted with Marxist or Bakuninist blindness, or whatever you choose to call it. Because it's just those who suffer those diseases, whether secret or declared, who are unable to see anything on my marvellous stage. Let's make a test, Monica, by which we find out about these gentlemen.

MONICA: Which shall we do?

FANTASIO: Oh, some trifle or other! (*He whispers to her. Monica draws back an invisible curtain. Fantasio and Rabelín make a great show of vigilance, as if they were the crew of a ship in peril.*)

MAYOR: Devil take me if I can see clearly and I'm sure I'm conformative enough. The truth is, without my glasses, I can hardly see at all. (*He takes out his glasses and puts them on.*) Yes, now I seem to see something. . . . Yes, yes, and you, Don Zoilo, do you see anything?

LANDOWNER: An empty stage. Obviously! For it *is* empty at present, I believe. . . .

CURATE: I don't know if it is wise to play about with these things. The devil is often closely concerned with sciences which come on us thus, suddenly, and from strange sources.

GENERAL: But come, do you see anything or not?

CURATE (*trembling*): I am not a suspicious character!

GENERAL (*terrible*): Nor am I!

MARCHIONESS: Nor I. Everything the curate sees I shall see perfectly.

THE DRAGON (*uttering sudden cries*): Ay, ay, ay! Jesus! How wonderful! How marvellous! I am dying! I want to die! Oh! (*She lets herself hang round the neck of the young man.*)

PRUDE: I can see a little angel flying.

DRAGON: I . . . oh! I cannot say it! (*looking at the young gentleman*): Is it true, Ernesto?

GENTLEMAN: What?

DRAGON: Can't you see it? You! I! The two of us!

PRUDE: She! Him! Oh! . . . (*She falls as if beheaded into the Marchioness's arms.*)

MARCHIONESS: This is intolerable. I can only see horns. (*The group comprised of the General, the Mayor and the Landowner stirs in some alarm.*)

LANDOWNER: Horns did she say? Where?

CURATE: This is dangerous! We are in the devil's trap. If only I knew Latin!

FANTASIO: It is true. We are in grievous danger. You are about to see yourselves intimately and discover things which should remain hidden. All right! Never mind the technique! Let me guide you. (*To the General*): Please, your excellency, will you lend me the services of your bugler?

GENERAL: It's no inconvenience.

FANTASIO: You Rabelín, set yourself on this side. You, Monica, stand opposite and drive off the bad smells. Between both of you the stage will be protected. You, Bugler, are here at my command, by kind permission of the General. Let's begin now in our traditional manner.

MARCHIONESS (*very startled*): Traditional?

FANTASIO: Yes, Señora Marchioness, this has a very ancient tradition: it was salomonic science, later the amusement of those grand dukes who knew the secret. Then the doubtful boast of Cagliostro and company, and now a methodical art, scientific, enigmatic, but traditional.

MARCHIONESS: Now I begin to see better.

CURATE: And I too, and not because previously I was anything less of a clergyman, but because tradition made me see only Carlists.

FANTASIO: Then let's begin. Keep the smells away. Monica! Break up that cloud. Be very careful of that little insect that Beelzebub lets go from under his tail. Be careful! Don't start to look before I tell you. We must be faithful to the ancient model that Cervantes respected. Our first number was a bull. See him look round now over a hill.

MONICA: He is so quick his horns whistle in the wind! The charge will be disastrous if there is no bull-fighter to kill him or to turn his path!

RABELÍN: Quick: a bull-fighter! and a squadron of surgeons!

FANTASIO: Do your duty, you!

(*Rabelín plays a bullfighters' march.*)

DRAGON: You fight the bull, Ernesto.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: I've no weapons. The tradition is to watch the bulls from behind the barreras.

(*He speaks behind the Marchioness's back.*)

MARCHIONESS: I see him, I see him, he is black and wild as a stormy night!

MAYOR: I used to do a bit of capework, so I would handle this matter, but I can't see very well. (*Hides behind the General.*)

LANDOWNER (*following him*): What did you say?

PRUDE: He's coming! He's coming!

MONICA: All the rats and little lizards rush before him terrified. Look at that grey rat!

(*Great uproar and hubbub among the women. Taking her chance the Dragon clutches at everybody, but strongest of all at the young man.*)

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Let me go. Here comes the bull!

DRAGON: Are you going to fight him?

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Let me go, I say, I can't run like this.

FANTASIO: Gentlemen, I must have a sword! Quickly, quickly!

(*Rabelín defends himself with his accordion. Monica pretends to put herself in the protection of Fantasio.*) To your post!

BUGLER: Why don't you make Belmonte appear, Señor Fantasio?

FANTASIO: There's no need. Our General's sword is much more skilful. Sound the death-call!

BUGLER: I don't know it.

FANTASIO: Do the best you can.

(*Delirious and disorderly noise from the Bugler. The women flee with a great uproar and the men push forward the General, who at last has no alternative but to draw his sword.*)

ALL: Bravo, General!

(*The General advances, makes terrific cuts in the air, and at last staggers as if overcome by the effort that the feat entails.*)

FANTASIO: One more thrust! The last! There!

ALL: Olé!

MONICA: See how quickly the team has taken the bull away.

PRUDE: You might have shown us something pleasanter, Señor Fantasio.

FANTASIO: Well we're safe. I knew the General's mettle.

MAYOR: As mayor, I forbid him to turn loose bulls, or things that seem to be bulls.

DRAGON: How horrible! He lifted my skirt with his horn!

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: That was me. I did it unwittingly.

FANTASIO (*indicating the stage*) Really you cannot complain about my show. Don't trouble to conceal your pleasure. (*To Don Zoilo, who is very puzzled*): Doesn't the play please you?

LANDOWNER: Yes, yes, very much. He! He! Could you see well Señor Curate?

CURATE: Eh? Yes, magnificently! But it seems to have left a bad odour behind. (*To Fantasio*): Put on another of these traditionals to drive the smell away.

MAYOR: That bull again?

ALL: No, No!

GENERAL: If the cause demands it!

FANTASIO: Can't you see clearly yet? I'm worried about that. Where can this Marxist effluvium come from? (*He looks inquisitively at everyone.*)

RABELÍN (*snatching a stone and throwing it*): Get away, you cursed brute! (*A little dog is heard yapping as it runs away.*)

MAYOR: Ah—was that it? It was my dog, but no matter. Let him be shot! But now, I wonder if we'll see any better this time!

FANTASIO: Here come some three thousand. . . .

LANDOWNER: Rather more, rather more, I make it about three thousand five hundred.

FANTASIO: I meant blonds—there are many more darkies.

MARCHIONESS: Oh yes, now I see perfectly. How beautifully they march.

CURATE: A pity they are Protestants.

GENERAL: If I'm not mistaken, they are Germans.

DRAGON: Oh! and Moors!

GENERAL: I salute you, saviours of Spain, once blond barbarians, who now make microscopes, chemicals and poison-gases! Before you, grandsons of Charles V, cousins of Imperial Spain that to-day is being reborn, before you, I say, I present my arms and humbly kiss the decorations of your Marshals. Yes, their decorations, you understand? Trembling with pride! Yes, with pride!

ALL: Bravo. Long live German Spain!

DRAGON: You were marvellous, General.

GENERAL: I have not finished yet! And you, dark sons of Mahomet, who now have put your crescent at the service of the cross, and the cross at the service of the cause, of which I . . . here . . . before you . . . (*he is stuck for a phrase*). Well, it's very complicated but you . . . to whom I have the pleasure. . . .

(*The Dragon rushes wantonly forward and cuts short the General's speech.*)

DRAGON: The pleasure is mine! I decorate you; you, the dark one, you, the fair one, all of you. I don't know which of you to have for myself. (*She embraces invisible Moors and Germans with great violence.*)

MARCHIONESS: That's going too far. Whatever will they say of us?

PRUDE: She's just a monopolizer.

FANTASIO: Don't upset the show with your petty squabbles, and

please reward those who have given you so much pleasure. (*He holds out his tall hat.*)

CURATE: I have no change. Give him some money for me, Don Zoilo.

LANDOWNER: I've left my purse at home.

GENERAL: I'll pay for everyone. (*He offers a note to Fantasio.*)

FANTASIO: A post-war German note? (*offering it an invisible Moor*). Take your pay, my little Moor, by order of the General!

GENERAL: We must show proper courtesy to these guests.

MAYOR (*pushing away Fantasio's hat*): Should we prepare billets, General?

RABELÍN (*who had picked up the note from the ground, throws it down again*): It's not worth a cent. Billets? They won't be necessary. (*He begins to play the 'Internationale' on his accordion*): They're going already.

DRAGON: Oh! Don't let them go so soon! (*She takes out a handkerchief, and after wiping her tears, she waves it in farewell.*)

MARCHIONESS: This devil has frightened them off with his din!

PRUDE: What music is that? Puah! It stinks of sulphur!

GENERAL (*pushing toward Rabelín with drawn sword*): Ah, you bloody urchin!

MAYOR: These people aren't to be trusted!

LANDOWNER: I've already said that myself.

(*Rabelín begins to play his accordion, making it sound with all the warblings and noises of the Noah's ark.*)

MARCHIONESS: That instrument is bewitched!

RABELÍN: Ah, you cursed thing, stop!

GENERAL: Are you talking to me?

RABELÍN: I'm telling my accordion to stop. To hell with you, you dog. It's to blame for everything. Let's shoot it!

FANTASIO (*taking the Mayor's pulse*): You haven't caught anything from your little dog, have you, Señor Mayor?

MAYOR: Do something about that music!

FANTASIO: My service is of little use in such cases.

MONICA: Can't you do anything to help him, Señor Curate?

VOICES: Poor little thing. Lift the spell someone.

GENERAL: I'll give him a good clout. That'll lift it! (*The Curate gently restrains the General, goes up to Rabelín, murmurs a prayer and traces several benedictions in the air. Rabelín's face lights up, and he begins to play the Royal March.*)

LANDOWNER: That's quite another tune. Bravo, Señor Priest!

ALL: A miracle, a miracle!

MONICA (*unexpectedly*): Here! Here! a blessing for the stage, quickly.
FANTASIO: What's the matter?
MONICA: Oh, it can't be helped now!
ALL: What?
MONICA: Need you ask? Aren't you looking? The whole stage is invaded by Red militiamen!
LANDOWNER: This is too much.
MAYOR: I forbid it!
MONICA: It was a slip on our part!
FANTASIO: One person can't look after things like this. Hide yourselves a moment.

(*All flee and hide wherever they can, except the Marchioness.*)

MARCHIONESS: What will happen? Will they harm me?
CURATE: Don't worry, Señora! I am in the same boat!
MARCHIONESS: You think so? They will harm us both? Oh! what strange chill is this? I cannot move! I cannot . . . !
GENERAL: Be calm! Let each man occupy his post. (*He gets behind the skirts of the Marchioness.*)
BUGLER: I'll follow your example. (*He tries to hide behind the skirts of the Prude, who gives him a shove, and he remains motionless in a ridiculous pose. Meanwhile, Fantasio makes mysterious passes, as if to drive away the danger on the stage.*)
GENERAL (*raising an invisible 'phone to his ear*): Hallo! hallo! Is that head-quarters? Quickly! Send reinforcements. Yes. Ready. I'll give the order.
BUGLER: Am I to play something?
PRUDE: If you dare, I'll kick you!
FANTASIO (*to Rabelín*): The magnetic stork!

(*Rabelín stands on one leg like a stork, and hops across the stage.*)

RABELÍN: Was that a good vibration, master?
FANTASIO: Magnificent, completely successful. Now they're going!
RABELÍN: They are flying in terror! and merely because they caught sight of my stork and the Señora Marchioness.
YOUNG GENTLEMAN: Whatever do you mean?
MARCHIONESS: Fleeing from me? From me? Oh! They are too timid.
FANTASIO: Look at my stage now, and jump and split your sides for joy. Quick, General! The moment to enter Madrid has come. Don't spare a single Marxist!
GENERAL: My horse! (*The Bugler brings in a cardboard horse and lance. The General mounts.*) To the front! (*The Bugler blows the 'Fall in.' Everybody forms up in military fashion to enter Madrid.*) March! (*The call is blown. All advance behind the General.*)

FANTASIO: Halt! Pardon me, General, that I should give the word of command, but the time has come to celebrate the victory, and a great festival awaits us. (*Rabelín plays a waltz and quickly the following pairs form up, the Young Gentleman and the Dowager, the Prude and the Mayor, the General and an invisible lady, the Landowner, and the horse that the General has just abandoned. The Bugler rushes about excitedly, receiving shoves from all the couples. The Marchioness takes off the Curate's hat and puts a paper mitre on his head. Monica and Fantasio stand off a little and regard the scene with some sadness. Fantasio, as usual, is making passes with his hands.*)

DRAGON: Now you'll be minister, Ernest dear!

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: You'll be the woman who rules Spain!

MARCHIONESS (*indicating her bishop*): We shall be the rulers! (*Both stalk by pompously.*)

MAYOR (*to his partner*): Why are you sad? This is great fun!

BUGLER: Congratulate me, everybody. I've been decorated. I've been promoted to Captain! (*He snatches the Young Gentleman's partner away, and now it is he who drifts around and who gets pushed away.*)

YOUNG GENTLEMAN: I am the Minister (*stamping on the ground*). I am the Minister. The Minister of War!

GENERAL (*to his invisible partner*): Pardon me. (*He goes up to the Young Gentleman.*) What impertinence is this? I am Minister of War. Whoever says the contrary lies like a Marxist or else can't see a donkey at three paces!

LANDOWNER (*looking at the cardboard horse*): I can see perfectly. I am no suspicious character. Per-fect-ly! (*With sudden dismay.*) Perfectly! (*He wipes the sweat from his forehead and points to the back of the stage.*)

MAYOR: What's happening? What is it?

MONICA: The truth of the play is becoming evident at last!

PRUDE: Enough of these terrible jokes, Señor Fantasio.

MONICA: Why are they coming so furiously?

FANTASIO: That's a mystery you'll never understand, Señora Marchioness.

CURATE: They seem to be familiar faces, people of my parish! I don't want them to see me in this get-up! (*He takes off his mitre and puts it on the Marchioness's head. He looks round for something.*) In all this dancing I lost my hat . . . and my parishioners . . . (*the firstcomer approaches, with long and very heavy strides.*)

(*Enter tumultuously the Peasant, his wife and the three Labourers, one of whom carries a hammer, the others a sickle and a winnowing fork, while the peasant has his crook.*)

PEASANT (*gleefully, embracing Monica*): Our boys have arrived! Thousands of militiamen! Hurrah!

(*As the peasants rush in they force the General and company off the stage. The company flees and disperses, stumbling, falling and rising again.*)

GENERAL (*getting a smack on the head with the shepherd's crook*): No respect for authority evidently!

THE MAN WITH THE SICKLE: Get out, you weeds!

THE MAN WITH THE WINNOWING FORK: Here's something to be winnowed! Out of it, you trash! (*Only the peasants and the players are left on the stage.*)

PEASANT (*to Monica*): Now put on a show for us!

MONICA: Who could put on such a lively play as this? You've already begun your own show!

RABELÍN: I'll play my very best. Everybody dance!

FANTASIO: The earth is purified. Art begins again. I renounce my inventions. Now all I know is how to dance.

(*He spins round like a whirlwind with his wife. The peasant and his wife dance face to face. The others caper very grotesquely, very innocently, turning cartwheels now and then.*)

(*Enter the Bugler, very timidly.*)

BUGLER: Let me join in your fun. I was only with them because I couldn't get away.

PEASANT WOMAN: Is that true?

MONICA: I can speak in his favour.

BUGLER: Will you have me? Yes? (*Unable to contain himself, he pirouettes with glee.*) I see you do! I can't stop dancing! I can't stop!

FANTASIO: Here new wonders begin, the wonders you see clearly when your eyes are open and you are free.

ALL: Long live Fantasio!

(*Monica takes out a coloured handkerchief she had hidden and waves it in the air. Fantasio makes a rapid turn and stops as Rabelín begins the 'Internationale.' Everyone gleefully raises their clenched fists.*)

CURTAIN

STEPHEN SPENDER

SPAIN INVITES THE WORLD'S WRITERS

Notes on the International Congress, Summer 1937

FROM the moment of our arrival in Spain, our congress was overshadowed by the wonderful country, the Spanish people and the civil war. Port Bou itself makes the strangest impression—a town in which the people are particularly friendly, in which a third of the population seems to be occupied in military training in the hills, a third bathing and sun-bathing in the harbour, while the rest sit at cafés or stand about, impressing us with that peculiar feeling of a war, that the people are not so much living in the town as haunting it; they are spirits obsessed by their idea, easily transferable to some other scene of war; and their relation to their homes, their material surroundings, is very slight. I have been at Port Bou three or four times during the past few months, so this was not new to me, but I was very conscious of its effect on the South American delegates. We were shown parts of the town which have been destroyed in the course of several unsuccessful attempts to bomb the station. The South Americans were upset, and their usual gaiety seemed rebuffed. They noticed with a certain anguish the thing that is *amusing* about bombardments: the single piece of furniture left quite undisturbed at the edge of a room which has been cut down, as though by a knife. But all this time we were preoccupied by two other things which are Spanish; the heat, and the monumental delay in the preparations for our midday meal.

After that excellent meal, we set out in a fleet of cars along the beautiful mountainous coastal road to Valencia. The English delegation were given a Rolls Royce and a chauffeur whose one idea of driving was to 'show her paces.' The wheels screamed round corners, he never 'changed down' up hills. For the purposes of the war, one of the most serious defects of the Spanish character is this reckless mishandling of machinery. In the early months of the war the banks of the Valencia—Madrid road were littered with wrecked motor-cars. Even now in the course of our journeys, we saw a great many wrecks on the sides of roads, and so much dangerous driving that I wondered there were not many more.

By the time we reached Gerona I was on back-slapping, embracing terms with most of the Spanish-American delegates—magnificent, bronzed, emotional speakers, most of them. André Malraux seemed slightly disappointed with the Mexican delegates: he said that our massively built, jet-eyed, warm colleagues—impressive for their immediate responsiveness and their directness of manner—were mere university professors compared with what Mexico could provide. Mexican poets should be utterly mad; they should be dressed like cowboys, carry hide whips and fire off revolvers from each hand.

We reached Barcelona at eight or nine in the evening. We were received by the Minister of Propaganda who asked us whether we wished to stay the night in Barcelona. Sylvia Townsend Warner, who was dead tired, amused us all by saying, on behalf of the English, 'Of course we are quite willing to go on, but I think that out of consideration for this Mexican comrade,' dragging one of the Mexicans forward, 'who has been travelling for ten days, we *ought* perhaps to stay the night.'

We were entertained by the Catalan Government at the Majestic, the best hotel in Barcelona. Next morning, we got up at six and waited for the usual two or three hours, before starting for Valencia. We were no longer in the Rolls Royce, as that had belonged to the Catalans, and the new fleet of cars was from Valencia. I travelled with Malraux and Aveline. During the Congress, Malraux, with his youthful appearance, his close-set greenish eyes, pale looming face, with one lock of hair overhanging his forehead, his hands in the pockets of his rough tweed suit, his rather slouching walk, and at intervals his long nervous sniff, had the air of being a senior, if not altogether respectable boy. But for me he was and is a hero, and I think of him with emotion. We talked a good deal during the journey to Valencia. I believe that for Malraux the creation of his own legend—his political activities, the 'Malraux squadron'—fulfils a spiritual need which is essential for him as an artist. The writer must create from a centre which is his environment: and it sometimes happens (it has happened repeatedly with bourgeois writers during this generation—and that indeed is the root of the interest of so many contemporary writers in politics) that the writer does not fit into his environment. He is then driven to discover some other environment, or, if he is intensely individualist, to create his environment: first to create his environment, and then to create literature from the centre of his environment, from the centre of his own legend. That is the task of a T. E. Lawrence or an André Malraux. For the

environment of André Malraux is the life of action. 'If you ask me what it is necessary to do, *il faut agir*—it is necessary to act.'

I remember one conversation in which we discussed politics and poetry, when he emphasized the influence of environment on the poet's vocabulary. Set the poet in simple surroundings of the earth, the ox, the woman and the mountain, and the imagery suggested by this environment will recur in his poetry. To the modern poet who does not accept the bourgeois environment and the bourgeois ideology, a problem exists which is not merely one of style but a problem of will. He must deliberately change his environment.

When we reached Valencia, on the 5th, we were immediately taken to a session of the Congress, where we met Ralph Bates, whom we elected leader of the English delegation for as long as we were in Spain. The session was held in a council chamber of the bombed town hall. All except this wing of the building had been gutted out, and the marble stairs leading to our meeting place had been filled with concrete where the marble was destroyed, like the fillings of teeth. In the Congress it was exceedingly hot, and made still hotter by the blaze of lights for the cinematographer. Ralph Bates spoke in Castilian, welcoming us. He was in a very dynamic mood and hammered a lot with his fist. He had been inspired by a speech made by Del Vayo that morning, which we missed. Del Vayo was there with his broad, red intelligent face, amiable and gleaming as always. Alexei Tolstoi made a speech attacking Trotsky. Tolstoi is a robust clever immensely prosperous man who yet does not seem to belong to the new order. Whenever I saw him he was perspiring profusely, and perhaps for that reason, I have an image of him in flannels and a silk shirt, handkerchief in hand, panting strenuously at the end of a successful race to keep up with the time. José Bergamin made one of his paradoxical, careful and sincere speeches; as president of the Congress he was its most popular member. With his slight, beautiful face, one always listens to him because he never intrudes, one always watches him because he seems almost invisible.

That evening I saw a performance of a play by Lorca and got to bed, as usual, very late. We were woken up at 4 a.m. by the air-raid alarms, and the pale morning sky was shot across with the red stains of anti-aircraft shrapnel, the guns making a rather hollow pleasant popping noise like the drawing of corks. Frank Tinsley, Reuter's correspondent, who had very kindly put me up in his room of the Hotel Victoria said that we ought to get dressed and go downstairs. There I met Fernsworth, *The Times* correspondent, who is afraid

neither of bombs nor shrapnel, and invited me to walk down to the hospital opposite the British Embassy with him to see if we could gain any news of the seriousness of the raid. We went, but there was no news. The only danger we ran was from the anti-aircraft shrapnel, which has to come down somewhere.

At ten o'clock our caravan of cars left Valencia for Madrid. By this time most of us were very exhausted. In Spain I have found myself getting so exhausted that my tiredness has taken an entirely different form from the routine tiredness I often feel at home. One can, I think, become so fatigued that one is actually more receptive than normally—because fatigue breaks one's ordinary habits of resistance down. For example, I am shockingly bad at listening to public speeches. But, in Spain, at the Congress, I have at times had the experience, when excessively tired, of understanding every word that was said, even of difficult speeches in French, German and Spanish: where ordinarily the fact that the speech was in a foreign language would have persuaded me that I could not understand it, and thus set up my machinery of resistance.

I mention this because anyone who has been in a war—or even at the edge of it—will realize how important an element fatigue is in war psychology.

On our way to Madrid we stopped for lunch at a village called Minganilla—memorable to every delegate of the Congress. It was a very hot, dazzling day, I remember walking up a straggling, dusty village street, with charming children and peasant women picturesquely dressed, whom Alexei Tolstoi photographed, with their donkeys. We drank lemonade in a guest-house, whilst we waited for our meal to be prepared. After two hours—or so it seemed—of waiting and talking we were told that lunch was ready and we adjourned to the long, low, first-storey room of the Fonda, where we sat down at long tables, to eat omelettes and flat, white hunks of Spanish bread, followed by slabs of raw bacon. Whilst we were eating we were interrupted by the singing of all the children of the village outside our windows. First they sang the International, then they sang other songs, of the Spanish Republic. We got up and stood at the windows to thank and applaud them. When we had finished eating we went down the stone steps of the Fonda where the children had cleared a little space in their crowd in the square and they were dancing a dance which consisted of running up and down from one end of this oblong space to the other. There were no men in the village—they were all either in the fields or fighting—and the women stood watching

their children dance, suddenly weeping. When we went into the square to get back into our cars, the women began talking to us about the war and they asked that one of us should speak from the balcony of the Fonda in order to show that we understood their fate (these were their words). One of the Mexicans spoke, very effectively. After that one of the women took Pablo Neruda and me back to her house, which was beautifully clean, and showed us photographs of her two sons at the front, and, in spite of our earnest protestations, insisted on our taking about half of all the sausages she had, because we would be hungry on the rest of the journey. We were all of us more moved by our few hours in Minganilla than by any other single incident of our stay in Spain.

A happy evening after dinner in the Hotel Victoria at Madrid, with the Spanish singing Flamenco songs, clapping their hands rhythmically. They sang the traditional tunes for which the modern poets have written new words about the Civil War. Rafael Alberti sang a ballad which he had written about Franco. Later the growing din was interrupted by Alberti, a massive, leonine figure, dressed in blue dungarees, with fine hair and magnificent sculptural features, leaping on to a chair and shouting with passionate fury to everyone to be quiet. Then he told us that a bombardment had started. Frank Pitcairn, Rickword, René Blech and I walked to the Puerta del Sol and watched the upper storeys of the Ministry of the Interior blazing, where they had been struck by an incendiary shell. René Blech walked out into the centre of the square looked up, came back and shrugged his shoulders with the one word '*ignoble*.' Then we returned to the hotel.

The impression made by Madrid to-day is sublime; the great, tall ugly town, whole quarters of which are silenced and destroyed, yet through which the stream of life still flows quite normally; Madrid with its blue summer sky torn open by the sound of aeroplanes machine-gunning, as they battle above the streets whilst the people stand in their doors, at windows and in the open street, watching; Madrid drummed all day by the roar of artillery from the city fronts, and sullenly illuminated at night by the red glow where incendiary shells have struck; above all, the city defended by the people who have already begun to live there the life of communal ownership which will be their future if they win the war. In this environment the endless stream of our oratory continued to flow, rather ineffectively.

What we said in public was of little interest, besides which it has

been published elsewhere, and for that reason I have thought it worth while to record some of the things which were said in private and which were, in fact, attempts to discuss problems which the Congress should have discussed. There was André Chamson, pale and furious with the Congress because we had stayed longer than three hours in Madrid, and because, having stayed there, all the delegates didn't feel as he did about it. '*Le devoir d'un écrivain est d'être tourmenté*'—and none of us was tormented. '*Moi, moi je suis responsable.*' One of us would get killed by a Franco 'obus' and then the World Press would shriek that the Reds had assassinated him—and Chamson, as secretary of the French Association, would bear the responsibility. Every morning I would go up to Chamson to inquire how he was and he would reply, '*Mal, mal, MAL!*' He would go on to say that the intellectual level of our Congress was appallingly low, that we were light-hearted, irresponsible, we did not *feel*. I quote all this, not out of malice, but because I think that in a way he was right. Along paths which I can scarcely follow, Chamson had arrived at a truth which few of the Congress—fêted, banqueted, received enthusiastically, the women bridling with excitement at Ralph Bates's or Ludwig Renn's uniform —had even glimpsed, that the war is terrible, that the mind of Madrid, if it is sublime, like Shakespeare's, is also terrible, like Shakespeare's. I myself had learnt this through painful experiences some months before, not at the Congress. I applaud Chamson.

From reading the Romances of the Civil War by Spanish poets, one might conclude that the whole of Spanish poetry on the Government side has adopted an uncritical, heroic attitude towards the war. Yet this is not so. I myself, because I am not a writer of heroics, have felt rather isolated for the cause and the people I greatly care for, because I could not share this uncritical attitude, but when I spoke to Alberti, Altolaguirre and Bergamín, I found that they felt about the propagandist heroics of the war much as I did myself. Alberti, a brilliant, arrogant, passionate individualist, is himself rather isolated, I feel. He is in a peculiar position as the recognized successor to Lorca, who yet is not a great influence on other contemporary Spanish poets.

On July 13th, we sat once more in the little port of Cerbère, very tired after a banquet in Barcelona and a terrific day of sight-seeing. A few of us had crossed the frontier before the other delegates, and I found myself next to Bergamín. We began talking about the poetry of the Spanish war, about Gide, about some personal tragedies occasioned by the war, about Bergamín's own family, about the assassination of Ramòn Sender's wife by the fascists. Bergamín has a para-

doxical involved mind which at times surprises one by its whimsicality not unlike E. M. Forster's, but, also like E. M. Forster's, surprises one even more by its combination of paradox with penetrating honesty and a concrete unevasive grasp of every problem. Bergamín knows what the tragedy and horror of war are: he knows also the lies which war produces, and yet his mind seems to penetrate through all these obstructions to a position where he is absolutely secure, where he accepts the tragedy and horror, relates the lies to the forces which render them inevitable. In a word, he was the only member of our Congress who was entitled to rebuke Gide, because he does not resent that which is honest in Gide (as far too many of his detractors seem to do), but because he, Bergamín, has a mind of even greater honesty, a mind which sees not merely the truth of isolated facts which Gide observed in the U.S.S.R., but the far more important truth of the *effect* which Gide's book is going to have.

During this conversation, one question troubled me—Bergamín's Catholicism. At last I dared to ask him: 'Are you still a Catholic?' He held up his hand, placing together the index finger and the thumb, thus forming a small circle, and said in his thin, nasal French: 'If you ask me do I believe in the articles of Faith, I say, yes, yes, yes, I accept all of that. But if you ask me do I believe that the Church has the right to interfere in the political life of the people and to represent the interests of one possessing class, I say no, not at all. Indeed, I go further than that. I say the Church should have no influence in public affairs at all. I even say that there should be no public ceremonies and demonstrations which the Church is able to use for religious propaganda, there should be no system of religious education, the end of which is to make men and women good members of the Church. Religion is a question for the private conscience of the individual and for that only. Now, I am writing a book in which I state my own position, and I cannot doubt but that this book may be placed on the Index. Good. In that case, I confidently make my appeal not to the Pope, but to an authority greater than the Pope's on the day of Judgement. In doing this, I maintain that I stand within the great tradition of Spanish Catholicism. I am fighting for the spiritual life and the spiritual freedom of Catholic Spain. But, unfortunately, the Church has used its power to support propertied interests, to represent materialism and to oppose the spiritual growth of our people.'

It has been said that a revolution corresponding at once to the French and the Russian revolutions is taking place in Spain. But there is yet another great change taking place: it is Spanish Protestantism and the Spanish Reformation.