

**TEXT FLY WITHIN
THE BOOK ONLY
THE BOOK WAS
DRENCHED**

TIGHT BINDING BOOK

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_174254

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

MODERN STORIES
FROM
EAST AND WEST

Edited with Introduction and Notes

BY

R. K. LAGU, M. A.

MACMILLAN AND COMPANY, LIMITED
BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS LONDON

1929

Printed by V. P. Pendherkar, at the Tutorial Press,
211a, Girgaum Back Road, Bombay and published by F. E. Francis,
for Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., Fort, Bombay.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The compiler is indebted to the following authors and publishers for permission to reprint the copyright stories included in this volume :—

Mr. F. W. Bain and Messrs Methuen & Co., Ltd., for "On the Bank of the Ganges", from *The Substance of a Dream*; Mr. Arnold Bennett and Messrs Methuen & Co., Ltd., for "Hot Potatoes", from *The Matador of the Five Towns*; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr. John Murray, for "The Red-Headed League", from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*; Mr. Rudyard Kipling, for "The Story of Muhammad Din", from *Plain Tales from the Hills*; Mr. Aylmer Maude and the Oxford University Press, for "The Two Old Men", by Leo Tolstoy; Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, for "Valiant Vicky", from *Tales of the Punjab*; Rabindranath Tagore, for "The Cabuliwallah", from *Hungry Stones*; and Mr. H. G. Wells for "The Stolen Bacillus". "The Punishment of Shahpesh", from *The Shaving of Shagpat*, by George Meredith is included by courtesy of Messrs Constable & Co., Ltd., London, and Messrs Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

PREFACE

This is a story-book for the young. The ten stories which are assembled here will appeal to the youthful reader's love of mystery, humour and romance. They will do more. They will educate his feelings, teach him—if ever so little—to sympathise with sorrow and suffering without obtruding the moral upon his attention. They are all examples of that good art which, in Tolstoy's view, 'communicates an emotion that draws men together.'

Every author whose work is represented here is a king of his craft. The women—Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Steel—are no whit behind the men. Owing to considerations of space, I had to leave out many distinguished masters of the form. There was another handicap. The University regulation requires that the stories must be selected from writers since 1850. This has prevented the inclusion of any story by Edgar Allan Poe whose precepts and practice in story-telling are alike admirable. There is comfort, however, in the thought that I have cast my net wide and gleaned in many fields, East and West, holding fast to the rule that in a book of short stories compiled for Indian boys, stories from the East should have a place side by side with those describing life in the West.

Mr. Kipling, Professor Bain, Mrs. Steel, and Sir Rabindranath Tagore portray the Indian scene. Meredith tells a tale of ancient life in Persia. Tolstoy, Mrs. Gaskell, Doyle, Bennett and Wells present pictures of the varied life of Western people. Indian students have to learn to express their thoughts in English and they have to be familiar with the life and manners of Western people. The ten stories brought together in this little book will meet both these

ends, for the writers of these stories not only depict life but they also furnish excellent models of style.

The stories in the book may be used as material for exercises in composition. They readily lend themselves to such a use. Few literary forms offer such capital opportunities for teaching the elements of style as this of the short story. The essay is arid by comparison. Poetry has its head in the clouds. Nothing helps a student so much towards self-expression as the writing of a short story. Start him on the story-telling track; teach him to build round a nucleus of his own experience; in course of time he will master the art of construction and develop the skill in narration, description, dialogue which is essential to successful story-telling. And a student who has acquired skill in these matters knows how to present artistically the material of his thought and express himself in a simple, clear and graceful style.

POONA, }
April 1929

R. K. LAGU.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	...	...	...	ix
1. THE STORY OF MUHAM- MAD DIN	Rudyard Kipling	...	1	
2. THE PUNISHMENT OF SHAHPESH	George Meredith	...	7	
3. THE TWO OLD MEN	Tolstoy	...	16	
4. ON THE BANK OF THE GANGES	F. W. Bain	...	47	
5. THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE	Conan Doyle	...	52	
6. THE HALF-BROTHERS	Mrs. Gaskell	...	83	
7. VALIANT VICKY, THE BRAVE WEAVER	F. A. Steel	...	101	
8. THE CABULIWALLAH	R. Tagore	...	109	
9. HOT POTATOES	Arnold Bennett	...	120	
10. THE STOLEN BACILLUS	H. G. Wells	...	139	

INTRODUCTION

I. THE OLD TRADITION OF THE SHORT STORY

The short story is at once a new and an old form of literature. It reminds us of the fairy in Chaucer's Tale who accompanied the knight as an aged and decrepit woman and was transformed suddenly into a radiant, young bride. Men and women have been telling stories ever since mankind developed the power of speech. Grandmothers tell fairy stories to children gathered round the fireside ; poets sing of heroic adventures and fights ; the great teachers of morality and religion have also found in the short story an apt medium for impressing on the minds of their followers the truths that govern human behaviour and the profound significance of human life. The story-teller has found a warm welcome and an eager audience in all ages and all countries. Young and old, the cultured and the illiterate—everyone succumbs to the spell which the story-teller casts upon us. The craving for a story is ingrained in us. It is in consequence of this that the story-telling tradition has suffered no break at any time and flourishes alike in the East and the West. Æsop's Fables have their parallel in the stories told by Vishnūsharmā in the Panchtantra. The *Three Rogues* of the Eastern Tale who bamboozled the silly brahmin are perhaps as well-known as the *Three Revellers* in the West who set out to attack Death. Christ's parables correspond to the stories which Buddha told. If Hercules rescues Alcestis from the fell clutches of Death in the Greek legend, Sāvitrī in the Hindu myth wins back her husband from the iron grasp of Death by her persuasive eloquence and tenacity of purpose.

II. THE MODERN SHORT STORY

All the same, the fairy tale, the myth and the legend, the fables of birds and beasts, the mediæval tale and its

romantic successor differ widely from the modern short story. The modern short story is a conscious literary effort. It is a cleverly-planned artistic achievement. The older type of the short story was comparatively unsophisticated and artless. The story-tellers let the story shape itself under the stress of the inspiration which drove them to tell a story. They had something to say and said it as well as they could. But they worked without a definite plan or scheme which had been sketched before they set pen to paper. The modern short story is, on the other hand, a highly-wrought piece of work. It is exceedingly conscious of its aim and purpose. It has fashioned for itself a science of building and construction. The modern writer assembles his material with care; he selects and rejects as his artistic conscience happens to advise at the moment. He goes to work cautiously, endeavouring to build into harmony the many elements of a modern short story—plot, characterization, dialogue, atmosphere, style. He checks his progress at every step to measure the distance he has covered and to see if he is treading the straight path that leads to his goal. In a word, the old writer was entirely unconscious of the principles which control the short story form. He might have accomplished his work with superb success, but he did it without worrying about the formal, technical side of his art. We enjoy these old stories for their delightful subject-matter, the quips and quirks which flash through them and best of all, for the teaching of knowledge and experience which is enshrined in them. The modern story-teller is conscious of his art to his finger-tips. He deliberately plans certain emotional, intellectual and humorous effects, and strains every nerve to attain them.

III. RECENT HISTORY OF THE SHORT STORY

The modern short story begins with Edgar Allan Poe (1809—1849). Poe laid down the principles and the rules

for the artistic construction of a short story. In his own short stories, such as *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), and *The Cask of Amontillado* (1846), he gave convincing illustrations of the doctrine which he enunciated with unsurpassed lucidity and precision. Poe was an American and his influence on English writers of the short story was not immediately apparent. In England short stories of a loose type were written by Sir Walter Scott, Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell and Meredith. And the loose type of the short story continued to hold the field till in the 'eighties the new form which took its cue from Poe made its first appearance. Stevenson and Kipling were influenced by Poe. Doyle adopted Poe's method of writing a detective story. In the 'nineties the modern short story in England had established itself firmly in popular favour. Henry James, Mr. Bennett and Mr. Wells, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and a host of others won fresh laurels in short-story writing and widened the field of the short story. As Mr. Barry Pain says "The short story was never better written in English than it has been during the last fifty years." Kipling showed that it was the art of suggestion. Stevenson combined romance and moral analysis. Henry James gave it a psychological turn. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch is a consummate 'creator of atmosphere.' Mr. Wells annexes science to the purposes of his art. Mr. Bennett wrings romance out of humdrum reality. Katherine Mansfield brings us face to face with stark reality. But wide as are the variations of the modern short story, in its main features it remains true to the pattern established by Poe.

IV. ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF THE MODERN SHORT STORY

The modern short story is an exquisitely finished work of art. It has a technique of its own—laws of structure and design, characterization, dialogue atmosphere, style—which

have converted the ancient, haphazard manner of story-telling into a highly specialized form of literary craft. Poe—the creator of the modern form—has also written a “Philosophy of its Composition”. The story-teller, says Poe, must aim at unity of effect. He may appeal to the emotions, or the intellect, or the soul of the reader. But ‘having conceived a certain effect to be wrought out, he invents such incidents, combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this pre-conceived effect’. In the whole composition, adds Poe, there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. If the writer’s first sentence tend not to the out-bringing of the (final) effect, then he has failed. In the first sentence of *The Cask of Amontillado* the end is suggested—‘The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could’. With such a suggestive opening, the writer works steadily forward increasing the reader’s suspense, letting his interest accumulate till at last a single unblurred impression is produced. This is an illustration from Poe’s practice, but his theory of short-story construction outlined above is more or less a complete account of the unified plot of a short story. It is only necessary to add that the principle of a single effect may be associated with a dramatic element in the plot. The presence of a dramatic element brings in a conflict, a struggle. It gives that thrill and surprise to the reader which constitute for him half the attraction of a short story. The plot of a short-story may be said to develop through a struggle, a conflict till it reaches the climax.

Structural harmony is one essential feature of the modern short story. A second requisite is successful characterization. This is harder to achieve in a short story than in a novel or a play, because in a short story the writer has not the fuller opportunities which the novel or the drama affords. A short story-teller must, therefore, avoid crowding his canvas with

too many figures, but the few characters that are necessary to the action should be portrayed truthfully, in a clear, convincing style. They should impress us as real live human beings with a volition and purpose of their own, speaking and acting independently of their creator. The writer who has this rare gift of characterization individualizes the men and women whom he introduces into his story. He endows them with distinctive traits—personal peculiarities—which mark them off from each other. And yet they are not represented as abnormal or supernormal beings. In all material particulars, they resemble other human beings. It is this mingling of the universal and the particular which is the secret of successful characterization. Tolstoy understands the secret; that is why his characters 'get into our memory and stay there'. The men and women whom he creates attract us as though they were our friends.

Dialogue is the third requisite of a modern short story. It is by his dialogue that a clever story-writer delineates characters. He lets his characters talk and reveal indirectly their thoughts and motives, the good and evil in their dispositions. There are writers, on the other hand, who distrust the reader's intelligence and take upon themselves to tell us all about the characters in their stories, and invite us, so to speak, to admire or revile them. One can have no patience with such writers. In addition to revealing their own characters, the speakers in a dialogue comment on other characters. This is a kind of cross-light which helps our understanding of these characters. Such a method of depicting characters by allowing the reader to judge for himself and form his own impressions is entirely natural and commends itself to the reader at once. It is at the same time more difficult. For the writer has to devise appropriate speeches for the different characters in the story in the diverse situations in which they are placed. Kings and queens, children and old men, servants and masters—each

character has its own natural mode of speech. And it is by this natural, individual style of talking that we recognize a character to be a live human being and not a puppet talking to the tune of its creator. Finally the dialogue must have a swift alert quality. Every speech put in the mouth of a character must carry the story-teller as far as it can. The space at the disposal of the story-teller is limited and even if he is guilty of a slight slip, the mistake is likely to cost him dear.

Apart from plot, characters and dialogue, *atmosphere* and *style* must be mentioned among the essential requisites of the modern short story. It is the business of the modern story-teller to bring the atmosphere of the story into harmony with its subject. If the story describes death and ruin, some mysterious fatality or ghostly happening, the writer must employ every artifice to create an atmosphere of gloom, suspense and terror. If, however, the subject of the story is a comic or romantic incident, the story-teller will endeavour to produce an atmosphere of gaiety and radiant joy. Atmosphere is fundamentally a matter of feeling. A feeling of mystery and gloom or joy and happiness is deepened by its repeated association with the scene, the incidents, the characters in the story, and their speeches. Description plays a large part in the creation of atmosphere. The artist who is a master of his craft selects the most telling and suggestive details, whether he is describing a situation or a scene, a child or a giant. Sometimes nature is laid under contribution, and there is no denying that nature makes a capital background for a story of human doom. On other occasions, however, nature provides a contrast by its perfect indifference to human misery. The atmosphere of a story is like a garment that clings close to its body. Meredith's 'Punishment of Shahpesh inflicted on Khipil' has a clinging atmosphere of ironic humour. And Mrs. Gaskell's 'Half-Brothers' is an example of a story with a sad atmosphere.

In a story of atmosphere where atmosphere has been alone the inspiration of the story, or is by far its most striking feature, a writer tries to render the spirit or feeling which in his view, penetrates and pervades some country, district or place of his choice. Such writers subordinate incidents and characters in their stories to a unique expression of the feeling which they associate with a place or a country. Stevenson's '*Merry Men*' is a supreme example of this type of story known as *story of atmosphere*. Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher* is another example.

Local colour may be distinguished from atmosphere, though it assists in the creation of atmosphere. A story-teller employs local colour to create an illusion of reality. It is the description of the dress, manners, dialect which are characteristic of a particular age or country. Thus Kipling describes the khitmatgar and his son and reproduces their speech. Meredith imitates the courtly manners and speech of ancient Persia. Tolstoy describes the Russian peasant. All three employ 'local colour' to give vividness and reality to their stories.

The style of a modern short story is designed to be a perfect medium for the translation of its subject matter. The writer selects his words carefully—*dull, dark* words to convey dreariness and gloom, *gay, bright* words to convey joy and happiness of heart. The phrases are again most artfully adapted to his purpose, and the rhythm of the sentences ingeniously moulded to suit the effect he wishes to produce. The similes, metaphors and other figures of speech contribute further to this end—the harmony of subject-matter and style. The author employs repetition or varies his expression as seems appropriate at the moment. Every means is employed to render with absolute fidelity the spirit and the mood of the story and all its finer, subtler, more delicate shades. The style is an echo to the sense.

V. THE SHORT STORY AND KINDRED FORMS

The short story is not unlike the drama or the novel in the many elements of plot, characterization, dialogue, atmosphere, style which it has in common with these two forms. But it differs from the drama and the novel in that it is short. As Poe expressed it once: "A short story must be of such length that it may be read at a sitting." Mr. Wells defines it as a fiction that may be read in something under an hour—from 15 to 50 minutes. This shortness is not a mechanical or external restraint. It is the inevitable form assumed by the material which the story-teller selects and shapes in obedience to the principles and laws that govern the composition of a short story. The novelist and the dramatist exploit a larger field of life; their works leave on the mind—especially the novelist's—"a panoramic impression". The short story offers at best a fragment of life, the veriest fraction of life. Again, as Albright remarks—"The short story of to-day aims not merely to recount a series of interesting events in chronological or logical order, but to create a vivid picture of a bit of life in such a way as to render a preconceived idea or impression". It presents people and events 'in their relations to one another and their environment'. "The short story exists," says Mr. Bullet, "for the sake of an illuminated and illuminating moment of beauty or of terror, of wonder or of sheer surprise." The story-teller concentrates on a single effect—call it what you will—fragment or a fraction of life, an idea rendered as a picture of life, an illuminated and an illuminating moment. He cuts away everything that is superfluous in incident, character and dialogue, and compels every circumstance, every sentence, and every word in the story to help produce the single effect—the illuminated and illuminating moment. Brevity, condensation, compression, terse expression—it is in virtue of these that the short story exists—they are the conditions of its being. We should not look for

fulness in a short story. It is the art of suggestion. The novel, observes Mr. Barry Pain, is a satisfaction, the short story is a stimulus. Hence the highest achievement in the short-story form is only within the reach of a writer who has the genius for it. Compression, selection, suggestion are no effort to such a writer. They are the elements in which he lives and thrives. "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room". The short-story writer who is born to his work goes beyond that. He is never so happy as when confined within the narrow room of the short story. Knowledge of the theory of the short story and constant practice in writing short stories are not to be despised. But they are a poor substitute for the original gift of short-story writing.

Finally, the short story is not a tale, for a tale has not the lyric brevity and concentration and well-proportioned beauty of a typical modern story. It is loose and rambling. An anecdote and a sketch are also to be distinguished from a short story. An anecdote is simpler; it is 'the brief record of a moment' which does not look before and after. A sketch describes a single incident, or it may give a glimpse of character.

The modern short-story is a self-dependent, self-contained entity. It is not a parasite, nor may it be likened to a branching growth of some elder tree, such as the novel or the drama. Rather is it like Ben Jonson's lily—the plant and flower of light.

VI. TYPES OF THE SHORT STORY AND ILLUSTRATIONS

It is fascinating work trying to classify short stories, if one is content with tentative results. There can be no finality in classification, inasmuch as there are numerous principles of classification. One may think of the storyteller's love of romance and reality and divide stories broadly into two classes, romantic and realistic. Another principle of division is the effect which stories produce upon

our minds. Following this principle, we have groups of stories which may be described as pathetic, tragic, humorous. If we adopt the principle of classification with reference to the chief characters in the stories we get the species known as stories of child-life, ghost stories, stories of animal life and others. Then there is the principle of locality which gives us types of stories which have appeared under such titles as '*Tales of Five Towns*', '*Wessex Tales*.' . . .

Perhaps the principle of classification which yields the most satisfactory results is that which rallies stories round plot or character, atmosphere or idea. The plot consists sometimes of a series of incidents leading to a climax. Mrs. Gaskell's '*The Half-Brothers*' is an example of such a plot. Sometimes the plot is an entanglement, and the interest of the reader is centred in the solution of the problem. The narrative in this species of plot consists of a chain of reasoning. Conan Doyle's '*Red-Headed League*' is an instance. Thirdly, the plot may consist of an exciting situation. A situation, observes Prof. Canby, may be defined as any active relationship between character and circumstances. Meredith's story is built upon an exciting situation. Khipil has wasted his time in idle gossip and the defaulter is brought face to face with his master who inflicts quaint punishment upon the offender 'under the pretence of heaping favours on him'. This keeps the reader excited and amused throughout. Mr. Wells's '*The Stolen Bacillus*' is a better example of a story of situation. The anarchist walks off with the tube of living cholera germs, and the teeth of the reader are set on edge as he thinks of the impending destruction of a whole city. Mr. Bennett's '*Hot Potatoes*', Tagore's '*Cabuliwallah*' may also be described as stories of situation. Tolstoy in his '*Two Old Men*' 'creates a vivid picture of a bit of life in such a way as to render a preconceived idea'. Professor Bain in a like manner presents an idea as a picture of life.

Of course, plot, character, setting or atmosphere and idea cannot be entirely isolated. One element merges insensibly into another, and some of the stories in our text may be said to belong to this or that class in virtue of some particular element which we wish to stress at the moment. A good case can be made out for classifying Meredith's '*Punishment of Shahpesh*' and Mr. Bennett's '*Hot Potatoes*' as stories of setting or atmosphere. Meredith's story, moreover, embodies a definite moral or purpose. There is absolute certainty only in regard to Doyle's *Red-Headed League* where the plot element subdues everything to its own purpose. And we may affirm with equal assurance that Tolstoy's and Professor Bain's stories exist for the ideas which underlie them.

I

RUDYARD KIPLING

Mr. Kipling began writing in the 'eighties. He "broke into print" at twenty-three, someone has said, and made good at once. The Story of Muhammad Din appeared in one of his earlier books—"Plain Tales from the Hills"—which was published in 1887. These earlier paper-bound volumes—little sun-baked booklets—as Dixon Scott described them—were issued by Messrs A. H. Wheeler and Co., of Allahabad. However, the extraordinary merit of Mr. Kipling's work was instantly recognized, and the popularity which the author won by these early booklets of his has remained more or less undimmed to our day.

Mr. Kipling was born in Bombay in 1865. After a few years' schooling at the United Services College in Devonshire, he returned to India and joined the staff of The Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore as assistant editor in 1882. He left the Gazette for the Pioneer of Allahabad in 1887. Mr. Kipling has written other books describing life in the East such as "The Light that Failed" (1891) and "Kim" (1901), "Departmental Ditties" (1886) and Barrack-Room Ballads (1892). Kipling, the poet, and Kipling, the Anglo-Indian story-teller, helped almost equally to introduce English readers to "the colour and passion and seductiveness of the East." And when—as the story goes—George Moore said that Mr. Kipling must come down from the camel and show that he could write excellent stories of English life to match his stories of Indian and Anglo-Indian life, Mr. Kipling accepted the challenge and wrote "They", "The Brushwood Boy" and "Puck of Pook's Hill" (1906). He showed in these stories that he could write as well about his countrymen in England as about Englishmen in India. As a poet, a story-teller, a novelist, Mr. Kipling has delighted thousands of readers and though the magic of the East which he introduced into his books has lost something of its novelty, his books are as much in demand as ever. Mr. Kipling was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. He lives in Sussex which is "for him the one spot on earth beloved over all."

The Story of Muhammad Din is striking in its pity and pathos. It has a universal appeal. We feel as we read the story that the innocence and purity of a child break through all barriers of race and creed. It is its love of children which binds together the whole world, and in the presence of a child we realize that there is neither East nor West here, nor breed nor birth. "Suffer little children to come unto me," said Christ, "for of such is the Kingdom of God." And the quotation from Munichandra given by the author may be paralleled by another from Kālidāsa—"Happy are they" says Kālidāsa, "who are dark with the dust of their children's limbs."

Mr. Kipling tells the story with all his consummate skill and artistry. It has a swift, direct opening. After this, a few incidents in the child's life during his shortlived friendship with the sahib are described, and then, almost without any warning, the curtain descends. This end of the story is all the more impressive because it is so sudden and unexpected. The brief chronicle of Muhammad Din's life is, in truth, presented as an artistic whole, the abrupt end being part of the artistic design. Its apparent simplicity must not blind us to the structural unity which is one of the striking merits of this Plain Tale from the Hills.

The two chief characters in the story are vividly portrayed. Muhammad is a lonely child always crooning to itself for lack of company, trotting in and out of the castor-oil bushes, building palaces out of stale flowers, broken glass and feathers which, with the predatory instincts of a child, he did not hesitate to pull from his master's fowls. In common with all children, Muhammad Din is full of that wide-eyed wonder and curiosity which is such a winsome trait of childhood. Finally, he is very jealous of his honour (I am not a *budmash*. I am a *man*), very sensitive to reproach (witness the tearful and apologetic face) and very conscientious and careful to respect the wishes of his benefactor and friend (laboured for an hour at effacing every trace of the dust bank and pottery fragments). The Sahib is almost as lonely as the child. He is kindly, sympathetic and generous. He shows a reverence for childhood and a profound appreciation of its winning little ways which endear him to all readers. He has, moreover, a lively sense of humour—"The *Heaven-born* set no particular store by it—By my *singular favour* he was permitted to disport himself. The long dry howl reached the servants' quarters far more quickly than any command of mine had ever done."

Mr. Kipling's knowledge of what is called child-psychology is evident everywhere in this story. The child has a personality which we grown-ups are apt to ignore. On the other hand, the child is perpetually trying to express its personality. Muhammad Din's disclaimer—quoted above—I am not a *budmash*. I am a *man*—is an example. Again, children like to build, construct things for themselves. Muhammad Din's many architectural triumphs are proof of this building instinct in childhood. If a child has no companions, it will create an imaginary world of its own. So Muhammad Din runs in and out among the castor-oil bushes on mysterious errands of his own.

The art of this story resembles nature. The incidents, characters, dialogue, description and local colour—*khitmatgar*, *budmash*, *jailkhana*, *bearer*—everything is in place. Mr. Kipling describes objects, persons, situations in words that are apt, convincing and clear. Thus the child is described as "a fat little body", "a chubby little eccentricity," his father as "portly old Imam Din." When the sahib sees the small figure in the dining room, he says it was "a tiny, plump figure in a ridiculously inadequate shirt which came, perhaps, half-way down the stomach. It wandered round the room, thumb in mouth..." Earlier, when the child is given the polo-ball its joy is described in words that leave nothing that is desired—"Then followed a hurri-

came of joyful squeaks, a patter of small feet and the *thud-thud-thud* of the ball rolling along the ground." What is more, the author never wastes words. This story appeals to us as much by its brevity, economy, suggestive beauty, as by its humanity and humour and other qualities mentioned above.

Munichandra, a Jain writer who lived in the 12th century, A.D. The verses translated by Peterson will be found in *Munichandra's Gathākośa*.

Khitmatgar, male servant who waits at table in India.

Bearer, domestic servant.

THE STORY OF MUHAMMAD DIN

"Who is the happy man? He that sees in his own house, at home little children crowned with dust, leaping and falling and crying—"

Munichandra, translated by Professor Peterson.

The polo-ball was an old one, scarred, chipped, and dented. It stood on the mantelpiece among the pipe-stems which Imam Din, *khitmatgar*, was cleaning for me.

'Does the Heaven-born want this ball?' said Imam Din deferentially.

The Heaven-born set no particular store by it, but of what use was a polo-ball to a *khitmatgar*?

By your Honour's favour, I have a little son. He has seen this ball, and desires it to play with. I do not want it for myself.'

No one would for an instant accuse portly old Imam Din of wanting to play with polo-balls. He carried out the battered thing into the verandah; and there followed a hurricane of joyful squeaks, a patter of small feet, and the *thud-thud-thud* of the ball rolling along the ground. Evidently the little son had been waiting outside the door to secure his treasure. But how had he managed to see that polo-ball?

Next day, coming back from office half an hour earlier than usual, I was aware of a small figure in the dining-room—a tiny, plump figure in a ridiculously inadequate shirt which came, perhaps, half-way down the tubby stomach. It wandered round the room, thumb in mouth,

crooning to itself as it took stock of the pictures. Undoubtedly this was the 'little son'.

He had no business in my room, of course; but was so deeply absorbed in his discoveries that he never noticed me in the doorway. I stepped into the room and startled him nearly into a fit. He sat down on the ground with a gasp. His eyes opened, and his mouth followed suit. I knew what was coming, and fled, followed by a long, dry howl which reached the servants' quarters far more quickly than any command of mine had ever done. In ten seconds Imam Din was in the dining-room. Then despairing sobs arose, and I returned to find Imam Din admonishing the small sinner who was using most of his shirt as a handkerchief.

'This boy', said Imam Din judicially, 'is a *budmash*—a big *budmash*. He will, without doubt, go to the *jail-khana* for his behaviour." Renewed yells from the penitent, and an elaborate apology to myself from Imam Din.

"Tell the baby," said I, "that the *Sahib* is not angry, and take him away." Imam Din conveyed my forgiveness to the offender, who had now gathered all his shirt round his neck, stringwise, and the yell subsided into a sob. The two set off for the door. "His name," said Imam Din, is Muhammad Din, and he is a *budmash*." Freed from present danger, Muhammad Din turned round in his father's arms, and said gravely, "It is true that my name is Muhammad Din, *Tahib*, but I am not a *budmash*. I am a *man*!"

From that day dated my acquaintance with Muhammad Din. Never again did he come into my dining-room, but on the neutral ground of the garden, we greeted each other with much state, though our conversation was confined to "*Talaam, Tahib*" from his side, and "*Salaam, Muhammad Din*" from mine. Daily on my return from office, the little white shirt and the fat little body used to

rise from the shade of the creeper-covered trellis where they had been hid; and daily I checked my horse here, that my salutation might not be slurred over or given unseemly.

Muhammad Din never had any companions. He used to trot about the compound, in and out of the castor-oil bushes, on mysterious errands of his own. One day I stumbled upon some of his handiwork far down the grounds. He had half buried the polo-ball in the dust, and stuck six shrivelled old marigold flowers in a circle round it. Outside that circle again was a rude square, traced out in bits of red brick alternating with fragments of broken china; the whole bounded by a little bank of dust. The water-man from the well-curb put in a plea for the small architect, saying that it was only the play of a baby and did not much disfigure my garden.

Heaven knows that I had no intention of touching the child's work then or later; but, that evening, a stroll through the garden brought me unawares full on it; so that I trampled, before I knew, marigold-heads, dustbank, and fragments of broken soap-dish into confusion past all hope of mending. Next morning, I came upon Muhammad Din crying softly to himself over the ruin I had wrought. Some one had cruelly told him that the *Sahib* was very angry with him for spoiling the garden, and had scattered his rubbish, using bad language the while. Muhammad Din laboured for an hour at effacing every trace of the dust-bank and pottery fragments, and it was with a tearful and apologetic face that he said, "*Talaam, Tahib,*" when I came home from office. A hasty inquiry resulted in Imam Din informing Muhammad Din that, by my singular favour, he was permitted to disport himself as he pleased. Whereat the child took heart and fell to tracing the ground-plan of an edifice which was to eclipse the marigold-polo-ball creation.

For some months the chubby little eccentricity revolved in his humble orbit among the castor-oil bushes and in the dust; always fashioning magnificent palaces from stale flowers thrown away by the bearer, smooth water-worn pebbles, bits of broken glass, and feathers pulled, I fancy, from my fowls—always alone, and always crooning to himself.

A gaily-spotted sea-shell was dropped one day close to the last of his little buildings; and I looked that Muhammad Din should build something more than ordinarily splendid on the strength of it. Nor was I disappointed. He meditated for the better part of an hour, and his crooning rose to a jubilant song. Then he began tracing in the dust. It would certainly be a wondrous palace, this one, for it was two yards long and a yard broad in ground-plan. But the palace was never completed.

Next day there was no Muhammad Din at the head of the carriage-drive, and no "*Talaam, Tahib*" to welcome my return. I had grown accustomed to the greeting, and its omission troubled me. Next day Imam Din told me that the child was suffering slightly from fever and needed quinine. He got the medicine, and an English Doctor.

"They have no stamina, these brats," said the Doctor, as he left Imam Din's quarters.

A week later, though I would have given much to have avoided it, I met on the road to the Mussulman burying-ground Imam Din, accompanied by one friend, carrying in his arms, wrapped in a white cloth, all that was left of little Muhammad Din.

II

GEORGE MEREDITH

This story of Khipil's punishment forms part of 'The Shaving of Shagpat' (1856) which was Meredith's first effort in prose fiction. It is a book written in the style of 'The Arabian Nights Entertainments.' Time and again, it happens in the Arabian Nights that someone lets fall a remark which serves as an excuse for the introduction of another story. In 'The Shaving of Shagpat' Meredith adopts this device of weaving a tale within a tale. The Vizier in Meredith's 'fable' has been making arrangements for the betrothal of his daughter—Noorna—to the barber, Shibli Bagarag. This barber is the hero of Meredith's tale. Noorna helps him with her knowledge of magic to shave Shagpat. Shagpat has one magical hair—called the Identical—on his head. Such is the power of this hair that it compels the king to bow down before Shagpat, and Shagpat hates Noorna because she has refused to marry him. While the Vizier is making arrangements for his daughter's betrothal with Shibli, Noorna and the barber are wasting their time in idle talk. On his return he asks them whether they had never heard of the punishment of Khipil who wagged his tongue and did nothing. 'How of that punishment?' inquires Bagarag. And the Vizier narrates the story of Khipil's punishment.

George Meredith was born in 1828 in Hampshire. After some schooling in Germany and an unsuccessful attempt to study law, he turned to journalism and authorship. The Shaving of Shagpat (1856) was followed by The Ordeal of Richard Feverel (1859), The Egoist (1879), Diana of the Crossways (1885) and many other novels and poems—Modern Love (1862), Ballads and Poems (1887), A Reading of the Earth (1888). Three short stories which Meredith contributed to the New Quarterly Magazine have been brought together in a separate volume of the collected edition of his works.

Meredith creates an atmosphere suitable to an Eastern story by referring to the guards with arrows, the gardens of dalliance and pleasure, the fountains, the marble terrace and pomegranate trees. King Shahpesh is again portrayed as an Eastern potentate. He is an autocrat with the gift of a whimsical humour which he displays even when he inflicts stern punishment. Khipil is made to stand for seven days and seven nights with stretched arms with a pomegranate in each hand. And the king brought people to regard *the wondrous pomegranate shoot, planted by Khipil, very wondrous and a new sort, worthy the gardens of a king*. Shahpesh has an artist's temperament: he feels the delight of a workman in his job when he is visiting offenders with punishment. For he quotes from poets in support of his views and calls upon the victim to describe the effects of the various punishments which he devises to bring home to Khipil the enormity of his guilt. With refined cruelty the king permits that chafing to others which is denied to Khipil and Khipil is commanded to relate the effects of the concession. Shahpesh knows, moreover, how

to veil the lightnings of his wrath; he is a master of grim irony. When he praises Khipil for the excellence of his execution, or his own magnanimity, he is only intent on catching 'the babbler in his net' and making an awful example of him. And this grim irony is in keeping with the autocratic power of the king. The least hint of protest on the part of the victim is met with a threat of death—"transfixed thou shalt be with twenty arrows and five."

Meredith's writings are rich in humour of various kinds, and there is 'God's plenty' in each of them, says Elton. The story of Khipil's punishment is written in a vein of extravagant humour. The author imitates the Arabian Nights manner of telling a tale. The diction, the poetry, the quaint tricks and turns of speech, the exuberance of fancy, the similes and metaphors, the forms of address, the dialogue—everything is faked with exquisite skill. He has invented the names—Shagpat is a humorous variant of Shaggy Pate—the quotations and incidents of the story, but so perfect is his art that he persuades us into the belief that it is an original Persian tale and not a faked-up, artificial imitation of a tale. 'The author is playing with his subject,' remarks Hearn, 'as a juggler plays with half a dozen balls at the same time, never letting one of them fall.' One notices the exuberance of fancy in the description of the people's laughter on seeing Khipil making a pretence of sitting upon his master's chair—"When they beheld him sitting upon nothing and trembling to stir for fear of the arrows, *they laughed so that they rolled upon the floor of the hall, and the echoes of laughter were a thousandfold. Surely the arrows of the guards swayed with the laughter that shook them.*" Khipil's tongue is described as drooping like the tongue of a heavy bell, that when it soundeth giveth forth mournful sounds only. This is an example of the oriental simile. Another example occurs earlier when Khipil is compared to a shepherd talking to the pleased workmen—his flocks. 'Battered with many beatings', which occurs immediately after the simile of the drooping tongue of a bell, is a specimen of alliteration. In the reply of Khipil pointing out the site to his king we have an illustration of what is called oriental hyperbole—"It is even here, O king of the age," says Khipil, "where thou delightest the earth with thy foot and the ear of thy slave with sweetness." Observe the metaphors in the following sentences—The currents of business had become stagnant pools—the tongue a constructor rather than a commentator. Amongst many others one example of irony may be given—on reaching a desert instead of the gardens of dalliance Shapesh cried, "This is indeed of admirable design, O Khipil! Feelest not thou the coolness of the fountains—their refreshingness?" Finally, the archaisms which Meredith employs—*quoeth, alludeth, soundeth, wotted*—are part of the fun of the writing. They help to give one the impression that the author is telling an ancient tale. But the whole of this drollery, the irony, the rainbow colours of style are a mask—a means employed to drive home the moral of the tale—that he who wags his tongue and does nothing invites the doom which overwhelmed Khipil the Builder.

Discover to me now, "discover" is used in the old sense of reveal, lay open.

Thou art but the length of thy measure on the ground, you will be killed instantly, and lie low on the ground stretched at full length.

As in conspiracy to amuse his master, as though he and his master had agreed beforehand to enjoy this joke—i. e. Khipil's making a pretence of sitting in a marble chair where none had been built.

When we go draggingly.....before, when we move under compulsion from behind, knowing that if we do not move we might be killed instantly, and equally certain that by moving forward we are sure to be overwhelmed by death or some terrible calamity. It is like sheep being led to slaughter by butchers.

I am beguiled.....odorous sloth, I forget the pain while I enjoy the sweet fragrance of flowers, and feel drowsy and disinclined to work as though overcome by their heavy perfume.

Comprehensiveness would be its portion.....It would be a complete description of the many joys which flowers yield, were it not that it fails to refer to the pleasure which is derived from chafing.

Compelled to drink.....fountain, was forced to make a pretence of drinking the water of the fountain which was dry—as earlier he was compelled to sit in a chair which had not been built at all and suffered extreme torture.

*Wotted.....coin, knew how to punish offences by making the offender suffer from the consequences of his failure to do his duty. Thus Khipil was made to stand with stretched arms like a pomegranate tree for seven days and nights for his failure to plant pomegranate trees. Wotted is past third person singular of *wit* to know, an archaic verb. To punish offences in coin is to follow the policy of tit for tat; if you fail to plant a pomegranate tree, you will yourself stand like a pomegranate tree for seven days and nights.*

Before his time affairs had languished.....gabble, in the days before Shahpesh came to the throne, business in the state was being very slowly done. Every officer was idle and arrears had accumulated. Business is compared to a stream which ceases to flow and becomes a stationary pool. Everybody talked like Khipil and did no work. The tongue instead of being called upon to criticize what was done—the work that was completed with hands—became itself the builder—i. e. there was no actual construction but only talk of construction. Every person, says the author, who wastes his time in excessive talk is overtaken by disaster. And a nation which spends its time in idle talk is also overwhelmed by ruin. Gabble is talk which is rapid and noisy and without meaning. To run to seed is to become weak by excess—excess of gabble in the present instance.

Leave to bloom the flower of things.....roots, do not waste your time in singing the praises of the good work you have undertaken to do, but labour hard

at' your task—put your nose to the grinding-stone—and achieve it. The beauty of the work you have done will announce itself without any assistance from you (Leave to bloom the flower of things); you need not trouble about it. Your only concern should be with hard work (dig among the roots). Do not imitate the farm-servant who neglected to sow in seed-time and took to singing the richness of the soil when it was harvest.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SHAHPESH, THE PERSIAN, ON KHIPIL, THE BUILDER

They relate that Shahpesh, the Persian, commanded the building of a palace, and Khipil was his builder. The work lingered from the first year of the reign of Shahpesh even to his fourth. One day Shahpesh went to the river-side where it stood, to inspect it. Khipil was sitting on a marble slab among the stones and blocks; round him stretched lazily the masons and stonecutters and slaves of burden; and they with the curve of humorous enjoyment on their lips, for he was reciting to them adventures, interspersed with anecdotes and recitations and poetic instances, as was his wont. They were like pleased flocks whom the shepherd hath led to a pasture freshened with brooks, there to feed indolently; he, the shepherd, in the midst.

Now, the king said to him, "O Khipil, show me my palace where it standeth, for I desire to gratify my sight with its fairness."

Khipil abased himself before Shahpesh, and answered, "'Tis even here, O King of the age, where thou delightest the earth with thy foot and the ear of thy slave with sweetness. Surely a site of vantage, one that dominateth earth, air, and water, which is the builder's first and chief requisition for a noble palace, a palace to fill foreign kings and sultans with the distraction of envy; and it is, O Sovereign of the time, a site, this site I have chosen, to occupy the tongues of travellers and awaken the flights of poets!"

Shahpesh smiled and said, "The site is good ! I laud the site ! Likewise I laud the wisdom of Ebn Busrac, where he exclaims :—

Be sure, where Virtue faileth to appear,
For her a gorgeous mansion men will rear ;
And day and night her praises will be heard,
Where never yet she spake a single word."

Then said he, "O Khipil, my builder, there was once a farm-servant that, having neglected in the seed-time to sow, took to singing the richness of his soil, when it was harvest, in proof of which he displayed the abundance of weeds that coloured the land everywhere. Discover to me now the completeness of my halls and apartments, I pray thee, O Khipil, and be the excellence of thy construction made visible to me !"

Quoth Khipil, "To hear is to obey".

He conducted Shahpesh among the unfinished saloons and imperfect courts and roofless rooms, and by half-erected obelisks, and columns pierced and chipped, of the palace of his building. And he was bewildered at the words spoken by Shahpesh ; but now the King exalted him, and admired the perfection of his craft, the greatness of his labour, the speediness of his construction, his assiduity ; feigning not to behold his negligence.

Presently they went up winding balusters to a marble terrace, and the King said, "such is thy devotion and constancy in toil, O Khipil, that thou shalt walk before me here".

He then commanded Khipil to precede him, and Khipil was heightened with the honour. When Khipil had paraded a short space he stopped quickly, and said to Shahpesh, "Here is, as it chanceth, a gap, O King ! and we can go no further this way".

Shahpesh said, "All is perfect, and it is my will thou delay not to advance".

Khipil cried, "The gap is wide, O mighty King, and manifest, and it is an incomplete part of thy palace".

Then said Shahpesh, "O Khipil, I see no distinction between one part and another; excellent are all parts in beauty and proportion, and there can be no part incomplete in this palace that occupieth the builder four years in its building: so advance, do my bidding".

Khipil yet hesitated, for the gap was of many strides, and at the bottom of the gap was a deep water, and he one that knew not the motion of swimming. But Shahpesh ordered his guard to point their arrows in the direction of Khipil, and Khipil stepped forward hurriedly, and fell in the gap, and was swallowed by the water below. When he rose the second time, succour reached him, and he was drawn to land trembling, his teeth chattering. And Shahpesh praised him, and said, "This is an apt contrivance for a bath, Khipil, O my builder! well conceived; one that taketh by surprise; and it shall be thy reward daily when much talking hath fatigued thee".

Then he bade Khipil lead him to the hall of state. And when they were there Shahpesh said, "For a privilege, and as a mark of my approbation, I give thee permission to sit in the marble chair of yonder throne, even in my presence, O Khipil".

Khipil said, "Surely, O King, the chair is not yet executed".

And Shahpesh exclaimed, "If this be so, thou art but the length of thy measure on the ground, O talkative one!".

Khipil said, "Nay, 'tis not so, O King of splendours! Blind that I am! Yonder's indeed the chair".

And Khipil feared the King, and went to the place where the chair should be, and bent his body in a sitting posture, eyeing the King and made pretence to sit in the chair of Shahpesh, as in conspiracy to amuse his master.

Then said Shahpesh, "For a token that I approve thy execution of the chair, thou shalt be honoured by remaining seated in it up to the hour of noon ; but move thou to the right or to the left, showing thy soul insensible of the honour done thee, transfixed thou shalt be with twenty arrows and five".

The King then left him with a guard of twenty-five of his body-guard ; and they stood around him with bent bows, so that Khipil dared not move from his sitting posture. And the masons and the people crowded to see Khipil sitting on his master's chair, for it became rumoured about. When they beheld him sitting upon nothing, and he trembling to stir for fear of the loosening of the arrows, they laughed so that they rolled upon the floor of the hall, and the echoes of laughter were a thousandfold. Surely the arrows of the guards swayed with the laughter that shook them.

Now, when the time had expired for his sitting in the chair, Shahpesh returned to him, and he was cramped, pitiable to see ; and Shahpesh said, "Thou hast been exalted above men, O Khipil ! for that thou didst execute for thy master has been found fitting for thee."

Then he bade Khipil lead the way to the noble gardens of dalliance and pleasure that he had planted and contrived. And Khipil went in that state described by the poet, when we go draggingly, with remonstrating members,

Knowing a dreadful strength behind,

And a dark fate before.

They came to the gardens, and behold, these were full of weeds and nettles, the fountains dry, no tree to be seen—a desert. And Shahpesh cried, "This is indeed of admirable design, O Khipil ! Feelest thou not the coolness of the fountains ?—their refreshingness ? Truly I am grateful to thee ! And these flowers, pluck me now a handful, and tell me of their perfume".

Khipil plucked a handful of the nettles that were there

in the place of flowers, and put his nose to them before Shahpesh, till his nose was reddened; and desire to rub it waxed in him, and possessed him, and became a passion, so that he could scarce refrain from rubbing it even in the King's presence. And the King encouraged him to sniff and enjoy their fragrance, repeating the poet's words;

Methinks I am a lover and a child,

A little child and happy lover, both !

When by the breath of flowers I am beguiled
From sense of pain, and lulled in odorous sloth.

So I adore them, that no mistress sweet

Seems worthier of the love which they awake ;

In innocence and beauty more complete,

Was never maiden cheek in morning lake.

Oh, while I live, surround me with fresh flowers !

Oh, when I die, then bury me in their bowers !

And the King said, 'What sayest thou, O my builder ? that is a fair quotation, applicable to thy feelings, one that expresseth them ?'

Khipil answered, "'Tis eloquent, O great King ! comprehensiveness would be its portion, but that it alludeth not to the delight of chafing."

Then Shahpesh laughed, and cried, 'Chafe not ! it is an ill thing, and hideous ! This nosegay, O Khipil, it is for thee to present to thy mistress. Truly she will receive thee well after its presentation ! I will have it now sent in thy name, with word that thou followest quickly. And for thy nettled nose, surely if the whim seize thee that thou desirest its chafing, to thy neighbour is permitted what to thy hand is refused.'

The King set a guard upon Khipil to see that his orders were executed, and appointed a time for him to return to the gardens.

At the hour indicated Khipil stood before Shahpesh again. He was pale, saddened ; his tongue drooped like the

tongue of a heavy bell, that when it soundeth giveth forth mournful sounds only; he had also the look of one battered with many beatings. So the King said, 'How of the presentation of the flowers of thy culture, O Khipil?'

He answered, "Surely, O King, she received me with wrath, and I am shamed by her."

And the King said, "How of my clemency in the matter of the chafing?"

Khipil answered, "O King of splendours! I made petition to my neighbours whom I met, accosting them civilly and with imploring, for I ached to chafe, and it was the very raging thirst of desire to chafe that was mine, devouring eagerness for solace of chafing. And they chafed me, O King; yet not in those parts which throbbed for the chafing, but in those which abhorred it."

Then Shahpesh smiled and said, "Tis certain that the magnanimity of monarchs is as the rain that falleth, the sun that shineth: and in this spot it fertilizeth richness; in that encourageth rankness. So art thou but a weed, O Khipil! and my grace is thy chastisement."

Now, the King ceased not persecuting Khipil, under pretence of doing him honour and heaping favours on him. Three days and three nights was Khipil gasping without water, compelled to drink of the drought of the fountain, as an honour at the hands of the King. And he was seven days and seven nights made to stand with stretched arms, as they were the branches of a tree, in each hand a pomegranate. And Shahpesh brought the people of his court to regard the wondrous pomegranate-shoot planted by Khipil, very wondrous, and a new sort, worthy the gardens of a King. So the wisdom of the King was applauded, and men wotted he knew how to punish offences in coin, by the punishment inflicted on Khipil, the builder. Before that time his affairs had languished, and the currents of business instead of flowing had become

stagnant pools. It was the fashion to do as did Khipil, and fancy the tongue a constructor rather than a commentator ; and there is a doom upon that people and that man which runneth to seed in gabble, as the poet says in his wisdom :

If thou wouldst be famous, and rich in splendid fruits,
Leave to bloom the flower of things, and dig among the roots.

Truly after Khipil's punishment there were few in the dominions of Shahpesh who sought to win the honours bestowed by him on gabblers and idlers : as again the poet :

When to loquacious fools with patience rare

I listen, I have thoughts of Khipil's chair :

His bath, his nosegay, and his fount I see,—

Himself stretched out as a pomegranate-tree.

And that I am not Shahpesh I regret,

So to inmesh the babbler in his net.

Well is that wisdom worthy to be sung

Which raised the Palace of the Wagging Tongue !

And whoso is punished after the fashion of Shahpesh, the Persian, on Khipil, the Builder, is said to be one "in the palace of the Wagging Tongue" to this time.

III

LEO TOLSTOY

'The Two Old Men' (1885) is one of those popular tales which Tolstoy wrote and published after the great crisis which he has recorded in his Confession. Throughout his youth and middle age, Tolstoy had been tormented by a desire to find a moral justification for life. He was not content to live in worldly prosperity, or lose himself in his art. In the crisis referred to above, he found the moral justification which he had been seeking in the teaching of Christ and adopted the well-known advice—Resist not evil—as the rule of his conduct. This conversion of Tolstoy, observes Prince Mirsky, coincided with an important change in the style and manner of his imaginative writings. Henceforward he ceased to care for pure disinterested art. The highest art was religious art, and he decided to write short

stories for the common people which would help them to realize the beauty and nobility of religion. In a word, art was to become a handmaid of religion.

Count Leo Tolstoy was born in 1828 at Yasnaya Polyana in Tula—south of Moscow. His parents belonged to the highest class of Russian nobility. Tolstoy lost them early in his life. He passed his matriculation in 1844, but left the University three years later without taking a degree. In 1851 he joined the army and fought in the Caucasus and the Crimea. In the meanwhile he had written '*Childhood*,' '*Boyhood*' (1854), '*Youth*' (1856) and the '*Sevastopol Stories*' (1856). These books were warmly welcomed by the common people as well as by contemporary men of letters. Tolstoy married in 1862. *War and Peace* (1865) and *Anna Karenina* (1874-76) were written during the happy days of his married life. They are the two greatest novels he wrote. '*Resurrection*' which came later shows a distinct falling off in power. After his conversion (1879-82) he was unable to reconcile his own views of abandoning land and property with his wife's sense of what she owed to the family. As the years passed the breach widened till he left his home and died almost immediately on November 7, 1910.

'The Two Old Men' is an illustration of Tolstoy's theory of art. All art, in Tolstoy's view, communicates the feelings of the author to the reader. When these feelings are moral, the art is to be commended, when they are immoral or exclusive—as referring to certain classes—the art is to be condemned or classed as inferior. A work which is of universal interest may, however, be described as good art—'A Prisoner of the Caucasus'—for example. In 'The Two Old Men' Tolstoy's purpose is obvious. God has to be worshipped in spirit. It is not by going on a long pilgrimage, or by placing candles at shrines, or bringing home the water of the Jordan that one truly worships God. The one supreme way to please God and to do his will is to love one's fellowmen and to help them in their days of sorrow and trouble. But this moral of the story does no harm to its exquisite art. Another essential principle of Tolstoy's theory of art is that facts should be left to speak for themselves and produce their natural effect. This is also exemplified in the story of The Two Old Men. Tolstoy hated ornament, exuberance, sentimental romance. The narrative, in his view, should be pure, simple, bare. Too much detail, description and ornament defeat the aim of the writer. The wood cannot be seen for the trees, the heavens are concealed by the crowd of stars. In 'The Two Old Men' the narrative is stripped of all ornament and superfluous detail. Tolstoy keeps close to the peasant life which he describes. Truth, he knows, has a tremendous power over the minds of men: he is content, therefore, to delineate truth.

Far from the madding crowd, the Russian peasant is shown leading a quiet life with his horse and cart and cow, sowing and reaping the harvest, building a hut, keeping bees, loving his children, fearing God and occasionally forgetting His mercy and goodness to human beings. Warm-hearted and generous in hospitality to guests, the Russian peasant tries to avoid drink, tobacco, snuff, the use of bad

language, and yet now and again he is enslaved by these vices. Tolstoy portrays him with all his weaknesses and strength, his superstition and piety—'warts and all' as Cromwell wished to be portrayed. Further, the food which the peasants eat—flat-cakes, curd-cakes, soup, porridge, the clothes which they wear—shirts tucked inside the trousers or left hanging outside, the kaftan, the leather-shoes, the spare shoes of platted bark, the huts in which they live—with their plastered walls and whitewashed tops, the brick-oven inside and the icon-stand, the roubles and kopeks in which they deal, finally, their quaint ways of greeting friends—this is what is called local colour. Tolstoy avails himself of everything that will bring his story nearer to the actual life of the peasants. The result is we see the peasants living and moving before us as though they were longstanding familiar acquaintances of ours.

In the presentation of characters, Tolstoy manifests the same relentless regard for truth. He depicts human beings as they are, knowing that humanity is not divided into sheep and goats. Good and evil—each has its share in the make-up of human character. Though Efim is worldly, and obsessed too much by household cares and by the misdeeds of his son, he is not a contemptible character. Tolstoy tells us that he was staid, serious and a capable administrator. He had a fine physique, being tall and erect in spite of his sixty years. He neither drank nor smoked, nor did he take snuff and had never used bad language except perhaps towards his ne'er-do-well eldest son. With touching humility he confesses that he made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but doubts whether his efforts were accepted, his feet were there, but whether his soul was there Again, when the pilgrim with the skull-cap complains that he has been robbed, Efim knows it to be a lie. All the same he rebukes himself for judging the pilgrim harshly. He is aware of his own weaknesses, but like most of us frail human beings, he is unable to resist temptation.

The garrulous wife of Elisha is exceedingly fond of her old man. She gives a lyrical description of the joy of the family when Elisha returned home. Whoever might blame Elisha, the idea of reproaching him for his unfinished pilgrimage never occurs to Elisha's wife. And yet this old wife tries to hide from the neighbour how many swarms there had been from the ten hives which were purchased by Elisha's neighbour.

Elisha is a man after Tolstoy's heart. He has his faults, otherwise he would not be human. He drinks sometimes, sings (a sin in the eyes of Russian peasants), and takes snuff. He is short and dark and has a bald head. But with all his defects God loves him. For his heart overflows with love and pity for his suffering fellowmen. He is genial and kind to his own people. They love him. It is dull without him, says the wife, and the son observes: 'It is like being without sunlight when he is away.' But Elisha's neighbours are equally fond of him. His

only thoughts, when he started on a pilgrimage were (as Tolstoy tells us) how to avoid being harsh to anyone, how to get to the journey's end and return home again in peace and love with all men. He is very religious. There is nothing dearer than the soul, he says, and he has never in his life been sorry for anything except his own sins. Not only does he avoid sin himself, but he is anxious not to lead others into it. He falls behind his comrade to take a pinch of snuff, to avoid leading him into temptation. It is these little acts of Elisha which endear him to his own people and others. When he returns home, he helps his son to store wood for winter and his women to grind grain. His inclination to a kind deed is so natural that he is not even conscious that he is doing anything out of the way. There is no bragging. On the contrary, he is positively alarmed when his good deeds are mentioned and turns the talk into another channel. He refuses to buy a cow for the peasant's family lest people should praise him too much for his kindness. Elisha loves virtue for its own sake, as some people are said to love art for art's sake. As soon as he has set the starving peasant and his family on their feet, he withdraws and they did not even know, as the old woman says, whether he was a man or an angel of God. It is this complete self-effacement of Elisha, his humility, his readiness to sacrifice every personal interest for the good of others, his honesty, piety and sweetness of disposition which made him beloved of his family, his fellowmen and God. Even the bees seem to love him. They fly round him, making a golden halo, and do not sting him. He stands before them without a face-net or gloves. Tolstoy describes in the most affectionate terms the many-sided charm of Elisha's character, and dwells lovingly even on his bald shining head and short curly beard. Elisha is his ideal of a Christian who obeys the Master in spirit, and tries to live up to the ideal enshrined in the words "We must do right and love truth, and walk humbly, and show mercy."

Finally, the description of the pilgrimage, the various places visited by Elím and the ceremonies performed is clear and convincing. The pilgrimage is completed in one year. It starts when the spring begins and ends with the advent of next year's spring. As an eminent critic has remarked: The story is a little masterpiece of construction, economy and adaptation of means to an end.

The woman saith unto him. . . . This quotation from St. John's Gospel which Tolstoy prefixes to 'The Two Old Men' contains those words of Christ which form the text round which the story is written. Christ tells the woman of Samaria that the hour has come when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, neither in the mountain, nor in Jerusalem. He met this woman at Jacob's well and asked her to give him water to drink. And though she had five husbands, and was living with a sixth person who was not her husband, Christ talked to her and offered to give her living water (*i. e.* instruct her in true religion) which is like a well within one springing into everlasting life.

Patron saint Elisha, a patron saint is one who is selected as the heavenly protector

of a person who is named after him. Elisha was named after the prophet Elisha, who succeeded Elijah. Elisha was a gracious and kindly personality. He was welcome wherever he went, and helped all who sought his help, kings and paupers. We learn from the Bible that Elisha was bald-headed.

Rouble, the value of the rouble has varied at different times from more than three shillings to less than two shillings (Translator's note). It is a silver coin equivalent to 2s. 1½ d.

Kopeks, the kopek is worth about a farthing. One hundred kopeks make a rouble. (Translator's note).

Odessa, town and sea-port on the Black Sea. It is the fourth largest town and the second sea-port in Russia.

St. Peter's Day, 29th of June. Peter was a fisherman. He became a favourite disciple of Christ. According to tradition he was the founder of the Church at Rome where he was put to death in the reign of Nero. His death is celebrated by a festival on the 29th of June.

Mount Athos, a mountain at the extremity of the peninsula of Athos in Macedonia. It is famous for its monasteries. The monks form a kind of republic under the suzerainty of Turkey.

Jerusalem, capital of Palestine; it is regarded as a holy city by Jews and Christians. It should be understood in connection with this story, says Mr. Sampson, that the great ambition of the Russian peasants is to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to visit the scenes associated with the life and death of Jesus. Pilgrimages to Jerusalem began from the third century.

Church of St. Sophia, the famous church of the Greeks at Constantinople (capital of Turkey) dedicated to wisdom. Since 1453 it has been a mosque.

Smyrna, a sea-port in the Turkish province of Aidin, Asia Minor. *Alexandria*, founded by Alexander, a well-known sea-port of Egypt. *Jaffa*, a sea-port of Palestine.

Patriarchate, residence of the Patriarch, the principal official of the church in Jerusalem.

Mary of Egypt, a saint. She is said to have lived and died in a desert, near the river Jordan in Palestine. She took three loaves with her to the desert when she repented of her sins.

Te Deum, Prayer-Book Hymn—We praise thee O God.

Mary Magdalen, a woman associated with Jesus. She was His disciple. Christ cast seven devils out of her. She was the first to witness His Resurrection, (rising out of the grave).

Church of Resurrection—the Lord's Sepulchre, this is the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the reputed site of Christ's tomb. Sepulchre means a tomb. Joseph of Arimathea, a rich disciple of Jesus, was allowed by Pilate to take away the body of Jesus. He buried it in a new sepulchre in the garden where He had been crucified.

Golgotha, the scene of Christ's crucifixion. It is a mound on the north of Jerusalem.

Bethlehem, a town in Palestine, 6 miles south of Jerusalem. *Bethany*, a village on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, Palestine, 2 miles south-east of Jerusalem. It is mentioned in the Gospels as the home of Lazarus who was raised from the dead by Christ.

Jordan, the chief river of Palestine, about 120 miles in length.

THE TWO OLD MEN

I

'The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the father seek to be his worshippers.'—*John iv.* 19-21, 23.

THERE were once two old men who decided to go on a pilgrimage to worship God at Jerusalem. One of them was a well-to-do peasant named Efim Tarásitch Shevélef. The other, Elisha Bódrof, was not so well off.

Efim was a staid man, serious and firm. He neither drank nor smoked nor took snuff, and had never used bad language in his life. He had twice served as village Elder, and when he left office his accounts were in good order. He had a large family: two sons and a married grandson, all living with him. He was hale, long-bearded and erect, and it was

only when he was past sixty that a little grey began to show itself in his beard.

Elisha was neither rich nor poor. He had formerly gone out carpentering, but now that he was growing old he stayed at home and kept bees. One of his sons had gone away to find work, the other was living at home. Elisha was a kindly and cheerful old man. It is true he drank sometimes, and he took snuff, and was fond of singing; but he was a peaceable man, and lived on good terms with his family and with his neighbours. He was short and dark, with a curly beard, and, like his patron saint Elisha, he was quite bald-headed.

The two old men had taken a vow long since and had arranged to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem together: but Efim could never spare the time; he always had so much business on hand; as soon as one thing was finished he started another. First he had to arrange his grandson's marriage; then to wait for his youngest son's return from the army, and after that he began building a new hut.

One holiday the two old men met outside the hut and, sitting down on some timber, began to talk.

'Well,' asked Elisha, 'when are we to fulfil our vow?'

Efim made a wry face.

'We must wait,' he said. 'This year has turned out a hard one for me. I started building this hut thinking it would cost me something over a hundred roubles, but now it's getting on for three hundred and it's still not finished. We shall have to wait till the summer. In summer, God willing, we will go without fail.'

'It seems to me we ought not to put it off, but should go at once,' said Elisha. 'Spring is the best time.'

'The time's right enough, but what about my building? How can I leave that?'

'As if you had no one to leave in charge! Your son can look after it.'

But how? My eldest son is not trustworthy—he sometimes takes a glass too much.'

'Ah, neighbour, when we die they'll get on without us. Let your son begin now to get some experience.'

'That's true enough; but somehow when one begins a thing one likes to see it done.'

'Eh, friend, we can never get through all we have to do. The other day the women-folk at home were washing and house-cleaning for Easter. Here something needed doing, there something else, and they could not get everything done. So my eldest daughter-in-law, who's a sensible woman, says: 'We may be thankful the holiday comes without waiting for us, or however hard we worked we should never be ready for it.'

Efím became thoughtful.

'I've spent a lot of money on this building,' he said, 'and one can't start on the journey with empty pockets. We shall want a hundred roubles apiece—and it's no small sum.'

Elisha laughed.

'Now, come, come, old friend!' he said, 'you have ten times as much as I, and yet you talk about money. Only say when we are to start, and though I have nothing now I shall have enough by then.'

Efím also smiled.

'Dear me, I did not know you were so rich!' said he. 'Why, where will you get it from?'

'I can scrape some together at home, and if that's not enough, I'll sell half a score of hives to my neighbour. He's long been wanting to buy them.'

'If they swarm well this year, you'll regret it.'

'Regret it! Not I, neighbour! I never regretted anything in my life, except my sins. There's nothing more precious than the soul.'

'That's so; still it's not right to neglect things at home.'

'But what if our souls are neglected? That's worse. We took the vow, so let us go! Now, seriously, let us go!'

II

Elisha succeeded in persuading his comrade. In the morning, after thinking it well over, Efím came to Elisha.

'You are right,' said he, 'let us go. Life and death are in God's hands. We must go now, while we are still alive and have the strength.'

A week later the old men were ready to start. Efím had money enough at hand. He took a hundred roubles himself, and left two hundred with his wife.

Elisha, too, got ready. He sold ten hives to his neighbour, with any new swarms that might come from them before the summer. He took seventy roubles for the lot. The rest of the hundred roubles he scraped together from the other members of his household, fairly clearing them all out. His wife gave him all she had been saving up for her funeral; and his daughter-in-law also gave him what she had.

Efím gave his eldest son definite orders about everything: when and how much grass to mow, where to cart the manure, and how to finish off and roof the cottage. He thought out everything, and gave his orders accordingly. Elisha, on the other hand, only explained to his wife that she was to keep separate the swarms from the hives he had sold, and to be sure to let the neighbour have them all, without any tricks. As to household affairs, he did not even mention them.

'You will see what to do and how to do it, as the needs arise,' he said. 'You are the masters, and will know how to do what's best for yourselves.'

So the old men got ready. Their people baked them cakes, and made bags for them, and cut them linen for leg-bands.¹ They put on new leather shoes, and took with them spare shoes of platted bark. Their families went with

¹ Worn by Russian peasants instead of stockings.

them to the end of the village and there took leave of them, and the old men started on their pilgrimage.

Elisha left home in a cheerful mood, and as soon as he was out of the village forgot all his home affairs. His only care was how to please his comrade, how to avoid saying a rude word to any one, how to get to his destination and home again in peace and love. Walking along the road, Elisha would either whisper some prayer to himself or go over in his mind such of the lives of the saints as he was able to remember. When he came across any one on the road, or turned in anywhere for the night, he tried to behave as gently as possible and to say a godly word. So he journeyed on, rejoicing. One thing only he could not do, he could not give up taking snuff. Though he had left his snuff-box behind, he hankered after it. Then a man he met on the road gave him some snuff; and every now and then he would lag behind (not to lead his comrade into temptation) and would take a pinch of snuff.

Efim too walked well and firmly; doing no wrong and speaking no vain words, but his heart was not so light. Household cares weighed on his mind. He kept worrying about what was going on at home. Had he not forgotten to give his son this or that order? Would his son do things properly? If he happened to see potatoes being planted or manure carted, as he went along, he wondered if his son was doing as he had been told. And he almost wanted to turn back and show him how to do things, or even do them himself.

III

The old men had been walking for five weeks, they had worn out their home-made bark shoes, and had to begin buying new ones when they reached Little Russia.¹ From

¹Little Russia is situated in the south-western part of Russia, and consists of the Governments of Kief, Poltava, Tohernigof, and part of Kharkof and Kherson.

the time they left home they had had to pay for their food and for their night's lodging, but when they reached Little Russia the people vied with one another in asking them into their huts. They took them in and fed them, and would accept no payment; and, more than that, they put bread or even cakes into their bags for them to eat on the road.

The old men travelled some five hundred miles in this manner free of expense, but after they had crossed the next province, they came to a district where the harvest had failed. The peasants still gave them free lodging at night, but no longer fed them for nothing. Sometimes, even, they could get no bread: they offered to pay for it, but there was none to be had. The people said the harvest had completely failed the year before. Those who had been rich were ruined and had had to sell all they possessed; those of moderate means were left destitute, and those of the poor who had not left those parts, wandered about begging, or starved at home in utter want. In the winter they had had to eat husks and goosefoot.

One night the old men stopped in a small village; they bought fifteen pounds of bread, slept there, and started before sunrise, to get well on their way before the heat of the day. When they had gone some eight miles, on coming to a stream they sat down, and, filling a bowl with water, they steeped some bread in it, and ate it. Then they changed their leg-bands, and rested for a while. Elisha took out his snuff-box. Efím shook his head at him.

'How is it you don't give up that nasty habit?' said he.

Elisha waved his hand. 'The evil habit is stronger than I,' he said.

Presently they got up and went on. After walking for nearly another eight miles, they came to a large village and passed right through it. It had now grown hot. Elisha was tired out and wanted to rest and have a drink, but Efím was the better walker of the two, and Elisha found it

hard to keep up with him.

'If I could only have a drink,' said he.

'Well, have a drink,' said Efim. 'I don't want any.'

Elisha stopped.

'You go on,' he said, 'but I'll just run in to the little hut there. . I will catch you up in a moment.'

'All right,' said Efim, and he went on along the high road alone, while Elisha turned back to the hut.

It was a small hut plastered with clay, the bottom a dark colour, the top whitewashed; but the clay had crumbled away. Evidently it was long since it had been re-plastered, and the thatch was off the roof on one side. The entrance to the hut was through the yard. Elisha entered the yard, and saw, lying close to a bank of earth that ran round the hut, a gaunt, beardless man with his shirt tucked into his trousers, as is the custom in Little Russia¹. The man must have lain down in the shade, but the sun had come round and now shone full on him. Though not asleep, he still lay there. Elisha called to him, and asked for a drink, but the man gave no answer.

'He is either ill or unfriendly,' thought Elisha and going to the door he heard a child crying in the hut. He took hold of the ring that served as a door-handle, and knocked with it.

'Hey, masters!' he called. No answer. He knocked again with his staff.

'Hey, Christians!' Nothing stirred.

'Hey, servants of God!' Still no reply.

Elisha was about to turn away, when he thought he heard a groan the other side of the door.

'Dear me, some misfortune must have happened to the people? I had better have a look.'

And Elisha entered the hut.

¹ In Great Russia the peasants let their shirt hang outside their trousers.

IV

Elisha turned the ring ; the door was not fastened. He opened it and went along up the narrow passage. The door into the dwelling-room was open. To the left was a brick oven ; in front against the wall was an icon-stand¹ and a table before it ; by the table was a bench on which sat an old woman, bareheaded and wearing only a single garment. There she sat with her head resting on the table, and near her was a thin, wax-coloured boy, with a protruding stomach. He was asking for something, pulling at her sleeve, and crying bitterly. Elisha entered. The air in the hut was very foul. He looked round, and saw a woman lying on the floor behind the oven : she lay flat on the ground with her eyes closed and her throat rattling, now stretching out a leg, now dragging it in, tossing from side to side ; and the foul smell came from her. Evidently she could do nothing for herself and no one had been attending to her needs. The old woman lifted her head, and saw the stranger.

‘What do you want?’ said she. ‘What do you want, man? We have nothing.’

Elisha understood her, though she spoke in the Little-Russian dialect.

‘I came in for a drink of water, servant of God,’ he said.

‘There’s no one—no one—we have nothing to fetch it in. Go your way.’

Then Elisha asked :

‘Is there no one among you, then, well enough to attend to that woman?’

‘No, we have no one. My son is dying outside, and we are dying in here.’

The little boy had ceased crying when he saw the stranger, but when the old woman began to speak, he began again,

¹ An icon (properly ikón) is a representation of God, Christ, an angel, or a saint, usually painted, enamelled, or embossed.

and clutching hold of her sleeve cried :

‘Bread, Granny, bread.’

Elisha was about to question the old woman, when the man staggered into the hut. He came along the passage, clinging to the wall, but as he was entering the dwelling-room he fell in the corner near the threshold, and without trying to get up again to reach the bench, he began to speak in broken words. He brought out a word at a time, stopping to draw breath, and gasping.

‘Illness has seized us . . . ,’ said he, ‘and famine. He is dying . . . of hunger.’

And he motioned towards the boy, and began to sob.

Elisha jerked up the sack behind his shoulder and, pulling the straps off his arms, put it on the floor. Then he lifted it on to the bench, and untied the strings. Having opened the sack, he took out a loaf of bread, and, cutting off a piece with his knife, handed it to the man. The man would not take it, but pointed to the little boy and to a little girl crouching behind the oven, as if to say :

‘Give it to them.’

Elisha held it out to the boy. When the boy smelt bread, he stretched out his arms, and seizing the slice with both his little hands, bit into it so that his nose disappeared in the chunk. The little girl came out from behind the oven and fixed her eyes on the bread. Elisha gave her also a slice. Then he cut off another piece and gave it to the old woman, and she too began munching it.

‘If only some water could be brought,’ she said, ‘their mouths are parched. I tried to fetch some water yesterday—or was it to-day—I can’t remember, but I fell down and could go no further, and the pail has remained there, unless some one has taken it.’

Elisha asked where the well was. The old woman told him. Elisha went out, found the pail, brought some water, and gave the people a drink. The children and the old

woman ate some more bread with the water, but the man would not eat.

‘I cannot eat,’ he said.

All this time the younger woman did not show any consciousness, but continued to toss from side to side. Presently Elisha went to the village shop and bought some millet, salt, flour, and oil. He found an axe, chopped some wood, and made a fire. The little girl came and helped him. Then he boiled some soup, and gave the starving people a meal.

V

The man ate a little. the old woman had some too, and the little girl and boy licked the bowl clean, and then curled up and fell fast asleep in one another’s arms.

The man and the old woman then began telling Elisha how they had sunk to their present state.

‘We were poor enough before!’ said they, ‘but when the crops failed, what we gathered hardly lasted us through autumn. We had nothing left by the time winter came, and had to beg from the neighbours and from any one we could. At first they gave, then they began to refuse. Some would have been glad enough to help us, but had nothing to give. And we were ashamed of asking : we were in debt all round, and owed money, and flour, and bread.’

‘I went to look for work,’ the man said, ‘but could find none. Everywhere people were offering to work merely for their own keep. One day you’d get a short job, and then you might spend two days looking for work. Then the old woman and the girl went begging, further away. But they got very little ; bread was so scarce. Still we scraped food together somehow, and hoped to struggle through till next harvest, but towards spring people ceased to give anything. And then this illness seized us. Things became worse and worse. One day we might have something to eat, and then nothing for two days. We began eating grass. Whether it

was the grass, or what, made my wife ill, I don't know. She could not keep on her legs, and I had no strength left, and there was nothing to help us to recovery.'

'I struggled on alone for a while,' said the old woman, 'but at last I broke down too for want of food, and grew quite weak. The girl also grew weak and timid. I told her to go to the neighbours—she would not leave the hut, but crept into a corner and sat there. The day before yesterday a neighbour looked in, but seeing that we were ill and hungry she turned away and left us. Her husband has had to go away, and she has nothing for her own little ones to eat. And so we lay, waiting for death.'

Having heard their story, Elisha gave up the thought of overtaking his comrade that day, and remained with them all night. In the morning he got up and began doing the housework, just as if it were his own home. He kneaded the bread with the old woman's help, and lit the fire. Then he went with the little girl to the neighbours to get the most necessary things; for there was nothing in the hut: everything had been sold for bread—cooking utensils, clothing, and all. So Elisha began replacing what was necessary, making some things himself, and buying some. He remained there one day, then another, and then a third. The little boy picked up strength and, whenever Elisha sat down, crept along the bench and nestled up to him. The little girl brightened up and helped in all the work, running after Elisha and calling:

'Daddy, daddy.'

The old woman grew stronger, and managed to go out to see a neighbour. The man too improved, and was able to get about, holding on to the wall. Only the wife could not get up, but even she regained consciousness on the third day, and asked for food.

'Well,' thought Elisha, 'I never expected to waste so much time on the way. Now I must be getting on.'

VI

The fourth day was the feast day after the summer fast, and Elisha thought :

‘I will stay and break the fast with these people. I’ll go and buy them something, and keep the feast with them, and to-morrow evening I will start.’

So Elisha went into the village, bought milk, wheat-flour and dripping, and helped the old woman to boil and bake for the morrow. On the feast day Elisha went to church, and then broke the fast with his friends at the hut. That day the wife got up, and managed to move about a bit. The husband had shaved and put on a clean shirt, which the old woman had washed for him ; and he went to beg for mercy of a rich peasant in the village to whom his ploughland and meadow were mortgaged. He went to beg the rich peasant to grant him the use of the meadow and field till after the harvest ; but in the evening he came back very sad, and began to weep. The rich peasant had shown no mercy, but had said : ‘Bring me the money.’

Elisha again grew thoughtful. ‘How are they to live now?’ thought he to himself. ‘Other people will go haymaking, but there will be nothing for these to mow, their grass land is mortgaged. The rye will ripen. Others will reap (and what a fine crop mother-earth is giving this year), but they have nothing to look forward to. Their three acres are pledged to the rich peasant. When I am gone, they’ll drift back into the state I found them in.’

Elisha was in two minds, but finally decided not to leave that evening, but to wait until the morrow. He went out into the yard to sleep. He said his prayers, and lay down ; but he could not sleep. On the one hand he felt he ought to be going, for he had spent too much time and money as it was ; on the other hand he felt sorry for the people.

There seems to be no end to it,' he said. 'First I only meant to bring them a little water and give them each a slice of bread: and just see where it has landed me. It's a case of redeeming the meadow and the cornfield. And when I have done that, I shall have to buy a cow for them, and a horse for the man to cart his sheaves. A nice coil you've got yourself into, brother Elisha! You've slipped your cables and lost your reckoning!'

Elisha got up, lifted his coat which he had been using for a pillow, unfolded it, got out his snuff-box and took a pinch, thinking that it might perhaps clear his thoughts.

But no! He thought and thought, and came to no conclusion. He ought to be going; and yet pity held him back. He did not know what to do. He refolded his coat and put it under his head again. He lay thus for a long time, till the cocks had already crowed once: then he was quite drowsy. And suddenly it seemed as if some one had roused him. He saw that he was dressed for the journey, with the sack on his back and the staff in his hand, and the gate stood ajar so that he could just squeeze through. He was about to pass out, when his sack caught against the fence on one side; he tried to free it, but then his leg-band caught on the other side and came undone. He pulled at the sack, and saw that it had not caught on the fence, but that the little girl was holding it and crying, 'Bread, daddy, bread!'

He looked at his foot, and there was the tiny boy holding him by the leg-band, while the master of the hut and the old woman were looking at him through the window.

Elisha awoke, and said to himself in an audible voice:

'To-morrow I will redeem their cornfield, and will buy them a horse, and flour to last till the harvest, and a cow for the little ones; or else while I go to seek the Lord beyond the sea, I may lose Him in myself.'

Then Elisha fell asleep, and slept till morning. He awoke

early, and going to the rich peasant redeemed both the cornfield and the meadow land. He bought a scythe (for that also had been sold) and brought it back with him. Then he sent the man to mow, and himself went into the village. He heard that there was a horse and cart for sale at the public-house, and he struck a bargain with the owner and bought them. Then he bought a sack of flour, put it in the cart, and went to see about a cow. As he was going along he overtook two women talking as they went. Though they spoke the Little-Russian dialect, he understood what they were saying.

'At first, it seems, they did not know him; they thought he was just an ordinary man. He came in to ask for a drink of water, and then he remained. Just think of the things he has bought for them! Why they say he bought a horse and cart for them at the publican's, only this morning! There are not many such men in the world. It's worth while going to have a look at him.'

Elisha heard and understood that he was being praised, and he did not go to buy the cow, but returned to the inn, paid for the horse, harnessed it, drove up to the hut, and got out. The people in the hut were astonished when they saw the horse. They thought it might be for them, but dared not ask. The man came out to open the gate.

'Where did you get a horse from, grandfather?' he asked.

'Why, I bought it,' said Elisha. 'It was going cheap. Go and cut some grass and put it in the manger for it to eat during the night. And take in the sack'.

The man unharnessed the horse, and carried the sack into the barn. Then he mowed some grass and put it in the manger. Everybody lay down to sleep. Elisha went outside and lay by the roadside. That evening he took his bag out with him. When every one was asleep, he got up, packed and fastened his bag, wrapped the linen bands

round his legs, put on his shoes and coat, and set off to follow Efim.

VII

When Elisha had walked rather more than three miles it began to grow light. He sat down under a tree, opened his bag, counted his money, and found he had only seventeen roubles and twenty kopeks left.

'Well,' thought he, 'it is no use trying to cross the sea with this. If I beg my way it may be worse than not going at all. Friend Efim will get to Jerusalem without me, and will place a candle at the shrines in my name. As for me, I'm afraid I shall never fulfil my vow in this life. I must be thankful it was made to a merciful Master, and to one who pardons sinners.'

Elisha rose, jerked his bag well up on his shoulders, and turned back. Not wishing to be recognized by any one, he made a circuit to avoid the village, and walked briskly homeward. Coming from home the way had seemed difficult to him, and he had found it hard to keep up with Efim, but now on his return journey, God helped him to get over the ground so that he hardly felt fatigue. Walking seemed like child's play. He went along swinging his staff, and did his forty to fifty miles a day.

When Elisha reached home the harvest was over. His family were delighted to see him again, and all wanted to know what had happened: Why and how he had been left behind? And why he had returned without reaching Jerusalem? But Elisha did not tell them.

'It was not God's will that I should get there,' said he. 'I lost my money on the way, and lagged behind my companion. Forgive me, for the Lord's sake!'

Elisha gave his old wife what money he had left. Then he questioned them about home affairs. Everything was going on well; all the work had been done, nothing neglected, and all were living in peace and concord.

Efim's family heard of his return the same day, and came for news of their old man ; and to them Elisha gave the same answers.

'Efim is a fast walker. We parted three days before St. Peter's day, and I meant to catch him up again, but all sorts of things happened. I lost my money, and had no means to get any further, so I turned back.'

The folks were astonished that so sensible a man should have acted so foolishly : should have started and not got to his destination, and should have squandered all his money. They wondered at it for a while, and then forgot all about it ; and Elisha forgot it too. He set to work again on his homestead. With his son's help he cut wood for fuel for the winter. He and the women threshed the corn. Then he mended the thatch on the outhouses, put the bees under cover, and handed over to his neighbour the ten hives he had sold him in spring, and all the swarms that had come from them. His wife tried not to tell how many swarms there had been from these hives, but Elisha knew well enough from which there had been swarms and from which not. And instead of ten, he handed over seventeen swarms to his neighbour. Having got everything ready for the winter, Elisha sent his son away to find work, while he himself took to platting shoes of bark, and hollowing out logs for hives.

VIII

All that day while Elisha stopped behind in the hut with the sick people, Efim waited for him. He only went on a little way before he sat down. He waited and waited, had a nap, woke up again, and again sat waiting ; but his comrade did not come. He gazed till his eyes ached. The sun was already sinking behind a tree and still no Elisha was to be seen.

'Perhaps he has passed me,' thought Efim, 'or perhaps some one gave him a lift and he drove by while I slept, and

did not see me. But how could he help seeing me? One can see so far here in the steppe. Shall I go back? Suppose he is on in front, we shall then miss each other completely and it will be still worse. I had better go on, and we shall be sure to meet where we put up for the night.'

He came to a village, and told the watchman, if an old man of a certain description came along, to bring him to the hut where Efim stopped. But Elisha did not turn up that night. Efim went on, asking all he met whether they had not seen a little, bald-headed, old man? No one had seen such a traveller. Efim wondered, but went on alone, saying :

'We shall be sure to meet in Odessa, or on board the ship,' and he did not trouble more about it.

On the way, he came across a pilgrim wearing a priest's coat, with long hair and a skull-cap such as priests wear. This pilgrim had been to Mount Athos, and was now going to Jerusalem for the second time. They both stopped at the same place one night, and, having met, they travelled on together.

They got safely to Odessa, and there had to wait three days for a ship. Many pilgrims from many different parts were in the same case. Again Efim asked about Elisha, but no one had seen him.

Efim got himself a foreign passport, which cost him five roubles. He paid forty roubles for a return ticket to Jerusalem, and bought a supply of bread and herrings for the voyage.

The pilgrim began explaining to Efim how he might get on to the ship without paying his fare; but Efim would not listen. 'No, I came prepared to pay, and I shall pay,' said he.

The ship was freighted, and the pilgrims went on board, Efim and his new comrade among them. The anchors were

weighed, and the ship put out to sea.

All day they sailed smoothly, but towards night a wind arose, rain came on, and the vessel tossed about and shipped water. The people were frightened: the women wailed and screamed, and some of the weaker men ran about the ship looking for shelter. Efím too was frightened, but he would not show it, and remained at the place on deck where he had settled down when first he came on board, beside some old men from Tambóf. There they sat silent, all night and all next day, holding on to their sacks. On the third day it grew calm; and on the fifth day they anchored at Constantinople. Some of the pilgrims went on shore to visit the Church of St. Sophia, now held by the Turks. Efím remained on the ship, and only bought some white bread. They lay there for twenty-four hours, and then put to sea again. At Smyrna they stopped again; and at Alexandria; but at last they arrived safely at Jaffa, where all the pilgrims had to disembark. From there still it was more than forty miles by road to Jerusalem. When disembarking the people were again much frightened. The ship was high, and the people were dropped into boats, which rocked so much that it was easy to miss them and fall into the water. A couple of men did get a wetting, but at last all were safely landed.

They went on on foot, and at noon on the third day reached Jerusalem. They stopped outside the town, at the Russian inn, where their passports were endorsed. Then, after dinner, Efím visited the Holy Places with his companion, the pilgrim. It was not the time when they could be admitted to the Holy Sepulchre, but they went to the Patriarchate. All the pilgrims assembled there. The women were separated from the men, who were all told to sit in a circle, barefoot. Then a monk came in with a towel to wash their feet. He washed, wiped, and then kissed their feet, and did this to every one in the

circle. Effim's feet were washed and kissed, with the rest. He stood through vespers and matins, prayed, placed candles at the shrines, handed in booklets inscribed with his parent's names, that they might be mentioned in the church prayers. Here at the Patriarchate food and wine were given them. Next morning they went to the cell of Mary of Egypt, where she had lived doing penance. Here too they placed candles and had prayers read. From there they went to Abraham's Monastery, and saw the place where Abraham intended to slay his son as an offering to God. Then they visited the spot where Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene, and the Church of James, the Lord's brother. The pilgrim showed Effim all these places, and told him how much money to give at each place. At mid-day they returned to the inn and had dinner. As they were preparing to lie down and rest, the pilgrim cried out, and began to search his clothes, feeling them all over.

'My purse has been stolen, there were twenty-three roubles in it,' said he, 'two ten-rouble notes and the rest in change.'

He sighed and lamented a great deal, but as there was no help for it, they lay down to sleep.

IX

As Effim lay there, he was assailed by temptation.

'No one has stolen any money from this pilgrim,' thought he, 'I do not believe he had any. He gave none away anywhere, though he made me give, and even borrowed a rouble of me.'

This thought had no sooner crossed his mind, than Effim rebuked himself, saying: 'What right have I to judge a man? It is a sin. I will think no more about it.' But as soon as his thoughts began to wander, they turned again to the pilgrim: how interested he seemed to be in money, and how unlikely it sounded when he declared that his purse had been stolen.

'He never had any money,' thought Efim. 'It's all an invention.'

Towards evening they got up, and went to midnight Mass at the great Church of the Resurrection, where the Lord's Sepulchre is. The pilgrim kept close to Efim and went with him everywhere. They came to the Church ; a great many pilgrims were there ; some Russians and some of other nationalities: Greeks, Armenians, Turks, and Syrians. Efim entered the Holy Gates with the crowd. A monk led them past the Turkish sentinels, to the place where the Saviour was taken down from the cross and anointed, and where candles were burning in nine great candlesticks. The monk showed and explained everything. Efim offered a candle there. Then the monk led Efim to the right, up the steps to Golgotha, to the place where the cross had stood. Efim prayed there. Then they showed him the cleft where the ground had been rent asunder to its nethermost depths ; then the place where Christ's hands and feet were nailed to the cross ; then Adam's tomb, where the blood of Christ had dripped on to Adam's bones. Then they showed him the stone on which Christ sat when the crown of thorns was placed on His head ; then the post to which Christ was bound when He was scourged. Then Efim saw the stone with two holes for Christ's feet. They were going to show him something else, but there was a stir in the crowd, and the people all hurried to the church of the Lord's Sepulchre itself. The Latin Mass had just finished there, and the Russian Mass was beginning. And Efim went with the crowd to the tomb cut in the rock.

He tried to get rid of the pilgrim, against whom he was still sinning in his mind, but the pilgrim would not leave him, but went with him to the Mass at the Holy Sepulchre. They tried to get to the front, but were too late. There was such a crowd that it was impossible to move either backwards or forwards. Efim stood looking in front

of him, praying, and every now and then feeling for his purse. He was in two minds: sometimes he thought that the pilgrim was deceiving him, and then again he thought that if the pilgrim spoke the truth and his purse had really been stolen, the same thing might happen to himself.

X

Efim stood there gazing into the little chapel in which was the Holy Sepulchre itself with thirty-six lamps burning above it. As he stood looking over the people's heads, he saw something that surprised him. Just beneath the lamps in which the sacred fire burns, and in front of every one, Efim saw an old man in a grey coat, whose bald, shining head was just like Elisha Bódrof.

'It is like him,' thought Efím, 'but it cannot be Elisha. He could not have got ahead of me. The ship before ours started a week sooner. He could not have caught that; and he was not on ours, for I saw every pilgrim on board.'

Hardly had Efim thought this, when the little old man began to pray, and bowed three times: once forwards to God, then once on each side—to the brethren. And as he turned his head to the right, Efím recognized him. It was Elisha Bódrof himself, with his dark, curly beard turning grey at the cheeks, with his brows, his eyes and nose, and his expression of face. Yes, it was he!

Efim was very pleased to have found his comrade again, and wondered how Elisha had got ahead of him.

'Well done, Elisha!' thought he. 'See how he has pushed ahead. He must have come across some one who showed him the way. When we get out, I will find him, get rid of this fellow in the skull-cap, and keep to Elisha. Perhaps he will show me how to get to the front also.'

Efim kept looking out, so as not to lose sight of Elisha. But when the Mass was over, the crowd began to sway, pushing forward to kiss the tomb, and pushed Efím aside. He was again seized with fear lest his purse should be stolen.

Pressing it with his hand, he began elbowing through the crowd, anxious only to get out. When he reached the open, he went about for a long time searching for Elisha both outside and in the Church itself. In the cells of the Church he saw many people of all kinds, eating, and drinking wine, and reading and sleeping there. But Elisha was nowhere to be seen. So Efím returned to the inn without having found his comrade. That evening the pilgrim in the skull-cap did not turn up. He had gone off without repaying the rouble, and Efím was left alone.

The next day Efím went to the Holy Sepulchre again, with an old man from Tambóf, whom he had met on the ship. He tried to get to the front, but was again pressed back ; so he stood by a pillar and prayed. He looked before him, and there in the foremost place under the lamps, close to the very Sepulchre of the Lord, stood Elisha, with his arms spread out like a priest at the altar, and with his bald head all shining.

‘Well, now,’ thought Efím, ‘I won’t lose him !’

He pushed forward to the front, but when he got there, there was no Elisha : he had evidently gone away.

Again on the third day Efím looked, and saw at the Sepulchre, in the holiest place, Elisha standing in the sight of all men, his arms outspread, and his eyes gazing upwards as if he saw something above. And his bald head was all shining.

‘Well, this time,’ thought Efím, ‘he shall not escape me ! I will go and stand at the door, then we can’t miss one another !’

Efím went out and stood by the door till past noon. Every one had passed out, but still Elisha did not appear.

Efím remained six weeks in Jerusalem, and went everywhere : to Bethlehem, and to Bethany, and to the Jordan. He had a new shirt sealed at the Holy Sepulchre for his burial, and he took a bottle of water from the Jordan,

and some holy earth, and bought candles that had been lit at the sacred flame. In eight places he inscribed names to be prayed for, and he spent all his money, except just enough to get home with. Then he started homeward. He walked to Jaffa, sailed thence to Odessa, and walked home from there on foot.

XI

Efim travelled the same road he had come by; and as he drew nearer home his former anxiety returned, as to how affairs were getting on in his absence. 'Much water flows away in a year,' the proverb says. It takes a lifetime to build up a homestead, but not long to ruin it, thought he. And he wondered how his son had managed without him, what sort of spring they were having, how the cattle had wintered, and whether the cottage was well finished. When Efim came to the district where he had parted from Elisha the summer before, he could hardly believe that the people living there were the same. The year before they had been starving, but now they were living in comfort. The harvest had been good, and the people had recovered, and had forgotten their former misery.

One evening Efim reached the very place where Elisha had remained behind; and as he entered the village, a little girl in a white smock ran out of a hut.

'Daddy, daddy, come to our house!'

Efim meant to pass on, but the little girl would not let him. She took hold of his coat, laughing, and pulled him towards the hut, where a woman with a small boy came out into the porch and beckoned to him.

'Come in, grandfather,' she said. 'Have supper and spend the night with us.'

So Efim went in.

'I may as well ask about Elisha,' he thought. 'I fancy this is the very hut he went to for a drink of water.'

The woman helped him off with the bag he carried, and

gave him water to wash his face. Then she made him sit down to table, and set milk, curd-cakes and porridge before him. Efim thanked her, and praised her for her kindness to a pilgrim. The woman shook her head.

'We have good reason to welcome pilgrims,' she said. 'It was a pilgrim who showed us what life is. We were living forgetful of God, and God punished us almost to death. We reached such a pass last summer, that we all lay ill and helpless with nothing to eat. And we should have died, but that God sent an old man to help us—just such a one as you. He came in one day to ask for a drink of water, saw the state we were in, took pity on us, and remained with us. He gave us food and drink, and set us on our feet again; and he redeemed our land, and bought a cart and horse and gave them to us.'

Here the old woman entering the hut, interrupted the younger one and said :

'We don't know whether it was a man, or an angel from God. He loved us all, pitied us all, and went away without telling us his name, so that we don't even know whom to pray for. I can see it all before me now! There I lay waiting for death, when in comes a bald-headed old man. He was not anything much to look at, and he asked for a drink of water. I, sinner that I am, thought to myself : "What does he come prowling about here for?" And just think what he did! As soon as he saw us, he let down his bag, on this very spot, and untied it.'

Here the little girl joined in.

'No, Granny,' said she, 'first he put it down here in the middle of the hut, and then he lifted it on to the bench.'

And they began discussing and recalling all he had said and done, where he sat and slept, and what he had said to each of them.

At night the peasant himself came home on his horse, and he too began to tell about Elisha and how he had lived

with them.

'Had he not come we should all have died in our sins. We were dying in despair, murmuring against God and man. But he set us on our feet again; and through him we learned to know God, and to believe that there is good in man. May the Lord bless him! We used to live like animals; he made human beings of us.'

After giving Efim food and drink, they showed him where he was to sleep; and lay down to sleep themselves.

But though Efim lay down, he could not sleep. He could not get Elisha out of his mind, but remembered how he had seen him three times at Jerusalem, standing in the foremost place.

'So that is how he got ahead of me,' thought Efim.

God may or may not have accepted my pilgrimage, but He has certainly accepted his!'

Next morning Efim bade farewell to the people, who put some patties in his sack before they went to their work, and he continued his journey.

XII

Efim had been away just a year, and it was spring again when he reached home one evening. His son was not at home, but had gone to the public-house, and when he came back, he had had a drop too much. Efim began questioning him. Everything showed that the young fellow had been unsteady during his father's absence. The money had all been wrongly spent, and the work had been neglected. The father began to upbraid the son; and the son answered rudely.

'Why didn't you stay and look after it yourself?' he said. 'You go off, taking the money with you, and now you demand it of me!'

The old man grew angry, and struck his son.

In the morning Efim went to the village Elder to complain of his son's conduct. As he was passing Elisha's

house, his friend's wife greeted him from the porch.

'How do you do, neighbour,' she said. 'How do you do, dear friend? Did you get to Jerusalem safely?'

Efim stopped.

'Yes, thank God,' he said. 'I have been there, I lost sight of your old man, but I hear he got home safely.'

The old woman was fond of talking:

'Yes, neighbour, he has come back,' said she. 'He's been back a long time. Soon after Assumption, I think it was, he returned. And we were glad the Lord had sent him back to us! We were dull without him. We can't expect much work from him any more, his years for work are past; but still he is the head of the household and it's more cheerful when he's at home. And how glad our lad was! He said, "It's like being without sunlight, when father's away!" It was dull without him, dear friend. We're fond of him, and take good care of him.'

'Is he at home now?'

'He is, dear friend. He is with his bees. He is hiving the swarms. He says they are swarming well this year. The Lord has given such strength to the bees that my husband doesn't remember the like. "The Lord is not rewarding us according to our sins," he says. Come in, dear neighbour, he will be so glad to see you again.'

Efim passed through the passage into the yard and to the apiary, to see Elisha. There was Elisha in his grey coat, without any face-net or gloves, standing under the birch trees, looking upwards, his arms stretched out and his bald head shining, as Efim had seen him at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem: and above him the sunlight shone through the birches as the flames of fire had done in the holy place, and the golden bees flew round his head like a halo, and did not sting him.

Efim stopped. The old woman called to her husband.

'Here's your friend come,' she cried.

Elisha looked round with a pleased face, and came towards Efim, gently picking bees out of his own beard.

‘Good-day, neighbour, good-day, dear friend. Did you get there safely?’

‘My feet walked there, and I have brought you some water from the river Jordan. You must come to my house for it. But whether the Lord accepted my efforts. . . .’

‘Well the Lord be thanked! May Christ bless you!’ said Elisha.

Efim was silent for a while, and then added:

‘My feet have been there, but whether my soul, or another’s, has been there more truly. . . .’

‘That’s God’s business, neighbour, God’s business,’ interrupted Elisha.

‘On my return journey I stopped at the hut where you remained behind. . . .’

Elisha was alarmed, and said hurriedly:

‘God’s business, neighbour, God’s business! Come into the cottage, I’ll give you some of our honey.’ And Elisha changed the conversation, and talked of home affairs.

Efim sighed, and did not speak to Elisha of the people in the hut, nor of how he had seen him in Jerusalem. But he now understood that the best way to keep one’s vows to God and to do His will, is for each man while he lives to show love and do good to others.

IV

F. W. BAIN

This story of the Pilgrim is told by a king’s companion to a princess. It appears in Professor Bain’s “A Digit of the Moon” which professes to be a translation of an old Sanskrit MS. handed to Professor Bain by a Brahmin friend of his, when the latter lay on his deathbed stricken with plague. ‘A Digit of the Moon’ was first published in 1898. Professor Bain, the author, who tries to coax us into the belief that ‘A Digit of the Moon’ is a translation—was born in 1863. He was educated at Westminster School

and Christ Church College, Oxford. For many years Professor Bain lectured in History and Economics at the Deccan College, Poona ; later, he became the Principal of the College. The study of Sanskrit was one of his hobbies. In 'A Digit of the Moon' and other books with romantic titles such as 'A Heifer of the Dawn', 'A Draught of the Blue', 'An Echo of the Spheres', Professor Bain reproduces the quaint old-world style of story-telling in Sanskrit.

'On the Bank of the Ganges' is a story told at the Court of Princess Anagrágá. This Princess is a kind of Atalanta, or La Belle Dame sans Merci (The Lovely Lady without Pity). She engages in a duel of wits with the young men who come in shoals to ask for her hand. The Princess is 'a lady of superhuman intelligence', even as she is inconceivably beautiful. She invites her infatuated lovers to propose riddles to her, and when she has solved the riddles, she dismisses the young men, or keeps them about her as slaves so that they may desire her for ever and desire her in vain. The battle of wits lasts for 21 days, during which time the Princess entertains the suitors. The king in our story is also an infatuated young man, but he has a wise companion who, for the time being, speaks for the king and tells the Princess one story every day which contains some problem or puzzle. Of these riddling stories 7 have been told. 'On the Bank of the Ganges' is the 8th story in the cycle.

Professor Bain has designed a framework for 'A Digit of the Moon' which is like that of the Arabian Nights Entertainments or the Wétal Panchawimshiká—a parallel which is mentioned by the author himself. He dovetails in his book a number of stories which grow out of one principal story. It is this principal story which supplies the occasion for the narration of other stories. Like Meredith (Punishment of Khpil) Professor Bain imitates the Eastern style of writing. Meredith writes after the manner of Persian story-tellers, Professor Bain imitates the style of Sanskrit story-tellers. 'On the Bank of the Ganges' pretends to be a translation, but the original MS. exists only in the imagination of the author. The gift of the MS. which was in the possession of a Brahmin who died of plague, leaving no one behind—the whole of this is an elaborate hoax. Nevertheless, though writing in a manner which is foreign to him, Professor Bain succeeds in creating an illusion that the story—A Digit of the Moon including On the Bank of the Ganges—is the translation of an original Sanskrit MS. It is a clever intellectual feat comparable to the dance on a tight rope. The subject matter of the story—bathing in the Ganges to expiate a deadly sin—has a genuine Eastern flavour. The three meetings of the pilgrim with the Páshupata and Kápalika and the devotee on the banks of the Nermada, casting flowers into the river and calling it by its name, lastly, the conversation between Yama and Chitrugupta—all these recall Hindu ways of life and Hindu beliefs. Further, Professor Bain expends no end of labour in getting right the ideas, images, similes and other rhetorical devices which are the distinguishing marks of the Sanskrit style of writing. Thus the simile which the Páshupata ascetic employs—The Ganges resembles this brook no more than Mount Méru resembles an ant-hill—and the two others employed by the Kápalika—Is a jackal

a *dion*, or a *Chándála* a Brahmin?—are characteristic of Sanskrit literature. Again, the sun beating on the pilgrim's head is compared to the thunderbolt of Indra. And, lest anyone should object that the style is far more clear, direct, and simple than we expect to meet with in Sanskrit Literature, Professor Bain tells us in his preface that the Sanskrit story he is translating differs from the general run of classical Sanskrit productions in two very striking particulars—the simplicity of the style and the originality of the matter. The originality of the matter is a point which may be conceded at once. The stupid Brahmin is certainly an original creation. When he reaches the bank of a mountain streamlet he says to himself: Doubtless this is the sacred Ganges. Again the quizzical humour which marks the speeches of the ascetics and the devotee is, one knows, the translator's peculiar gift. The moral of the story is not unlike that of Tolstoy's 'The Two Old Men.' It is put in the Princess's mouth—Men judge by the fallacious testimony of the senses, but the Gods judge by the heart.

Páshupata, a particular follower of Shiwa (Author's note).

Mount Meru, the highest mountain round which, according to Hindu belief, the sun and the moon and the planets revolve.

Kápálika, another sect of Shiwa-worshippers (Author's note).

Indra, the Lord of Heaven who like Jupiter hurls his thunderbolt at his enemies and kills them.

Yama, Judge of the dead and Chitragupta, his recorder, who keeps accounts of every man's actions. (Author's note).

Rasakósha, the king's companion. The word means 'a treasury of sentiments' and may be rendered as the author has rendered it—a treasury of taste, wit, literary sentiments or flavours.

ON THE BANK OF THE GANGES

Lady, there lived formerly in a certain country a very stupid Brahman householder, who inadvertently committed a deadly sin. And his spiritual adviser told him, that his guilt could be cleansed and his sin atoned for, only by going and spending the remainder of his life bathing in the Ganges. So he handed over his goods to his son, and set out, with his pot and staff, on his pilgrimage to the Ganges. And after travelling for some days, he came to the bank of a small mountain streamlet, whose waters in the hot season were all but dry. And he said to himself: Doubtless this is the sacred Ganges. So he took up his abode on the

banks of that stream, bathing every day in such water as he could find. And thus he remained for five years.

Then one day there passed by that way a Páshupata ascetic. And he said to the Brahman: My son, what are you doing here? So he replied: Reverend Sir, I am performing penance, for the expiation of sin, on the banks of the Ganges. Then the ascetic said: What has this miserable puddle to do with the Ganges? And the Brahman said: Is this, then, not the Ganges? And the ascetic laughed in his face, and said: Truly, old as I am, I did not think that there had been folly like this in the world. Wretched man, who has deluded you? The Ganges is hundreds of miles away, and resembles this contemptible brook no more than Mount Meru resembles an ant hill.

Then the Brahman said: Reverend Sir, I am much obliged to you. And taking his pot and staff, he went forward, till at length he came to a broad river. And he rejoiced greatly, saying: This must be the sacred Ganges. So he settled on its bank, and remained there for five years, bathing everyday in its waters. Then one day there came by a Kápálíka, who said to him: Why do you remain here, wasting precious time over a river of no account or sanctity, instead of going to the Ganges? But the Brahman was amazed, and said: And is this, then, not the Ganges? Then the Kápálíka replied: This is the Ganges! Is a jackal a lion, or a Chándála a Brahman? Sir, you are dreaming.

Then the Brahman said sorrowfully: Worthy Kápálíka, I am indebted to you. Fortunate was our meeting. And taking his pot and staff, he went forward, till at length he came to the Nermada. And thinking: Here, at last, is the sacred Ganges; he was overjoyed; and he remained on its banks for five years, bathing every day in its waters. But one day he observed on the bank near him, a pilgrim like himself, casting flowers into the river, and calling it by its name. So he went up to him and said; Sir, what is the name of this

river? And the pilgrim answered: Is it possible that you do not know the holy Nermada? Then the Brahman sighed deeply. And he said: Sir, I am enlightened by you. And he took his pot and staff, and went forward.

But he was now very old and feeble. And long penance had weakened his frame and exhausted his energies. And as he toiled on in the heat of the day over the burning earth, the sun beat on his head like the thunderbolt of Indra, and struck him with fever. Still he gathered himself together and struggled on, growing weaker and weaker day by day, till at last he got no further, but fell down and lay dying on the ground. But collecting all his remaining strength, with a last desperate effort he dragged himself up a low hill in front of him. And lo! there before him rolled the mighty stream of Ganges, with countless numbers of pilgrims doing penance on its banks and bathing in its stream. And in his agony he cried aloud! O Mother Ganges! alas! alas! I have pursued you all my life, and now I die here helpless in sight of you. So his heart broke, and he never reached its shore.

But when he got to the other world, Yama said to Chitrakupta: What is there down against him? And Chitrakupta said: I find against him a terrible sin. But that he has expiated by fifteen years' penance on the banks of the Ganges. Then that Brahman was amazed, and said: Lord, you are mistaken. I never reached the Ganges. And Yama smiled.

Now tell me, Princess, what did Yama mean by his smile? And Rasakôsha ceased. Then the Princess said: Yama is just, and cannot err: and Chitrakupta cannot be deceived. But what is this whole world but illusion! And just as penance performed in an improper spirit, even on the actual banks of the Ganges, would be no true penance, so that poor simple Brahman's penance, performed in the belief that he had reached the Ganges, was counted by that holy One as truly so performed. For men judge by the fallacious testimony of the senses, but the gods judge by the heart.

V

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

'The Red-Headed League' was published in 1891 along with other detective stories in a volume entitled 'The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.' Since its first publication in the '90s, the Adventures volume has been reprinted several times. The text in the present collection is reproduced from *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* published in October 1928. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born in 1859. He was educated at Edinburgh University, and practised as a doctor at Southsea between 1882-1890. Sir Arthur began his literary career with '*A Study in Scarlet*' (1887); he followed this up with '*The Sign of Four*' (1889), both detective stories, but it was with the publication of '*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*' that he had the world at his feet. This famous detective appeared as the central figure in many subsequent volumes of detective stories which Sir Arthur wrote—'*The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*' (1893), '*Return of Sherlock Holmes*' (1904), '*His Last Bow*' (1918), '*The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*' (1927). In course of time Sherlock Holmes has become a legend, and even the man in the street is familiar with his face and features; and the 'Dear Watson' style of address is almost as well-known as Dr. Johnson's 'Sir' in reply to Boswell's numerous questions. Englishmen are very proud of Sherlock Holmes and look upon him as a national possession to be dearly loved and cherished. Sir Arthur has written historical novels, such as '*Micah Clarke*' (1888) and '*The Refugees*' (1891). His is a versatile genius, for he has published a play and a poem—'*The Guards Came Through*' (1920). And everyone knows that he is interested in spiritualism.

The Red-Headed League is an admirably constructed story, and it is admirably told. It has the two essentials of a detective story—a crime enveloped in mystery and the detection of the crime which dissolves the mystery. Most ingeniously does Sir Arthur weave the tangled web of the story. In the beginning there is the puzzling advertisement of The Red-Headed League, at the end the authors of the advertisement are laid by their heels, and the puzzle is explained. Between these two extremes, there are the incidents of the chase when the criminal is being run to earth with clues, apparent and real, scattered along our way. The idea of the Red-Headed League is itself a piece of humorous invention which transforms as by a magic touch the sordid story of bank robbery into an ever-delightful detective story. In truth, there is all the difference in the world between a crude account of some sensational robbery such as appears in a newspaper column and a crime imagined by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle which forms fit subject-matter for a detective story. The writing of detective stories is an art, and no art grows to its full height when it is made to feed on the dry husks of reality. In addition to this craft of constructing a story in which the various parts are deftly put together, Sir Arthur has the gift of story-telling. In the Red-Headed League, he cleaves to the straight path, now exciting our suspense, now

relieving it partly, but keeping us on tenterhooks the whole time till we reach the end when the rogues are arrested and every link in the long chain of events stands out clear as daylight. There is no 'dilly-dallying' in Sir Arthur: he does not dawdle on the way, he introduces no superfluous detail. He is aware that in a detective story 'the true beauty is in mass and outline, not in irrelevant ornament without structural value' and conforms to the creed.

In the detection of crime Sir Arthur adopts Poe's method of logical reasoning and deduction. Sherlock Holmes is preternaturally acute. Even as he glances up and down at some person, he sizes him up and the numerous conclusions he draws from the facts under observation almost take away the reader's breath. He feels helpless and stupid, as does 'Dear Watson'. He knows he has eyes and yet he has not seen what Sherlock Holmes has seen. One example of this process of deduction at a breathless pace will be found in the Red-Headed League when Holmes, looking at Jabez Wilson, gathers a rich harvest of conclusions from odds and ends—the shiny cuff, the breastpin, the tattooed fish—which one is likely to leave unnoticed. Such a method of detecting crime by straightforward reasoning gives the detective story an intellectual interest. The appeal is less to the heart than to the head. As in Poe, again, the uncannily clever detective principal is provided by Sir Arthur with a confidant, a familiar, a companion. Watson is to Holmes what Boswell was to Dr. Johnson. He makes a door-mat of himself and adores his chief. Humbly, gingerly, he tries to follow in the footsteps of Holmes, and when his clever friend observes things and deduces conclusions from the facts under his observation, he too makes the same attempt. But he has to give it up in despair, and confess that he is dense. Holmes overwhelms him with clear, definite conclusions: with unerring skill he hits the nail on the head in almost every case he undertakes to investigate. In the presence of the brilliant detective flashing to his goal with the swiftness of lightning, Watson appears exceedingly small. Nevertheless, the association of Watson with Holmes is artistically helpful in a variety of ways. In the first place, he is an excellent foil. His smallness adds many cubits to the stature of Holmes. Again, the dramatic interest of the story is enhanced by the fact that it is Watson who tells the story. It would be monotonous to the reader if the detective himself were to relate all the facts of the case, and, besides, he (the detective) would lay himself open to the charge of egoism. Further, the game of hide and seek which the author plays with the reader would be impossible without Watson. For Dr. Watson represents the dull, stupid reader who sees nothing, or sees very little. On the other hand, the detective sees everything and plans everything. It is the contrast presented between these two which gives the Red-Headed League its dramatic thrill of interest. All the same, Watson's humility, his sterling loyalty to his chief, his readiness to sacrifice everything to help his friend in his subtle investigations and daring arrests, his enthusiastic and just praise of Holmes—these together make up a winsome personality. We like him for himself, and again because Holmes trusts him absolutely, and has a genuine affection for him, though he feels himself superior to Watson and does show it occasionally.

Sir Arthur has very carefully individualized Sherlock Holmes. The detective is a man of culture and refinement. He quotes Latin proverbs, employs many French words—*partie carrée*, *ennui*—admires Flaubert and Meredith, and dotes on music. He appreciates German music more than French or Italian music, and for days on end lounges in his arm-chair 'amid his improvisations and black-letter editions.' Extremes meet in the character of Sherlock Holmes. He is courageous and quick, a man of devouring energy, alert, eager, acute, but he is a victim of ennui: his life is spent, he says, in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. 'This relentless keen-witted ready-handed criminal agent'—as Dr. Watson describes him—has physical peculiarities to match the eccentric make-up of his character. He has a hawk-like nose, long thin fingers, languid dreamy eyes which shine brightly when he is investigating something: finally, there is his clay-pipe. The complexity of a problem is to be measured by the pipes he smokes (It is quite a three-pipe problem). It is no wonder such a quaint figure as this appealed at once to the popular mind. Of course, Sherlock Holmes is pontifical, so cocksure sometimes, as to get on the nerves of the reader; very often he is posing for effect, striking an attitude. He seems to exult in his own superiority. But even these defects of his character helped rather than hindered his immense popularity.

Sir Arthur writes in a clear and vigorous style. He has fashioned an instrument for story-telling which is perfectly adapted to his purpose. The words and phrases in the Red-Headed League seem to race and run with the speed of the narrative. The author expresses himself with amazing ease and naturalness. This simplicity and directness of style are important elements in the charm which this story exercises over the minds of men. But the humour in it counts for more. This humour runs like an undercurrent throughout the story. It is perfectly natural—as arising out of a situation—when the pawnbroker copying the Encyclopædia, having finished 'Architecture' and 'Attica' hoped to get on to the B's and is curtly informed that The Red-Headed League is dissolved. Again, when all the Red-Headed men in London assemble in response to the advertisement, we have an exceedingly humorous situation and Sir Arthur does complete justice to it. Humour and romance are mingled in the words addressed to Inspector Jones by Clay.—'I beg that you will not touch me with your filthy hands. You may not be aware that I have royal blood in my veins.....' There is self-conscious humour in Holmes's observation—'I make a mistake in explaining'—for the pawnbroker who was earlier taken aback completely by Holmes's remarks coolly says, after the causes are explained, 'I thought you had done something clever, but I see there was nothing in it after all.' But on occasions the author seems 'to chaff his readers and himself.' One example of this occurs when Sherlock Holmes says: 'For strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself which is *always* far more daring than any effort of the imagination.' Another instance will be found in the description of the tugging of Jabez Wilson's hair as a consequence of which he

yells with pain. As someone has said: Sir Arthur never took his success seriously. He is in fact aware of the 'pontifical' 'cocksure attitude' of Sherlock Holmes. He is chaffing his readers and himself.

Omne ignotum pro magnifico, whatever is unknown is held to be magnificent.

Employé, servant, person employed for wages.

Sarasate, (1844-1908), one of the greatest of modern violinists. He was a Spaniard and his playing, we are told, was characterized by great brilliancy of execution and charm of style.

He'll crack a crib, break into a house.

Partie carrée, party of four.

Derbies, handcuffs.

Ennui, mental weariness from lack of occupation or interest.

L'homme c'est rien—l'œuvre c'est tout, Man is nothing—Work is everything.

Gustave Flaubert, (1821-1880), a famous French novelist, the author of 'Madame Bovary'

George Sand, (1804-1876), the assumed name of Lucile Aurore Dudevant. Like Flaubert, a celebrated French novelist.

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE

I had called upon my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, one day in the autumn of last year, and found him in deep conversation with a very stout, florid-faced, elderly gentleman, with fiery red hair. With an apology for my intrusion, I was about to withdraw, when Holmes pulled me abruptly into the room, and closed the door behind me.

"You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson," he said cordially.

"I was afraid that you were engaged."

"So I am. Very much so."

"Then I can wait in the next room."

"Not at all. This gentleman, Mr. Wilson, has been my partner and helper in many of my successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the utmost use to me in yours also."

The stout gentleman half rose from his chair, and gave a bob of greeting, with a quick little questioning glance from his small, fat-encircled eyes.

"Try the settee," said Holmes, relapsing into his arm-chair, and putting his finger-tips together, as was his custom when in judicial moods. "I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of everyday life. You have shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures."

"Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me," I observed.

"You will remember that I remarked the other day, just before we went into the very simple problem presented by Miss Mary Sutherland, that for strange effects and extraordinary combinations we must go to life itself, which is always far more daring than any effort of the imagination."

"A proposition which I took the liberty of doubting".

"You did, Doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for otherwise I shall keep piling fact upon fact on you, until your reason breaks down under them and acknowledges me to be right. Now, Mr. Jabez Wilson here has been good enough to call upon me this morning, and to begin a narrative which promises to be one of the most singular which I have listened to for some time. You have heard me remark that the strangest and most unique things are very often connected not with the larger but with the smaller crimes, and occasionally, indeed, where there is room for doubt whether any positive crime has been committed. As far as I have heard, it is impossible for me to say whether the present case is an instance of crime or not, but the course of events is certainly among the most singular that I have ever listened to. Perhaps, Mr. Wilson, you would have the great kindness to recommence your narrative. I ask you not merely because my friend Dr. Watson has not heard the opening part, but also because the peculiar nature

of the story makes me anxious to have every possible detail from your lips. As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which occur to my memory. In the present instance I am forced to admit that the facts are, to the best of my belief, unique ”.

The portly client puffed out his chest with an appearance of some little pride, and pulled a dirty and wrinkled newspaper from the inside pocket of his greatcoat. As he glanced down the advertisement column, with his head thrust forward, and the paper flattened out upon his knee, I took a good look at the man, and endeavoured after the fashion of my companion to read the indications which might be presented by his dress or appearance.

I did not gain very much, however, by my inspection. Our visitor bore every mark of being an average commonplace British tradesman, obese, pompous, and slow. He wore rather baggy grey shepherd's check trousers, a not overclean black frockcoat, unbuttoned in the front, and a drab waistcoat with a heavy brassy Albert chain, and a square pierced bit of metal dangling down as an ornament. A frayed top hat and a faded brown overcoat with a wrinkled velvet collar lay upon a chair beside him. Altogether, look as I would, there was nothing remarkable about the man save his blazing red head, and the expression of extreme chagrin and discontent upon his features.

Sherlock Holmes's quick eye took in my occupation, and he shook his head with a smile as he noticed my questioning glance. “Beyond the obvious fact that he has at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately, I can deduce nothing else ”.

Mr. Jabez Wilson started up in his chair, with his forefinger upon the paper, but his eyes upon my companion.

"How, in the name of good fortune, did you know all that, Mr. Holmes?" he asked. "How did you know, for example, that I did manual labour? It's as true as gospel, and I began as a ship's carpenter".

"Your hands, my dear sir. Your right hand is quite a size larger than your left. You have worked with it, and the muscles are more developed".

"Well, the snuff, then, and the Freemasonry?"

"I won't insult your intelligence by telling you how I read that, especially as rather against the strict rules of your order, you use an arc and compass breastpin".

"Ah, of course, I forgot that. But the writing?"

"What else can be indicated by that right cuff so very shiny for five inches, and the left one with the smooth patch near the elbow where you rest it upon the desk?"

"Well, but China?"

"The fish which you have tattooed immediately above your right wrist could only have been done in China. I have made a small study of tattoo marks, and have even contributed to the literature of the subject. The trick of staining the fishes' scales of a delicate pink is quite peculiar to China. When, in addition, I see a Chinese coin hanging from your watch-chain, the matter becomes even more simple".

Mr. Jabez Wilson laughed heavily. "Well, I never!" said he. "I thought at first you had done something clever, but I see that there was nothing in it after all".

"I begin to think, Watson," said Holmes, "that I made a mistake in explaining. '*Omne ignotum pro magnifico*', you know, and my poor little reputation, such as it is, will suffer shipwreck if I am so candid. Can you not find the advertisement, Mr. Wilson?"

"Yes, I have got it now", he answered, with his thick, red finger planted half-way down the column. "Here it is. That is what began it all. You just read it for yourself, sir"

I took the paper from him and read as follows :

"TO THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE.—On account of the bequest of the late Ezekiah Hopkins, of Lebanon, Penn., U. S. A., there is now another vacancy open which entitles a member of the League to a salary of four pounds a week for purely nominal services. All red-headed men who are sound in body and mind, and above the age of twenty-one years, are eligible. Apply in person on Monday, at eleven o'clock, to Duncan Ross, at the offices of the League, 7, Pope's Court, Fleet Street."

"What on earth does this mean?" I ejaculated, after I had twice read over the extraordinary announcement.

Holmes chuckled, and wriggled in his chair, as was his habit when in high spirits. "It is a little off the beaten track, isn't it?" said he. "And now, Mr. Wilson, off you go at scratch, and tell us all about yourself, your household, and the effect which this advertisement had upon your fortunes. You will first make a note, Doctor, of the paper and the date".

"It is *The Morning Chronicle*, of April 27, 1890. Just two months ago".

"Very good. Now, Mr. Wilson?"

"Well, it is just as I have been telling you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes", said Jabez Wilson, mopping his forehead. "I have a small pawnbroker's business at Coburg Square, near the City. It's not a very large affair, and of late years it has not done more than just give me a living. I used to be able to keep two assistants, but now I only keep one; and I would have a job to pay him, but that he is willing to come for half wages, so as to learn the business."

"What is the name of this obliging youth?" asked Sherlock Holmes.

"His name is Vincent Spaulding, and he's not such a youth either. It's hard to say his age. I should not wish a

smarter assistant, Mr. Holmes; and I know very well that he could better himself, and earn twice what I am able to give him. But after all, if he is satisfied, why should I put ideas in his head?"

"Why, indeed? You seem most fortunate in having an employé who comes under the full market price. It is not a common experience among employers in this age. I don't know that your assistant is not as remarkable as your advertisement."

"Oh, he has his faults, too," said Mr. Wilson. "Never was such a fellow for photography. Snapping away with a camera when he ought to be improving his mind, and then diving down into the cellar like a rabbit into its hole to develop his pictures. That is his main fault; but, on the whole, he's a good worker. There's no vice in him."

"He is still with you, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. He and a girl of fourteen, who does a bit of simple cooking, and keeps the place clean—that's all I have in the house, for I am a widower, and never had any family. We live very quietly, sir, the three of us; and we keep a roof over our heads, and pay our debts, if we do nothing more."

"The first thing that put us out was that advertisement. Spaulding, he came down into the office just this day eight weeks with this very paper in his hand, and he says:

"'I wish to the Lord, Mr. Wilson, that I was a red-headed man.'

"'Why that?' I asks.

"'Why,' says he, 'here's another vacancy on the League of the Red-headed Men. It's worth quite a little fortune to any man who gets it, and I understand that there are more vacancies than there are men, so that the trustees are at their wits' end what to do with the money. If my hair would only change colour, here's a nice little crib all ready for me to step into.'

“‘Why, what is it, then?’ I asked. You see, Mr. Holmes, I am a very stay-at-home man, and, as my business came to me instead of my having to go to it, I was often weeks on end without putting my foot over the doormat. In that way I didn’t know much of what was going on outside, and I was always glad of a bit of news.

“‘Have you never heard of the League of the Red-headed Men?’ he asked, with his eyes open.

“‘Never.’

“‘Why, I wonder at that, for you are eligible yourself for one of the vacancies.’

“‘And what are they worth?’ I asked.

“‘Oh, merely a couple of hundred a year, but the work is slight, and it need not interfere much with one’s other occupations.’

“‘Well, you can easily think that that made me prick up my ears, for the business had not been over good for some years, and an extra couple of hundred would have been very handy.

“‘Tell me all about it,’ said I.

“‘Well,’ said he, showing me the advertisement, ‘you can see for yourself that the League has a vacancy, and there is the address where you should apply for particulars. As far as I can make out, the League was founded by an American millionaire, Ezekiah Hopkins, who was very peculiar in his ways. He was himself red-headed, and he had a great sympathy for all red-headed men; so, when he died, it was found that he had left his enormous fortune in the hands of trustees, with instructions to apply the interest to the providing of easy berths to men whose hair is of that colour. From all I hear it is splendid pay, and very little to do.’

“‘But,’ said I, ‘there would be millions of red-headed men who would apply.’

“‘Not so many as you might think,’ he answered. ‘You see, it is really confined to Londoners, and to grown men.’

This American had started from London when he was young, and he wanted to do the old town a good turn. Then, again, I have heard it is no use your applying if your hair is light red, or dark red, or anything but real, bright, blazing, fiery red. Now, if you cared to apply, Mr. Wilson, you would just walk in; but perhaps it would hardly be worth your while to put yourself out of the way for the sake of a few hundred pounds.'

"Now, it is a fact, gentlemen, as you may see for yourselves, that my hair is of a very full and rich tint, so that it seemed to me that, if there was to be any competition in the matter, I stood as good a chance as any man that I had ever met. Vincent Spaulding seemed to know so much about it that I thought he might prove useful, so I just ordered him to put up the shutters for the day, and to come right away with me. He was very willing to have a holiday, so we shut the business up, and started off for the address that was given us in the advertisement.

"I never hope to see such a sight as that again, Mr. Holmes. From north, south, east, and west every man who had a shade of red in his hair had tramped into the City to answer the advertisement. Fleet Street was choked with red-headed folk, and Pope's Court looked like a coster's orange barrow. I should not have thought there were so many in the whole country as were brought together by that single advertisement. Every shade of colour they were—straw, lemon, orange, brick, Irish-setter, liver, clay; but as Spaulding said, there were not many who had the real vivid flame-coloured tint. When I saw how many were waiting, I would have given it up in despair; but Spaulding would not hear of it. How he did it I could not imagine, but he pushed and pulled and butted until he got me through the crowd, and right up to the steps which led to the office. There was a double stream upon the stair, some going up in hope, and some coming back dejected;

but we wedged in as well as we could, and soon found ourselves in the office."

"Your experience has been a most entertaining one," remarked Holmes, as his client paused and refreshed his memory with a huge pinch of snuff. "Pray continue your very interesting statement."

"There was nothing in the office but a couple of wooden chairs and a deal table, behind which sat a small man, with a head that was even redder than mine. He said a few words to each candidate as he came up, and then he always managed to find some fault in them which would disqualify them. Getting a vacancy did not seem to be such a very easy matter after all. However, when our turn came, the little man was more favourable to me than to any of the others, and he closed the door as we entered, so that he might have a private word with us.

" 'This is Mr. Jabez Wilson,' said my assistant, and he is willing to fill a vacancy in the League."

" 'And he is admirably suited for it', the other answered. 'He has every requirement. I cannot recall when I have seen anything so fine'. He took a step backwards, cocked his head on one side, and gazed at my hair until I felt quite bashful. Then suddenly he plunged forward, wrung my hand, and congratulated me warmly on my success.

" 'It would be injustice to hesitate', said he. 'You will, however, I am sure, excuse me for taking an obvious precaution'. With that he seized my hair in both his hands, and tugged until I yelled with the pain.

" 'There is water in your eyes', said he, as he released me. 'I perceive that all is as it should be. But we have to be careful, for we have twice been deceived by wigs and once by paint. I could tell you tales of cobbler's wax which would disgust you with human nature'. He stepped over to the window, and shouted through it at

the top of his voice that the vacancy was filled. A groan of disappointment came up from below, and the folk all trooped away in different directions, until there was not a red head to be seen except my own and that of the manager.

“‘My name,’ said he, ‘is Mr. Duncan Ross, and I am myself one of the pensioners upon the fund left by our noble benefactor. Are you a married man, Mr. Wilson? Have you a family?’”

“I answered that I had not.

“His face fell immediately.

“‘Dear me!’ he said, gravely, ‘that is very serious indeed! I am sorry to hear you say that. The fund was, of course, for the propagation and spread of the red-heads as well as for their maintenance. It is exceedingly unfortunate that you should be a bachelor.’”

“My face lengthened at this, Mr. Holmes, for I thought that I was not to have the vacancy after all; but after thinking it over for a few minutes, he said that it would be all right.

“‘In the case of another’, said he, ‘the objection might be fatal, but we must stretch a point in favour of a man with such a head of hair as yours. When shall you be able to enter upon your new duties?’”

“‘Well, it is a little awkward, for I have a business already’, said I.

“Oh, never mind about that, Mr. Wilson!” said Vincent Spaulding. “I shall be able to look after that for you”.

“‘What would be the hours?’ I asked.

“‘Ten to two’.

“Now a pawnbroker’s business is mostly done of an evening, Mr. Holmes, especially Thursday and Friday evening, which is just before pay-day; so it would suit me very well to earn a little in the mornings. Besides, I knew that my assistant was a good man, and that he would see to anything that turned up.

"That would suit me very well", said I. "And the pay?"

"Is four pounds a week?"

"And the work?"

"Is purely nominal?"

"What do you call purely nominal?"

"Well, you have to be in the office, or at least in the building, the whole time. If you leave, you forfeit your whole position for ever. The will is very clear upon the point. You don't comply with the conditions if you budge from the office during that time."

"It's only four hours a day, and I should not think of leaving," said I.

"No excuse will avail," said Mr. Duncan Ross, "neither sickness, nor business, nor anything else. There you must stay, or you lose your billet."

"And the work?"

"Is to copy out the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. There is the first volume of it in that press. You must find your own ink, pens, and blotting-paper, but we provide this table and chair. Will you be ready to-morrow?"

"Certainly," I answered.

"Then good-bye, Mr. Jabez Wilson, and let me congratulate you once more on the important position which you have been fortunate enough to gain." He bowed me out of the room, and I went home with my assistant, hardly knowing what to say or do, I was so pleased at my own good fortune.

"Well, I thought over the matter all day, and by evening I was in low spirits again; for I had quite persuaded myself that the whole affair must be some great hoax or fraud, though what its object might be I could not imagine. It seemed altogether past belief that anyone could make such a will, or that they would pay such a sum for doing anything so simple as copying out the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vincent Spaulding did what he could to cheer

me up, but by bedtime I had reasoned myself out of the whole thing. However, in the morning I determined to have a look at it anyhow, so I bought a penny bottle of ink, and with a quill pen, and seven sheets of foolscap paper, I started off for Pope's Court.

"Well, to my surprise and delight, everything was as right as possible. The table was set out ready for me, and Mr. Duncan Ross was there to see that I got fairly to work. He started me off upon the letter A, and then he left me; but he would drop in from time to time to see that all was right with me. At two o'clock he bade me good-bye, complimented me upon the amount that I had written, and locked the door of the office after me.

"This went on day after day, Mr. Holmes, and on Saturday the manager came in and planked down four golden sovereigns for my week's work. It was the same next week, and the same the week after. Every morning I was there at ten, and every afternoon I left at two. By degrees Mr. Duncan Ross took to coming in only once of a morning, and then, after a time, he did not come in at all. Still, of course, I never dared to leave the room for an instant, for I was not sure when he might come, and the billet was such a good one, and suited me so well that I would not risk the loss of it.

"Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbots, and Archery, and Armour, and Architecture, and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B's before very long. It cost me something in foolscap, and I had pretty nearly filled a shelf with my writings. And then suddenly the whole business came to an end."

"To an end?"

"Yes, sir. And no later than this morning. I went to my work as usual at ten o'clock, but the door was shut and locked, with a little square of cardboard hammered on to the

middle of the panel with a tack. Here it is, and you can read for yourself."

He held up a piece of white cardboard, about the size of a sheet of note-paper. It read in this fashion :—

THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE IS DISSOLVED

Oct. 9, 1890.

Sherlock Holmes and I surveyed this curt announcement and the rueful face behind it, until the comical side of the affair so completely overtopped every other consideration that we both burst out into a roar of laughter.

"I cannot see that there is anything very funny", cried our client, flushing up to the roots of his flaming head. "If you can do nothing better than laugh at me, I can go elsewhere".

"No, no", cried Holmes, shoving him back into the chair from which he had half risen. "I really wouldn't miss your case for the world. It is most refreshingly unusual. But there is, if you will excuse me saying so, something just a little funny about it. Pray what steps did you take when you found the card upon the door?"

"I was staggered, sir. I did not know what to do. Then I called at the offices round, but none of them seemed to know anything about it. Finally, I went to the landlord, who is an accountant living on the ground floor, and I asked him if he could tell me what had become of the Red-headed League. He said that he had never heard of any such body. Then I asked him who Mr. Duncan Ross was. He answered that the name was new to him

"Well", said I, "the gentleman at No. 4".

"What, the red-headed man?"

"Yes".

"Oh", said he, "his name was William Morris. He was a solicitor, and was using my room as a temporary convenience until his new premises were ready. He moved out yesterday".

"Where could I find him?"

"Oh, at his new offices. He did tell me the address. Yes, 17, King Edward Street, near St. Paul's".

"I started off, Mr. Holmes, but when I got to that address it was a manufactory of artificial knee-caps, and no one in it had ever heard of either Mr. William Morris or Mr. Duncan Ross".

"And what did you do then?" asked Mr. Holmes.

"I went home to Saxe-Coburg Square, and I took the advice of my assistant. But he could not help me in any way. He could only say that if I waited I should hear by post. But that was not quite good enough, Mr. Holmes. I did not wish to lose such a place without a struggle, so, as I had heard that you were good enough to give advice to poor folk who were in need of it, I came right away to you".

"And you did very wisely", said Holmes. "Your case is an exceedingly remarkable one, and I shall be happy to look into it. From what you have told me I think that it is possible that graver issues hang from it than might at first sight appear".

"Grave enough!" said Mr. Jabez Wilson. "Why, I have lost four pounds a week."

"As far as you are personally concerned", remarked Holmes, "I do not see that you have any grievance against this extraordinary League. On the contrary, you are, as I understand, richer by some thirty pounds, to say nothing of the minute knowledge which you have gained on every subject which comes under the letter A. You have lost nothing by them."

"No, sir. But I want to find out about them, and who they are, and what their object was in playing this prank—if it was a prank—upon me. It was a pretty expensive joke for them, for it cost them two-and-thirty pounds."

"We shall endeavour to clear up these points for you. And, first, one or two questions, Mr. Wilson. This assistant

of yours who first called your attention to the advertisement how long had he been with you?"

"About a month then."

"How did he come?"

"In answer to an advertisement."

"Was he the only applicant?"

"No, I had a dozen."

"Why did you pick him?"

"Because he was handy, and would come cheap."

"At half wages, in fact."

"Yes."

"What is he like, this Vincent Spaulding?"

"Small, stout-built, very quick in his ways, no hair on his face, though he's not short of thirty. Has a white splash of acid upon his forehead."

Holmes sat up in his chair in considerable excitement. "I thought as much," said he. "Have you ever observed that his ears are pierced for earrings?"

"Yes, sir. He told me that a gipsy had done it for him when he was a lad."

"Hum!" said Holmes, sinking back in deep thought. "He is still with you?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I have only just left him."

"And has your business been attended to in your absence?"

"Nothing to complain of, sir. There's never very much to do of a morning."

"That will do, Mr. Wilson. I shall be happy to give you an opinion upon the subject in the course of a day or two. To-day is Saturday, and I hope that by Monday we may come to a conclusion."

"Well, Watson," said Holmes, when our visitor had left us, "what do you make of it all?"

"I make nothing of it," I answered frankly. "It is a most mysterious business."

"As a rule," said Holmes, "the more bizarre a thing is

the less mysterious it proves to be. It is your commonplace, featureless crimes which are really puzzling, just as a commonplace face is the most difficult to identify. But I must be prompt over this matter."

"What are you going to do then?" I asked.

"To smoke," he answered. "It is quite a three-pipe problem, and I beg that you won't speak to me for fifty minutes." He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. I had come to the conclusion that he had dropped asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly sprang out of his chair with the gesture of a man who had made up his mind, and put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.

"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon," he remarked. "What do you think, Watson? Could your patients spare you for a few hours?"

"I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing."

"Then put on your hat, and come. I am going through the City first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect. Come along."

We travelled by the Underground as far as Aldersgate; and a short walk took us to Saxe-Coburg Square, the scene of the singular story which we had listened to in the morning. It was a pokey, little, shabby-genteel place, where four lines of dingy two-storied brick houses looked out into a small railed-in enclosure, where a lawn of weedy grass and a few clumps of faded laurel bushes made a hard fight against a smoke-laden and uncongenial atmosphere. Three gilt balls and a brown board with "Jabez Wilson" in white

letters, upon a corner house, announced the place where our red-headed client carried on his business. Sherlock Holmes stopped in front of it with his head on one side and looked it all over, with his eyes shining brightly between puckered lids. Then he walked slowly up the street and then down again to the corner, still looking keenly at the houses. Finally he returned to the pawnbroker's, and, having thumped vigorously upon the pavement with his stick two or three times, he went up to the door and knocked. It was instantly opened by a bright-looking, clean-shaven young fellow, who asked him to step in.

"Thank you," said Holmes, "I only wished to ask you how you would go from here to the Strand."

"Third right, fourth left", answered the assistant promptly, closing the door.

"Smart fellow, that," observed Holmes as we walked away. "He is, in my judgment, the fourth smartest man in London, and for daring I am not sure that he has not a claim to be third. I have known something of him before."

"Evidently," said I, "Mr. Wilson's assistant counts for a good deal in this mystery of the Red-headed League. I am sure that you inquired your way merely in order that you might see him."

"Not him."

"What then?"

"The knees of his trousers."

"And what did you see?"

"What I expected to see."

"Why did you beat the pavement?"

"My dear Doctor, this is a time for observation, not for talk. We are spies in an enemy's country. We know something of Saxe-Coburg Square. Let us now explore the paths which lie behind it."

The road in which we found ourselves as we turned round the corner from the retired Saxe-Coburg Square presented

as great a contrast to it as the front of a picture does to the back. It was one of the main arteries which convey the traffic of the city to the north and west. The roadway was blocked with the immense stream of commerce flowing in a double tide inwards and outwards, while the footpaths were black with the hurrying swarm of pedestrians. It was difficult to realise as we looked at the line of fine shops and stately business premises that they really abutted on the other side upon the faded and stagnant square which we had just quitted.

"Let me see," said Holmes, standing at the corner, and glancing along the line, "I should like just to remember the order of the houses here. It is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London. There is Mortimer's, the tobacconist, the little newspaper shop, the Coburg branch of the City and Suburban Bank, the Vegetarian Restaurant, and McFarlane's carriage-building depot. That carries us right on to the other block. And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich, and a cup of coffee, and then off to violin-land, where all is sweetness, and delicacy, and harmony, and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums."

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer, but a composer of no ordinary merit. All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him

from extreme languor to devouring energy ; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his arm-chair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions. Then it was that the lust of the chase would suddenly come upon him, and that his brilliant reasoning power would rise to the level of intuition, until those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals. When I saw him that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

" You want to go home, no doubt, Doctor," he remarked, as we emerged.

" Yes, it would be as well."

" And I have some business to do which will take some hours. This business at Coburg Square is serious."

" Why serious ? "

" A considerable crime is in contemplation. I have every reason to believe that we shall be in time to stop it. But to-day being Saturday rather complicates matters. I shall want your help to-night."

" At what time ? "

" Ten will be early enough."

" I shall be at Baker Street at ten."

" Very well. And, I say, Doctor ! there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket." He waved his hand, turned on his heel, and disappeared in an instant among the crowd.

I trust that I am not more dense than my neighbours, but I was always oppressed with a sense of my own stupidity in my dealings with Sherlock Holmes. Here I had heard what he had heard, I had seen what he had seen, and yet from his words it was evident that he saw clearly not only what had happened, but what was about to happen, while

to me the whole business was still confused and grotesque. As I drove home to my house in Kensington I thought over it all, from the extraordinary story of the red-headed copier of the *Encyclopaedia* down to the visit to Saxe-Coburg Square, and the ominous words with which he had parted from me. What was this nocturnal expedition, and why should I go armed? Where were we going, and what were we to do? I had the hint from Holmes that this smooth-faced pawnbroker's assistant was a formidable man—a man who might play a deep game. I tried to puzzle it out, but gave it up in despair, and set the matter aside until night should bring an explanation.

It was a quarter-past nine when I started from home and made my way across the Park, and so through Oxford Street to Baker Street. Two hansoms were standing at the door, and, as I entered the passage, I heard the sound of voices from above. On entering his room, I found Holmes in animated conversation with two men, one of whom I recognized as Peter Jones, the official police agent; while the other was a long, thin, sad-faced man, with a very shiny hat, and oppressively respectable frock-coat.

"Ha! our party is complete," said Holmes, buttoning his pea-jacket, and taking his heavy hunting-crop from the rack. "Watson, I think you know Mr. Jones, of Scotland Yard? Let me introduce you to Mr. Merryweather, who is to be our companion in to-night's adventure."

"We're hunting in couples again, Doctor, you see," said Jones, in his consequential way. "Our friend here is a wonderful man for starting a chase. All he wants is an old dog to help him to do the running down."

I hope a wild goose may not prove to be the end of our chase," observed Mr. Merryweather, gloomily.

"You may place considerable confidence in Mr. Holmes, sir," said the police agent, loftily. "He has his own little methods, which are, if he won't mind my saying

so, just a little too theoretical and fantastic, but he has the making of a detective in him. It is not too much to say that once or twice, as in that business of the Sholto murder and the Agra treasure, he has been more nearly correct than the official force."

"Oh, if you say so, Mr. Jones, it is all right!" said the stranger, with deference. "Still, I confess, that I miss my rubber. It is the first Saturday night for seven-and-twenty years that I have not had my rubber."

"I think you will find," said Sherlock Holmes, "that you will play for a higher stake to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be more exciting. For you, Mr. Merryweather, the stake will be some thirty thousand pounds; and for you, Jones, it will be the man upon whom you wish to lay your hands."

"John Clay, the murderer, thief, smasher, and forger. He's a young man, Mr. Merryweather, but he is at the head of his profession, and I would rather have my bracelets on him than on any criminal in London. He's a remarkable man, is young John Clay. His grandfather was a royal Duke, and he himself has been to Eton and Oxford. His brain is as cunning as his fingers, and though we meet signs of him at every turn, we never know where to find the man himself. He'll crack a crib in Scotland one week, and be raising money to build an orphanage in Cornwall the next. I've been on his track for years, and have never set eyes on him yet."

"I hope that I may have the pleasure of introducing you to-night. I've had one or two little turns also with Mr. John Clay, and I agree with you that he is at the head of his profession. It is past ten, however, and quite time that we started. If you two will take the first hansom, Watson and I will follow in the second."

Sherlock Holmes was not very communicative during the long drive, and lay back in the cab humming the

tunes which he had heard in the afternoon. We rattled through an endless labyrinth of gas-lit streets until we emerged into Farringdon street.

"We are close there now," my friend remarked. "This fellow Merryweather is a bank director and personally interested in the matter. I thought it as well to have Jones with us also. He is not a bad fellow, though an absolute imbecile in his profession. He has one positive virtue. He is as brave as a bull-dog, and as tenacious as a lobster if he gets his claws upon anyone. Here we are, and they are waiting for us."

We had reached the same crowded thoroughfare in which we had found ourselves in the morning. Our cabs were dismissed, and, following the guidance of Mr. Merryweather, we passed down a narrow passage, and through a side door, which he opened for us. Within there was a small corridor, which ended in a very massive iron gate. This also was opened, and led down a flight of winding stone steps, which terminated at another formidable gate. Mr. Merryweather stopped to light a lantern, and then conducted us down a dark, earth-smelling passage, and so, after opening a third door, into a huge vault or cellar, which was piled all round with crates and massive boxes.

"You are not very vulnerable from above," Holmes remarked, as he held up the lantern and gazed about him.

"Nor from below," said Mr. Merryweather, striking his stick upon the flags which lined the floor. "Why, dear me, it sounds quite hollow!" he remarked, looking up in surprise.

"I must really ask you to be a little more quiet," said Holmes severely. "You have already imperilled the whole success of our expedition. Might I beg that you would have the goodness to sit down upon one of those boxes, and not to interfere?"

The solemn Mr. Merryweather perched himself upon a

crate, with a very injured expression upon his face, while Holmes fell upon his knees upon the floor, and, with the lantern and a magnifying lens, began to examine minutely the cracks between the stones. A few seconds sufficed to satisfy him, for he sprang to his feet again, and put his glass in his pocket.

"We have at least an hour before us," he remarked, "for they can hardly take any steps until the good pawnbroker is safely in bed. Then they will not lose a minute, for the sooner they do their work the longer time they will have for their escape. We are at present, Doctor—as no doubt you have divined—in the cellar of the City branch of one of the principal London banks. Mr. Merryweather is the chairman of Directors, and he will explain to you that there are reasons why the more daring criminals of London should take a considerable interest in this cellar at present."

"It is our French gold," whispered the director. "We have had several warnings that an attempt might be made upon it."

"Your French gold?"

"Yes. We had occasion some months ago to strengthen our resources, and borrowed, for that purpose, thirty thousand napoleons from the Bank of France. It has become known that we have never had occasion to unpack the money, and that it is still lying in our cellar. The crate upon which I sit contains two thousand napoleons packed between layers of lead foil. Our reserve of bullion is much larger at present than is usually kept in a single branch office, and the directors have had misgivings upon the subject."

"Which were very well justified," observed Holmes. "And now it is time that we arranged our little plans. I expect that within an hour matters will come to a head. In the meantime, Mr. Merryweather, we must put the screen over that dark lantern."

"And sit in the dark?"

"I am afraid so. I had brought a pack of cards in my pocket, and I thought that, as we were a *partie carrée*, you might have your rubber after all. But I see that the enemy's preparations have gone so far that we cannot risk the presence of a light. And, first of all, we must choose our positions. These are daring men, and, though we shall take them at a disadvantage they may do us some harm, unless we are careful. I shall stand behind this crate, and do you conceal yourselves behind those. Then, when I flash a light upon them, close in swiftly. If they fire, Watson, have no compunction about shooting them down."

I placed my revolver, cocked, upon the top of the wooden case behind which I crouched. Holmes shot the slide across the front of his lantern, and left us in pitch darkness—such an absolute darkness as I have never before experienced. The smell of hot metal remained to assure us that the light was still there, ready to flash out at a moment's notice. To me, with my nerves worked up to a pitch of expectancy, there was something depressing and subduing in the sudden gloom, and in the cold, dank air of the vault.

"They have but one retreat," whispered Holmes. "That is back through the house into Saxe-Coburg Square. I hope that you have done what I asked you, Jones?"

"I have an inspector and two officers waiting at the front door."

"Then we have stopped all the holes. And now we must be silent and wait."

What a time it seemed! From comparing notes afterwards it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it appeared to me that the night must have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. My limbs were weary and stiff, for I feared to change my position, yet my nerves were worked up to the highest pitch of tension, and my hearing was so acute that I could not only hear the gentle breathing of my

companions, but I could distinguish the deeper, heavier in-breath of the bulky Jones from the thin sighing note of the bank director. From my position I could look over the case in the direction of the floor. Suddenly my eyes caught the glint of a light.

At first it was but a lurid spark upon the stone pavement. Then it lengthened out until it became a yellow line, and then, without any warning or sound, a gash seemed to open and a hand appeared, a white, almost womanly hand, which felt about in the centre of the little area of light. For a minute or more the hand, with its writhing fingers, protruded out of the floor. Then it was withdrawn as suddenly as it appeared, and all was dark again save the single lurid spark, which marked a chink between the stones.

Its disappearance, however, was but momentary. With a rending, tearing sound, one of the broad, white stones turned over upon its side, and left a square, gaping hole, through which streamed the light of a lantern. Over the edge there peeped a clean-cut, boyish face, which looked keenly about it, and then, with a hand on either side of the aperture, drew itself shoulder high and waist high, until one knee rested upon the edge. In another instant he stood at the side of the hole, and was hauling after him a companion, lithe and small like himself, with a pale face and a shock of very red hair.

"It's all clear," he whispered, "Have you the chisel and the bags? Great Scott! Jump, Archie, jump, and I'll swing for it!"

Sherlock Holmes had sprung out and seized the intruder by the collar. The other dived down the hole, and I heard the sound of rending cloth as Jones clutched at his skirts. The light flashed upon the barrel of a revolver, but Holmes's hunting-crop came down on the man's wrist, and the pistol clinked upon the stone floor.

"It's no use, John Clay," said Holmes blandly; "you

have no chance at all."

"So I see," the other answered, with the utmost coolness. "I fancy that my pal is all right, though I see you have got his coat-tails."

"There are three men waiting for him at the door," said Holmes.

"Oh, indeed, you seem to have done the thing very completely. I must compliment you."

"And I you," Holmes answered. "Your red-headed idea was very new and effective."

"You'll see your pal again presently," said Jones. "He's quicker at climbing down holes than I am. Just hold out while I fix the derbies."

"I beg that you will not touch me with your filthy hands," remarked our prisoner, as the handcuffs clattered upon his wrists. "You may not be aware that I have royal blood in my veins. Have the goodness also when you address me always to say 'sir' and 'please'."

"All right," said Jones, with a stare and snigger. "Well, would you please, sir, march upstairs, where we can get a cab to carry your highness to the police-station?"

"That is better," said John Clay, serenely. He made a sweeping bow to the three of us, and walked quietly off in the custody of the detective.

"Really, Mr. Holmes," said Merryweather, as we followed them from the cellar, "I do not know how the bank can thank you or repay you. There is no doubt that you have detected and defeated in the most complete manner one of the most determined attempts at bank robbery that have ever come within my experience."

"I have had one or two little scores of my own to settle with Mr. John Clay," said Holmes. "I have been at some small expense over this matter, which I shall expect the bank to refund, but beyond that I am amply repaid by having had an experience which is in many ways

unique, and by hearing the very remarkable narrative of the Red-headed League."

"You see, Watson," he explained, in the early hours of the morning, as we sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street, "it was perfectly obvious from the first that the only possible object of this rather fantastic business of the advertisement of the League, and the copying of the *Encyclopaedia*, must be to get this not over-bright pawnbroker out of the way for a number of hours every day. It was a curious way of managing it, but really it would be difficult to suggest a better. The method was no doubt suggested to Clay's ingenious mind by the colour of his accomplice's hair. The four pounds a week was a lure which must draw him, and what was it to them, who were playing for thousands? They put in the advertisement; one rogue has the temporary office, the other rogue incites the man to apply for it, and together they manage to secure his absence every morning in the week. From the time that I heard of the assistant having come for half wages, it was obvious to me that he had some strong motive for securing the situation."

"But how could you guess what the motive was?"

"Had there been women in the house, I should have suspected a mere vulgar intrigue. That, however, was out of the question. The man's business was a small one, and there was nothing in his house which could account for such elaborate preparations, and such an expenditure as they were at. It must then be something out of the house. What could it be? I thought of the assistant's fondness for photography, and his trick of vanishing into the cellar. The cellar! There was the end of this tangled clue. Then I made inquiries as to this mysterious assistant, and found that I had to deal with one of the coolest and most daring criminals in London. He was doing something in the cellar—something which took

many hours a day for months on end. What could it be, once more? I could think of nothing save that he was running a tunnel to some other building.

"So far I had got when we went to visit the scene of action. I surprised you by beating upon the pavement with my stick. I was ascertaining whether the cellar stretched out in front or behind. It was not in front. Then I rang the bell, and, as I hoped, the assistant answered it. We have had some skirmishes, but we had never set eyes on each other before. I hardly looked at his face. His knees were what I wished to see. You must yourself have remarked how worn, wrinkled, and stained they were. They spoke of those hours of burrowing. The only remaining point was what they were burrowing for. I walked round the corner, saw that the City and Suburban Bank abutted on our friend's premises, and felt that I had solved my problem. When you drove home after the concert I called upon Scotland Yard, and upon the chairman of the bank directors, with the result that you have seen."

"And how could you tell that they would make their attempt to-night?" I asked.

"Well, when they closed their League offices that was a sign that they cared no longer about Mr. Jabez Wilson's presence; in other words, that they had completed their tunnel. But it was essential that they should use it soon, as it might be discovered, or the bullion might be removed. Saturday would suit them better than any other day, as it would give them two days for their escape. For all these reasons I expected them to come to-night."

"You reasoned it out beautifully," I exclaimed, in unfeigned admiration. "It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true."

"It saved me from *ennui*," he answered, yawning. "Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces

of existence. These little problems help me to do so."

"And you are a benefactor of the race," said I.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use," he remarked. "*L'homme c'est rien, l'œuvre c'est tout,*" as Gustave Flaubert wrote to George Sand."

VI

Mrs. GASKELL

'*The Half-Brothers*' was contributed to the Dublin University Magazine. It appeared in the November issue of the Magazine in 1858. The next year it was printed along with other stories in a collection of tales entitled '*Round the Sofa*.' The framework of these stories is like that of Chaucer's, or Boccaccio's tales. A young lady being placed for medical treatment under a doctor—Mr. Dawson—finds life in Edinburgh extremely dull. She welcomes the invitation to spend her Monday evenings at Mrs. Dawson's, the Doctor's sister. Mrs. Dawson tells stories to a number of friends who gather round her sofa. On this particular Monday she begins the story of 'My Lady Ludlow' and calls upon the company to contribute to the entertainment by recounting tales of their own experience. '*The Half-Brothers*' is the last story in the collection. It is told by Mr. Preston who is described as a grave, reserved and silent man. The text of the story here is taken from the Vth. volume of the Knutsford edition of Mrs. Gaskell's works, published in 1906.

Mrs. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell was born in 1810. She grew up at Knutsford (in Cheshire) occasionally paying visits to London and Edinburgh. For two years she was at Stratford-on-Avon. In 1832 she married the Rev. William Gaskell—an accomplished scholar. After the loss of their only son—we are told—Mr. Gaskell persuaded his wife to write a long piece of fiction which would distract her from her sorrow. '*Mary Barton*' (1847) was the result. In this novel Mrs. Gaskell described the life of the working classes in Manchester. Cranford appeared between 1851-53. Mrs. Gaskell is at her best in this novel of the quiet countryside before its tranquillity was disturbed by railways. The author of Cranford wrote other novels, such as '*North and South*' (1855), and the unfinished '*Wives and Daughters*.' Mrs. Gaskell died in 1865.

'*The Half-Brothers*' is a story told in the first person. Mr. Preston who tells the tale recalls in it an unforgettable experience of his early days, filling in the details and giving the story the atmosphere and the setting it needs with the material gathered

in subsequent years from the talk of his aunt. Aunt Fanny is like a prompter who helps out the speaker on the stage. Young Preston, being overwhelmed by a snow-storm in the Fells, is rescued from imminent death by his despised and unloved half-brother Gregory who himself died in the effort. This is the climax of the story, the curtain, so to speak, towards which the whole narrative tends.

Mr. Preston plunges into the story at once. 'My mother was twice married' is the first sentence he utters, and it strikes the key-note of the whole. It is an Iliad in a nutshell. After this direct opening, the speaker refers to the first marriage of his mother, the death of her child, the birth of Gregory, the anxieties of the household and the decision to marry Preston. Then follows a description of the jealousy of Mr. Preston, the harsh treatment meted out to Gregory and the death of the mother. Finally, the adventure in the Fells is described, the sudden calamity, the rescue, and the sad yet noble death of Gregory. The direct opening of the story is matched by its effective close. In the intermediate parts Mrs. Gaskell (Mr. Preston is her mouth-piece) narrates the incidents in orderly sequence explaining by Mr. Preston's comments or those of other characters the action and reaction of events upon the various persons who figure in the story. The author devotes more space to the description of the snow-storm and the terror and bewilderment it produced in the mind of the child who was overwhelmed by it. This fits into her scheme. For the snow-storm is a very important incident in the story—the pivot on which it turns. But she does not linger or digress elsewhere. She introduces no incident, no character, no detail which cannot be brought into close relation with the plan of the story. Everything in *'The Half-Brothers'* is controlled by an artistic design. The story proceeds to its goal at a smooth and an equable pace. It does not race and run, but it gets there all the same.

In characterization Mrs. Gaskell displays the same lively sense of artistic economy. The six persons introduced into the story are more or less vitally linked to the plot. No character is brought in which does not help the progress of the narrative. Thus is characterization balanced with narrative—one is made to assist the other. Every character is carefully distinguished, and the various characters are artistically grouped. The silent sister is set off against the talkative, the lumpish Gregory against his bonny-looking half-brother. Mr. Preston is the centre of the family group. Old Adam and Lassie (as good as a human being) stand a little further off, though Lassie plays an important part in the development of the story.

Helen is portrayed as a silent, sensitive, suffering, delicate, refined selfless woman. She lavishes all the fulness of her affection on Gregory. Born after the death of his father, awkward, ungainly, dull of comprehension, the unfortunate Gregory calls out the infinite tenderness of the mother. The more unkind and harsh Mr. Preston is, the more gentle and considerate the mother becomes towards the fatherless child. It might be said almost that she lived in him and for him. Her sister and her husband were the 'trappings' of her life, her being was entirely wrapped up in

Gregory. Aunt Fanny is on the other hand talkative, practical, matter-of-fact, business-like. She is entirely free from sentiment. Marriage is a matter of convenience to her. When Mr. Preston proposes to her sister, she thinks she would have been a far more suitable match for him. After Helen's death, someone was needed to look after the child and aunt Fanny makes no bones about filling the vacant position. Nevertheless, she lacks neither tenderness nor humanity. She loves her sister, she loves young Preston and, though she took the common view of Gregory, she never failed in her duty to him.

Mr. Preston is not half so hateful a character as we are apt to think at first. If we had been in his position, we should very probably have behaved like him. He is not more hard-hearted, cruel, callous, malicious than ordinary persons. In his circumstances, being a man of property, with little refinement, culture or education, he expected that a woman who had married him should love him. On the contrary, he found her cold and formal. Naturally, he grew jealous of Gregory, who was loved by his wife, and persecuted him. Moreover, he makes ample amends for his cruelty to Gregory after Gregory's death. When all this is said, however, we must admit that he was a man 'who liked better to be angry than sorry,' that he often acted like a bully when he cursed and swore at Gregory, and kicked his dog, and finally, when he said to his wife that it was hard enough to keep another man's child without having it held up in its naughtiness by his wife, he was speaking like a cad. He might have risen above his petty hatred and jealousy of Gregory and shown more charity. But he was a rich farmer, always accustomed to have his own way. That is why Christ said: It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Gregory is like an uncut jewel. He is ungainly, awkward, loutish and lumpish. He has no gifts of intellect to balance his unattractive appearance. But—as young Preston says—he was patient and good-natured, knew all the bearings of the Fells and would have made an excellent shepherd under old Adam's training. He endeavoured to do a kind turn even to those who had scolded or cuffed him. His efforts might fail, but the good motive was beyond question. He had, in truth, a heart of gold. And over and above all his defects "like fountains of sweet water in the sea" rises the pure unselfish love he cherished for his mother, in obedience to whose wish he sacrificed his life to save that of his brother. Young Preston is clever and handsome and vain. He has all the weakness of a child who is petted and coddled by everyone. But his heart is in the right place. After the one tragic experience of his early days, we expect, he learnt a lesson of charity and love which he never forgot in his later life.

'*The Half-Brothers*' is a very human story. It deals with such primary and universal affections as a mother's absorbing love for an ugly lumpish child, and the simple unreasoning love which inspires the elder brother to give up his life willingly to save the younger brother from being frozen to death. It is this happy choice of a

subject of universal interest—the twin theme of a mother's love for an unattractive fatherless child and an elder brother's love for his half-brother—which gives this story its abiding hold on the popular mind. Mrs. Gaskell's genius is, moreover, essentially fitted to deal with such a theme. As Elton has observed: She (Mrs. Gaskell) is at her best in the idyllic and domestic style. Another authority says: " '*The Half-Brothers*' is endeared to those best acquainted with the heights and depths of Mrs. Gaskell's nature because the story seems to them to typify the spirit of self-sacrifice which pervaded her life." Mrs. Gaskell's pathos is genuine. She avails herself of all the common sources for creating pathetic situations. The poverty of the young widowed mother, the death of her child, the blindness due to heavy crying, the unhappy second marriage, the harsh reproaches hurled at the suffering, meek mother—all this Mrs. Gaskell describes minutely and with a sure touch. The height in this kind of writing is reached when the author depicts the last moments of the long-suffering mother as she makes Gregory take the hand of his little half-brother and smiles when the husband gazes at the two with a grave sort of tenderness. Most touching, again, is the description of the two brothers when they were found beneath the rock to which Lassie guided Mr. Preston and others. Mr. Preston's words, wrung from him in the bitterness of his remorse,—“I would have given him half of my land...” are also a genuinely pathetic utterance. But Mrs. Gaskell achieves a higher triumph—goes almost beyond herself—when she makes Gregory say to his benumbed brother “*Thou canst not remember, lad, how we lay together thus by our dying mother.....I reckon she sees us now*” Gregory knew that he was laying himself down to die. But there is no whining, no complaining. This is the very sublimity of pathos—which combines courage and noble resignation. ‘Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail or knock on the breast!’ Mrs. Gaskell cannot, however, be acquitted of indulging in sentimentality. In ‘*The Half-Brothers*’ people fall on each other's necks and shed tears in plenty. And the paper of directions in which Mr. Preston desired that he might lie at the foot of the grave in which poor Gregory had been laid with his mother is an example of cheap, showy pathos.

In the description of the snow-storm and its effects on the child about to be overwhelmed by it, Mrs. Gaskell displays her powers of close, clear, luminous description. The loneliness of the region, the desperate efforts which the child makes to summon help, the terror inspired by the blinding storm which blotted out every track and hid from view the perilous precipices, the bewilderment of the young traveller, the near approach of death and the memories of past happiness and love which it vividly presented—Mrs. Gaskell delineates all these things with a lucidity and artistic completeness which leave nothing that is desired.

There is an atmosphere of still serenity round the story. A gentle strain of penitent sadness runs through it. The narrative flows clear and the diction is soft and pure. “I lay in chilly sleep, but still alive.....He was in his shirt-sleeves—His arm thrown over me—a quiet smile upon his still cold face”—this might serve as a typical example.

But the words move swiftly when the occasion calls for speed, as in—"Off I set at a pretty quick pace. But night came on quicker....." Now and then, the words are strong and emphatic as required by the situation, as when Preston says that his father *would have coined his heart's blood into gold to save his wife, if that could have been.*

The moral of the story is obvious. It teaches the lesson of noble unselfish love—love that is an end in itself and seeks no other reward apart from the cheerful surrender of everything it holds dear and precious for the object of its tender care. And, further, it bids us beware of the demon of jealousy which has made the shipwreck of so many lives. The story illustrates a famous passage in Thomas à Kempis (*Imitation of Christ*, Chap. XLX) which, says Ward, Mrs. Gaskell was accustomed to recite with peculiar solemnity—the passage beginning: "That which pleaseth others shall go well forward: that which pleaseth thee shall not speed....."

Scarlet fever, a very common infectious fever. It derives its name from the red spots which appear on the body when someone is attacked by the fever. Children are particularly liable to attack.

Mocking spirits of the Fells, the ghosts which haunted these wild lonely mountainous parts jeered at the traveller crying out for help. Popular superstition regarded the echoes returned by the mountains as the mocking cries of evil spirits.

THE HALF-BROTHERS

My mother was twice married. She never spoke of her first husband, and it is only from other people that I have learnt what little I know about him. I believe she was scarcely seventeen when she was married to him: and he was barely one-and-twenty. He rented a small farm up in Cumberland, somewhere towards the sea-coast; but he was perhaps too young and inexperienced to have the charge of land and cattle: anyhow, his affairs did not prosper, and he fell into ill health, and died of consumption before they had been three years man and wife, leaving my mother a young widow of twenty, with a little child only just able to walk, and the farm on her hands for four years more by the lease, with half the stock on it dead, or sold off one by one to pay the more pressing debts, and with no money to purchase more, or even to buy the provisions needed for the small consumption of every day. There was another child coming, too; and sad and sorry, I believe, she was to think of it. A

dreary winter she must have had in her lonesome dwelling with never another near it for miles around; her sister came to bear her company and they two planned and plotted how to make every penny they could raise go as far as possible. I can't tell you how it happened that my little sister, whom I never saw, came to sicken and die; but, as if my poor mother's cup was not full enough, only a fortnight before Gregory was born the little girl took ill of scarlet fever, and in a week she lay dead. My mother was, I believe, just stunned with this last blow. My aunt has told me that she did not cry; aunt Fanny would have been thankful if she had; but she sat holding the poor wee lassie's hand, and looking in her pretty, pale, dead face, without so much as shedding a tear. And it was all the same, when they had to take her away to be buried. She just kissed the child, and sat her down in the window-seat to watch the little black train of people (neighbours—my aunt, and one far-off cousin, who were all the friends they could muster) go winding away amongst the snow, which had fallen thinly over the country the night before. When my aunt came back from the funeral, she found my mother in the same place, and as dry-eyed as ever. So she continued until after Gregory was born; and, somehow, his coming seemed to loosen the tears, and she cried day and night, till my aunt and the other watcher looked at each other in dismay, and would fain have stopped her if they had but known how. But she bade them let her alone, and not be over-anxious, for every drop she shed eased her brain, which had been in a terrible state before for want of the power to cry. She seemed after that to think of nothing but her new little baby; she had hardly appeared to remember either her husband or her little daughter that lay dead in the Brigham churchyard—at least so aunt Fanny said; but she was a great talker, and my mother was very silent by nature, and I think aunt Fanny may have been mistaken in believing that

my mother never thought of her husband and child just because she never spoke about them. Aunt Fanny was older than my mother, and had a way of treating her like a child; but, for all that, she was a kind, warm-hearted creature, who thought more of her sister's welfare than she did of her own; and it was on her bit of money that they principally lived, and on what the two could earn by working for the great Glasgow sewing-merchants. But by-and-by my mother's eye-sight began to fail. It was not that she was exactly blind, for she could see well enough to guide herself about the house, and to do a good deal of domestic work; but she could no longer do fine sewing and earn money. It must have been with the heavy crying she had had in her day, for she was but a young creature at this time, and as pretty a young woman, I have heard people say, as any on the country side. She took it sadly to heart that she could no longer gain anything towards the keep of herself and her child. My aunt Fanny would fain have persuaded her that she had enough to do in managing their cottage and minding Gregory; but my mother knew that they were pinched, and that aunt Fanny herself had not as much to eat, even of the commonest kind of food, as she could have done with; and as for Gregory, he was not a strong lad, and needed, not more food—for he always had enough, whoever went short—but better nourishment, and more flesh meat. One day—it was aunt Fanny who told me all this about my poor mother, long after her death—as the sisters were sitting together, aunt Fanny working, and my mother hushing Gregory to sleep, William Preston, who was afterwards my father, came in. He was reckoned an old bachelor; I suppose he was long past forty, and he was one of the wealthiest farmers thereabouts, and had known my grandfather well, and my mother and my aunt in their more prosperous days. He sat down, and

began to twirl his hat by way of being agreeable; my aunt Fanny talked, and he listened and looked at my mother. But he said very little, either on that visit, or on many another that he paid before he spoke out what had been the real purpose of his calling so often all along, and from the very first time he came to their house. One Sunday, however, my aunt Fanny stayed away from church, and took care of the child, and my mother went alone. When she came back she ran straight upstairs, without going into the kitchen to look at Gregory or speak any word to her sister, and aunt Fanny heard her cry as if her heart was breaking; so she went up and scolded her right well through the bolted door, till at last she got her to open it. And then she threw herself on my aunt's neck, and told her that William Preston had asked her to marry him, and had promised to take good charge of her boy, and to let him want for nothing, neither in the way of keep nor of education, and that she had consented. Aunt Fanny was a good deal shocked at this; for as I have said, she had often thought that my mother had forgotten her first husband very quickly, and now here was proof positive of it, if she could so soon think of marrying again. Besides, as aunt Fanny used to say, she herself would have been a far more suitable match for a man of William Preston's age than Helen, who, though she was a widow, had not seen her four-and-twentieth summer. However, as aunt Fanny said, they had not asked her advice; and there was much to be said on the other side of the question. Helen's eyesight would never be good for much again, and as William Preston's wife she would never need to do anything, if she chose to sit with her hands before her: and a boy was a great charge to a widowed mother; and now there would be a decent steady man to see after him. So, by-and-by, aunt Fanny seemed to take a brighter

view of the marriage than did my mother herself, who hardly ever looked up, and never smiled after the day when she promised William Preston to be his wife. But much as she had loved Gregory before, she seemed to love him more now. She was continually talking to him when they were alone, though he was far too young to understand her moaning words, or give her any comfort, except by his caresses.

At last William Preston and she were wed; and she went to be mistress of a well-stocked house, not above half-an-hour's walk from where aunt Fanny lived. I believe she did all that she could to please my father; and a more dutiful wife, I have heard him himself say, could never have been. But she did not love him, and he soon found it out. She loved Gregory, and she did not love him. Perhaps, love would have come in time, if he had been patient enough to wait; but it just turned him sour to see how her eye brightened and her colour came at the sight of that little child, while for him who had given her so much she had only gentle words as cold as ice. He got to taunt her with the difference in her manner, as if that would bring love: and he took a positive dislike to Gregory,—he was so jealous of the ready love that always gushed out like a spring of fresh water when he came near. He wanted her to love him more, and perhaps that was all well and good; but he wanted her to love her child less, and that was an evil wish. One day, he gave way to his temper, and cursed and swore at Gregory, who had got into some mischief, as children will; my mother made some excuse for him; my father said it was hard enough to have to keep another man's child, without having it perpetually held up in its naughtiness by his wife, who ought to be always in the same mind as he was; and so from little they got to more; and the end of it was, that my mother took to her bed before her time, and I was born that very day. My father

was glad, and proud, and sorry, all in a breath; glad and proud that a son was born to him; and sorry for his poor wife's state, and to think how his angry words had brought it on. But he was a man who liked better to be angry than sorry, so he soon found out that it was all Gregory's fault, and owed him an additional grudge for having hastened my birth. He had another grudge against him before long. My mother began to sink the day after I was born. My father sent to Carlisle for doctors, and would have coined his heart's blood into gold to save her, if that could have been ; but it could not. My aunt Fanny used to say sometimes, that she thought that Helen did not wish to live, and so just let herself die away without trying to take hold on life; but when I questioned her, she owned that my mother did all the doctors bade her do, with the same sort of uncomplaining patience with which she had acted through life. One of her last requests was to have Gregory laid in her bed by my side, and then she made him take hold of my little hand. Her husband came in while she was looking at us so, and when he bent tenderly over her to ask her how she felt now, and seemed to gaze on us two little half-brothers, with a grave sort of kindliness, she looked up in his face and smiled, almost her first smile at him; and such a sweet smile! as more besides aunt Fanny have said. In an hour she was dead. Aunt Fanny came to live with us. It was the best thing that could be done. My father would have been glad to return to his old mode of bachelor life, but what could he do with two little children? He needed a woman to take care of him, and who so fitting as his wife's elder sister? So she had the charge of me from my birth; and for a time I was weakly, as was but natural, and she was always beside me, night and day watching over me, and my father nearly as anxious as she. For his land had come down from father to son for more than three hundred years, and he would have cared

for me merely as his flesh and blood that was to inherit the land after him. But he needed something to love, for all that, to most people, he was a stern, hard man, and he took to me as, I fancy, he had taken to no human being before—as he might have taken to my mother, if she had had no former life for him to be jealous of. I loved him back again right heartily. I loved all around me, I believe, for everybody was kind to me. After a time, I overcame my original weakness of constitution, and was just a bonny, strong-looking lad whom every passer-by noticed, when my father took me with him to the nearest town.

At home I was the darling of my aunt, the tenderly-beloved of my father, the pet and plaything of the old domestics, the “young master” of the farm-labourers, before whom I played many a lordly antic, assuming a sort of authority which sat oddly enough, I doubt not, on such a baby as I was.

Gregory was three years older than I. Aunt Fanny was always kind to him in deed and in action, but she did not often think about him, she had fallen so completely into the habit of being engrossed by me, from the fact of my having come into her charge as a delicate baby. My father never got over his grudging dislike to his step-son, who had so innocently wrestled with him for the possession of my mother's heart. I mistrust me, too, that my father always considered him as the cause of my mother's death and my early delicacy; and utterly unreasonable as this may seem. I believe my father rather cherished his feeling of alienation to my brother as a duty, than strove to repress it. Yet not for the world would my father have grudged him anything that money could purchase. That was, as it were, in the bond when he had wedded my mother. Gregory was lumpish and loutish, awkward and ungainly, marring whatever he meddled in, and many a hard word and sharp scolding did he get from the people about the farm, who hardly

waited till my father's back was turned before they rated the step-son. I am ashamed—my heart is sore to think how I fell into the fashion of the family, and slighted my poor orphan step-brother. I don't think that I ever scouted him, or was wilfully ill-natured to him; but the habit of being considered in all things, and being treated as something uncommon and superior, made me insolent in my prosperity, and I exacted more than Gregory was always willing to grant, and then, irritated, I sometimes repeated the disparaging words I had heard others use with regard to him, without fully understanding their meaning. Whether he did or not I cannot tell. I am afraid he did. He used to turn silent and quiet—sullen and sulky, my father thought it; stupid, aunt Fanny used to call it. But every one said he was stupid and dull, and this stupidity and dullness grew upon him. He would sit without speaking a word, sometimes, for hours; then my father would bid him rise and do some piece of work, may be, about the farm. And he would take three or four tellings before he would go. When we were sent to school, it was all the same. He could never be made to remember his lessons; the school-master grew weary of scolding and flogging, and at last advised my father just to take him away, and set him to some farm-work that might not be above his comprehension. I think he was more gloomy and stupid than ever after this, yet he was not a cross lad; he was patient and good-natured, and would try to do a kind turn for any one, even if they had been scolding or cuffing him not a minute before. But very often his attempts at kindness ended in some mischief to the very people he was trying to serve, owing to his awkward and ungainly ways. I suppose I was a clever lad; at any rate, I always got plenty of praise; and was, as we called it, the cock of the school. The schoolmaster said I could learn anything I chose, but my father, who had no great learning himself, saw little use in much for me, and took me away

betimes, and kept me with him about the farm. Gregory was made into a kind of shepherd, receiving his training under old Adam, who was nearly past his work. I think old Adam was almost the first person who had a good opinion of Gregory. He stood to it that my brother had good parts, though he did not rightly know how to bring them out; and, for knowing the bearings of the Fells, he said he had never seen a lad like him. My father would try to bring Adam round to speak of Gregory's faults and shortcomings; but, instead of that, he would praise him twice as much, as soon as he found out what was my father's object.

One winter-time, when I was about sixteen, and Gregory nineteen, I was sent by my father on an errand to a place about seven miles distant by the road, but only about four by the Fells. He bade me return by the road whichever way I took in going, for the evenings closed in early, and were often thick and misty; besides which, old Adam, now paralytic and bed-ridden, foretold a downfall of snow before long. I soon got to my journey's end, and soon had done my business; earlier by an hour, I thought, than my father had expected, so I took the decision of the way by which I would return into my own hands, and set off back again over the Fells, just as the first shades of evening began to fall. It looked dark and gloomy enough; but everything was so still that I thought I should have plenty of time to get home before the snow came down. Off I set at a pretty quick pace. But night came on quicker. The right path was clear enough in the day-time, although at several points two or three exactly similar diverged from the same place; but when there was a good light, the traveller was guided by the sight of distant objects,—a piece of rock—a fall in the ground which were quite invisible to me now. I plucked up a brave heart, however, and took what seemed to me the right road.

It was wrong, nevertheless, and led me whither I knew not, but to some wild boggy moor where the solitude seemed painful, intense, as if never footfall of a man had come thither to break the silence. I tried to shout—with the dimmest possible hope of being heard—rather to reassure myself by the sound of my own voice; but my voice came husky and short, and yet it dismayed me; it seemed so weird and strange, in that noiseless expanse of black darkness. Suddenly the air was filled thick with dusky flakes, my face and hands were wet with snow. It cut me off from the slightest knowledge of where I was, for I lost every idea of the direction from which I had come, so that I could not even retrace my steps; it hemmed me in, thicker, thicker, with a darkness that might be felt. The boggy soil on which I stood quaked under me if I remained long in one place, and yet I dared not move far. All my youthful hardiness seemed to leave me at once. I was on the point of crying, and only very shame seemed to keep it down. To save myself from shedding tears, I shouted—terrible, wild shouts for bare life they were. I turned sick as I paused to listen; no answering sound came but the unfeeling echoes. Only the noiseless, pitiless snow kept falling thicker, thicker—faster, faster! I was growing numb and sleepy. I tried to move about, but I dared not go far, for fear of the precipices which, I knew, abounded in certain places on the Fells. Now and then, I stood still and shouted again; but my voice was getting choked with tears, as I thought of the desolate helpless death I was to die, and how little they at home, sitting round a warm, red, bright fire, wotted what was become of me,—and how my poor father would grieve for me—it would surely kill him—it would break his heart, poor old man! Aunt Fanny too—was this to be the end of all her cares for me? I began to review my life in a strange kind of vivid dream, in which the various scenes of my few boyish years passed

before me like visions. In a pang of agony, caused by such remembrance of my short life, I gathered up my strength and called out once more, a long, despairing, wailing cry, to which I had no hope of obtaining any answer, save from the echoes around, dulled as the sound might be by the thickened air. To my surprise I heard a cry,—almost as long, as wild as mine—so wild, that it seemed unearthly, and I almost thought it must be the voice of some of the mocking spirits of the Fells, about whom I had heard so many tales. My heart suddenly began to beat fast and loud. I could not reply for a minute or two. I nearly fancied I had lost the power of utterance. Just at this moment a dog barked. Was it Lassie's bark—my brother's collie—an ugly enough brute, with a white ill-looking face, that my father always kicked whenever he saw it, partly for its own demerits, partly because it belonged to my brother. On such occasions, Gregory would whistle Lassie away, and go off and sit with her in some out-house. My father had once or twice been ashamed of himself, when the poor collie had yowled out with the suddenness of the pain, and had relieved himself of his self-reproach by blaming my brother, who, he said, had no notion of training a dog, and was enough to ruin any collie in Christendom with his stupid way of allowing them to lie by the kitchen fire. To all which Gregory would answer nothing, nor even seem to hear, but go on looking absent and moody.

Yes! there again! It was Lassie's bark! Now or never! I lifted up my voice and shouted "Lassie! Lassie! for God's sake, Lassie!" Another moment, and the great whitefaced Lassie was curving and gambolling with delight round my feet and legs, looking, however, up in my face with her intelligent, apprehensive eyes, as if fearing lest I might greet her with a blow, as I had done oftentimes before. But I cried with gladness, as I stooped down and patted her,

My mind was sharing in my body's weakness, and I could not reason, but I knew that help was at hand. A grey figure came more and more distinctly out of the thick, close-pressing darkness. It was Gregory wrapped in his maud.

"Oh, Gregory!" said I, and I fell upon his neck, unable to speak another word. He never spoke much, and made me no answer for some little time. Then he told me we must move, we must walk for the dear life—we must find our road home, if possible; but we must move or we should be frozen to death.

"Don't you know the way home?" asked I.

"I thought I did when I set out, but I am doubtful now. The snow blinds me, and I am feared that in moving about just now, I have lost the right gait homewards."

He had his shepherd's staff with him, and by dint of plunging it before us at every step we took—clinging close to each other—we went on safely enough, as far as not falling down any of the steep rocks, but it was slow, dreary work. My brother, I saw, was more guided by Lassie and the way she took than anything else, trusting to her instinct. It was too dark to see far before us; but he called her back continually, and noted from what quarter she returned, and shaped our slow steps accordingly. But the tedious motion scarcely kept my very blood from freezing. Every bone, every fibre in my body seemed first to ache, and then to swell, and then to turn numb with the intense cold. My brother bore it better than I, from having been more out upon the hills. He did not speak, except to call Lassie. I strove to be brave, and not complain; but now I felt the deadly fatal sleep stealing over me.

"I can go no farther," I said, in a drowsy tone. I remember I suddenly became dogged and resolved. Sleep I would, were it only for five minutes. If death were to be the consequence, sleep I would. Gregory stood still. I

suppose, he recognised the peculiar phase of suffering to which I had been brought by the cold.

"It is of no use," said he, as if to himself. "We are no nearer home than we were when we started, as far as I can tell. Our only chance is in Lassie. Here ! roll thee in my maud, lad, and lay thee down on this sheltered side of this bit of rock. Creep close under it, lad, and I'll lie by thee, and strive to keep the warmth in us. Stay ! hast gotten aught about thee they'll know at home ?"

I felt him unkind thus to keep me from slumber, but on his repeating the question, I pulled out my pocket-handkerchief, of some showy pattern, which aunt Fanny had hemmed for me—Gregory took it, and tied it round Lassie's neck.

"Hie thee, Lassie, hie thee home !" And the white-faced ill-favoured brute was off like a shot in the darkness. Now I might lie down—now I might sleep. In my drowsy stupor, I felt that I was being tenderly covered up by my brother; but what with I neither knew nor cared—I was too dull, too selfish, too numb to think and reason, or I might have known that in that bleak bare place there was naught to wrap me in, save what was taken off another. I was glad enough when he ceased his cares and lay down by me. I took his hand.

"Thou canst not remember, lad, how we lay together thus by our dying mother. She put thy small, wee hand in mine—I reckon she sees us now; and belike we shall soon be with her. Anyhow. God's will be done."

"Dear Gregory," I muttered, and crept nearer to him for warmth. He was talking still, and again about our mother, when I fell asleep. In an instant—or so it seemed—there were many voices about me—many faces hovering round me—the sweet luxury of warmth was stealing into every part of me. I was in my own little bed at home. I am thankful to say, my first word was "Gregory?"

A look passed from one to another—my father's stern old face strove in vain to keep its sternness; his mouth quivered, his eyes filled with unwonted tears.

"I would have given him half my land—I would have knelt at his feet, and asked him to forgive my hardness of heart."

I heard no more. A whirl came through my brain, catching me back to death.

I came slowly to my consciousness, weeks afterwards. My father's hair was white when I recovered, and his hands shook as he looked into my face.

We spoke no more of Gregory. We could not speak of him; but he was strangely in our thoughts. Lassie came and went with never a word of blame; nay, my father would try to stroke her, but she shrank away; and he, as if reproved by the poor dumb beast, would sigh, and be silent and abstracted for a time.

Aunt Fanny—always a talker—told me all. How, on that fatal night, my father, irritated by my prolonged absence, and probably more anxious than he cared to show, had been fierce and imperious, even beyond his wont to Gregory; had upbraided him with his father's poverty, his own stupidity which made his services good for nothing—for so, in spite of the old shepherd, my father always chose to consider him. At last, Gregory had risen up, and whistled Lassie out with him—poor Lassie, crouching underneath his chair for fear of a kick or a blow. Some time before, there had been some talk between my father and my aunt respecting my return; and when aunt Fanny told me all this, she said she fancied that Gregory might have noticed the coming storm, and gone out silently to meet me. Three hours afterwards, when all were running about in wild alarm, not knowing whither to go in search of me—not even missing Gregory, or heeding his absence, poor fellow—poor, poor fellow!—Lassie came home, with my handkerchief tied round her neck,

they knew and understood, and the whole strength of the farm was turned out to follow her, with wraps, and blankets, and brandy, and everything that could be thought of. I lay in chilly sleep, but still alive, beneath the rock that Lassie guided them to. I was covered over with my brother's plaid, and his thick shepherd's coat was carefully wrapped round my feet. He was in his shirt-sleeves—his arm thrown over me—a quiet smile (he had hardly ever smiled in life) upon his still, cold face.

My father's last words were, "God forgive me my hardness of heart towards the fatherless child!"

And what marked the depth of his feeling of repentance, perhaps more than all, considering the passionate love he bore my mother, was this; we found a paper of directions after his death, in which he desired that he might lie at the foot of the grave, in which, by his desire, poor Gregory had been laid with OUR MOTHER.

VII

FLORA ANNIE STEEL

'Valiant Vicky' is one of those tales of the Punjab which were collected and offered to the public in English dress in November 1894. A second edition of the book was called for in December of the same year. These '*Tales of the Punjab*' found a ready market directly they were published, because the material of the Tales which existed in a scattered form appealed to a wider circle of readers when it was collected in one place and presented in English garb. Mrs. Steel, the author, was born in 1847. She was educated at home and married a Bengal civilian in 1867. She lived in India till 1889. While in India, she was Inspectress of Government and Aided Schools, and a member of the Educational Committee. Mrs. Steel has published many other books: '*The Adventures of Akbar*' (1913). '*India through the Ages*' (1908). '*A Tale of Indian Heroes*' (1923).

'Valiant Vicky' is what is called a folk-tale. It is marked by all that delightful simplicity, humour and fantasy which one looks for in a folk-tale—a tale current among the common people. The common people are like children. They dote on crude adventures and marvels. They are not very critical of probability. They will over-

look much in a story if it speeds on to its appointed end and holds their interest, preserving a general consistency of character and plot.

In 'Valiant Vicky' the obscure little weaver becomes a king. That is the appointed end. Three very crude adventures help him to kingship. These three adventures—the weaver's fights with the elephant, the tiger, and the neighbouring Prince's army also provide humorous situations, although it is such broad, farcical humour as simple-minded children and the common people love. On the one hand, we have the ridiculous weaver with his big head and thin legs and the heart of a hare, on the other hand, the mighty elephant, the savage tiger, and the huge army. In every one of these adventures, however, the weaver is assisted to victory by some unexpected turn of Fate. The common people like to see such triumphs won against tremendous odds. And they have their laugh at the weaver every time he goes out to meet an enemy. "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them;" Valiant Vicky must be placed in the third class of great men. All the same, we must not deny a certain shrewdness to this weaver, an ability to make the most of what Fortune offers. After the tiger has been killed, he cuts off its head and tells the townspeople what arrant cowards they were, for he has been fighting the tiger for seven days and seven nights, whilst they have been guzzling and snoozing at home. This puts us in mind of Falstaff. Valiant Vicky does not lack brave words and he can assume a heroic pose. Solemnly he assures the people not to distress themselves, for it is ridiculous to suppose that the tiger will have any chance against him. Considering all things, therefore, we are not sorry that the vainglorious weaver has become a king. The story is written in a lively dramatic style. So neat and fine is the workmanship, so apt and humorous are the words and phrases employed, such is the ease and geniality of the narrative that one is persuaded into the belief that the author has written an original tale instead of presenting 'an old far-off thing' in a new dress.

Ought not to hide his light under a bushel, must not conceal his heroic qualities.

Shrieked to his wife in a terrible taking, cried out in a state of great agitation.

VALIANT VICKY, THE BRAVE WEAVER

Once upon a time there lived a little weaver, by name Victor Prince, but because his head was big, his legs thin, and he was altogether small, and weak, and ridiculous, his neighbours called him Vicky—Little Vicky the Weaver.

But despite his size, his thin legs, and his ridiculous appearance, Vicky was very valiant, and loved to *talk* for hours of his bravery, and the heroic acts he would perform if Fate gave him an opportunity. Only Fate did not, and in

consequence Vicky remained little Vicky the valiant weaver, who was laughed at by all for his boasting.

Now one day, as Vicky was sitting at his loom, weaving, a mosquito settled on his left hand just as he was throwing the shuttle from his right hand, and by chance, after gliding swiftly through the warp, the shuttle came flying into his left hand on the very spot where the mosquito had settled, and squashed it. Seeing this, Vicky became desperately excited: 'It is as I have always said,' he cried; 'if I only had the chance I knew I could show my mettle. Now, I'd like to know how many people could have done that? Killing a mosquito is easy, and throwing a shuttle is easy, but to do both at one time is a mighty different affair! It is easy enough to shoot a great hulking man—there is something to see, something to aim at; then guns and crossbows are made for shooting; but to shoot a *mosquito* with a *shuttle* is quite another thing. That requires a man!'

The more he thought over the matter, the more elated he became over his skill and bravery, until he determined that he would no longer suffer himself to be called 'Vicky'. No! now that he had shown his mettle he would be called 'Victor'—'Victor Prince'—or better still, 'Prince Victor'; that was a name worthy his merits. But when he announced this determination to the neighbours, they roared with laughter, and though some did call him Prince Victor, it was with such sniggering and giggling and mock reverence that the little man flew home in a rage. Here he met with no better reception, for his wife, a fine handsome young woman, who was tired to death by her ridiculous little husband's whims and fancies, sharply bade him hold his tongue and not make a fool of himself. Upon this, beside himself with pride and mortification, he seized her by the hair, and beat her most unmercifully. Then, resolving to stay no longer in a town where his merits were unrecognised,

he bade her prepare some bread for a journey, and set about packing his bundle.

'I will go into the world!' he said to himself. 'The man who can shoot a mosquito dead with a shuttle ought not to hide his light under a bushel.' So off he set, with his bundle, his shuttle, and a loaf of bread tied up in a kerchief.

Now as he journeyed he came to a city where a dreadful elephant came daily to make a meal off the inhabitants. Many mighty warriors had gone against it, but none had returned. On hearing this the valiant little weaver thought to himself, 'Now is my chance! A great haystack of an elephant will be a fine mark to a man who has shot a mosquito with a shuttle!' So he went to the King, and announced that he proposed single-handed to meet and slay the elephant. At first the King thought the little man was mad, but as he persisted in his words, he told him that he was free to try his luck if he chose to run the risk; adding that many better men than he had failed.

Nevertheless, our brave weaver was nothing daunted; he even refused to take either sword or bow, but strutted out to meet the elephant armed only with his shuttle.

'It is a weapon I thoroughly understand, good people,' he replied boastfully to those who urged him to choose some more deadly arm, 'and it has done its work in its time, I can tell you.'

It was a beautiful sight to see little Vicky swaggering out to meet his enemy, while the townsfolk flocked to the walls to witness the fight. Never was such a valiant weaver till the elephant, desecring its tiny antagonist, trumpeted fiercely, and charged right at him, and then, alas! all the little man's courage disappeared, and forgetting his new name of Prince Victor he dropped his bundle, his shuttle, and his bread, and bolted away as fast as Vicky's legs could carry him.

Now it so happened that his wife had made the bread

ever so sweet, and had put all sorts of tasty spices in it, because she wanted to hide the flavour of the poison she had put in it also; for she was a wicked, revengeful woman, who wanted to be rid of her tiresome, whimsical little husband. And so, as the elephant charged past, it smelt the delicious spices, and catching up the bread with its long trunk, gobbled it up without stopping an instant. Meanwhile fear lent speed to Vicky's short legs, but though he ran like a hare, the elephant soon overtook him. In vain he doubled and doubled, and the beast's hot breath was on him, when in sheer desperation he turned, hoping to bolt through the enormous creature's legs; being half blind with fear, however, he ran full tilt against them instead. Now, as luck would have it, at that very moment the poison took effect, and the elephant fell to the ground stone dead.

When the spectators saw the monster fall they could scarcely believe their eyes, but their astonishment was greater still when, running up the scene of action, they found valiant Vicky seated in triumph on the elephant's head, calmly mopping his face with his handkerchief.

'I had to pretend to run away,' he explained, 'or the coward would never have engaged me. Then I gave him a little push, and he fell down, as you see. Elephants are big beasts, but they have no strength to speak of.'

The good folks were amazed at the careless way in which Valiant Vicky spoke of his achievement, and as they had been too far off to see very distinctly what had occurred, they went and told the king that the little weaver was just a fearful wee man, and had knocked over the elephant like a ninepin. Then the king said to himself, 'None of my warriors and wrestlers, no, not even the heroes of old, could have done this. I must secure this little man's services if I can.' So he asked Vicky why he was wandering about the world.

'For pleasure, for service, or for conquest!' returned Valiant Vicky, laying such stress on the last word that the King, in a great hurry, made him Commander-in-Chief of his whole army, for fear he should take service elsewhere.

So there was Valiant Vicky a mighty fine warrior, and as proud as a peacock of having fulfilled his own predictions.

'I knew it!' he would say to himself when he was dressed out in full fig, with shining armour and waving plumes, and spears, swords, and shields; 'I *felt* I had it in me!'

Now after some time a terribly savage tiger came ravaging the country, and at last the city folk petitioned that the mighty Prince Victor might be sent out to destroy it. So out he went at the head of his army, for he was a great man now, and had quite forgotten all about looms and shuttles. But first he made the king promise his daughter in marriage as a reward. 'Nothing for nothing!' said the astute little weaver to himself, and when the promise was given he went out as gay as a lark.

'Do not distress yourselves, good people,' he said to those who flocked round him praying for his successful return; it is ridiculous to suppose the tiger will have a chance. Why, I knocked over an elephant with my little finger! I am really invincible!'

But, alas for our Valiant Vicky.' No sooner did he see the tiger lashing its tail and charging down on him, than he ran for the nearest tree, and scrambled into the branches. There he sat like a monkey, while the tiger glowered at him from below. Of course when the army saw their Commander-in-Chief bolt like a mouse, they followed his example, and never stopped until they reached the city, where they spread the news that the little hero had fled up a tree.

'There let him stay,' said the king, secretly relieved, for he was jealous of the little weaver's prowess, and did not want him for a son-in-law.

Meanwhile, Valiant Vicky sat cowering in the tree, while the tiger occupied itself below with sharpening its teeth and claws, and curling its whiskers, till poor Vicky nearly tumbled into its jaws with fright. So one day, two days, three days, six days passed by; on the seventh the tiger was fiercer, hungrier, and more watchful than ever. As for the poor little weaver, he was so hungry that his hunger made him brave, and he determined to try and slip past his enemy during its mid-day snooze. He crept stealthily down inch by inch, till his foot was within a yard of the ground, and then? Why then the tiger, which had had one eye open all the time, jumped up with a roar.

Valiant Vicky shrieked with fear, and making a tremendous effort, swung himself into a branch, cocking his little bandy legs over it to keep them out of reach, for the tiger's red panting mouth and gleaming white teeth were within half an inch of his toes. In doing so, his dagger fell out of its sheath, and went pop into the tiger's wide-open mouth, and thus point foremost down into its stomach, so that it died!

Valiant Vicky could scarcely believe his good fortune, but, after prodding at the body with a branch, and finding it did not move, he concluded that the tiger really was dead, and ventured down. Then he cut off its head, and went home in triumph to the king.

'You and your warriors are a nice set of cowards' said he, wrathfully. 'Here have I been fighting that tiger for seven days and seven nights, without bite or sup, whilst you have been guzzling and snoozing at home. Pah! it's disgusting! but I suppose every one is not a hero as I am!' So Prince Victor married the king's daughter, and was a greater man than ever.

But by and by a neighbouring prince, who bore a grudge against the king, came with a huge army, and encamped outside the city, swearing to put every man, woman, and

child within it to the sword. Hearing this, the inhabitants of course cried with one accord, 'Prince Victor! Prince Victor to the rescue!' So the valiant little weaver was ordered by the king to go out and destroy the invading army, after which he was to receive half the kingdom as a reward. Now Valiant Vicky, with all his boasting, was no fool, and he said to himself, 'This is a very different affair from the others. A man may kill a mosquito, an elephant, and a tiger; yet another man may kill *him*. And here is not one man, but thousands! No, no!—what is the use of half a kingdom if you haven't a head on your shoulders? Under the circumstances I prefer *not* to be a hero!

So in the dead of night he bade his wife rise, pack up her golden dishes, and follow him—'Not that you will want the golden dishes, at my house,' he explained boastfully, 'for I have heaps and heaps, but on the journey these will be useful.' Then he crept outside the city, followed by his wife carrying the bundle, and began to steal through the enemy's camp.

Just as they were in the very middle of it, a big cockchafer flew into Valiant Vicky's face. 'Run! run!' he shrieked to his wife, in a terrible taking, and setting off as fast as he could, never stopped till he had reached his room again and hidden under the bed. His wife set off at a run likewise, dropping her bundle of golden dishes with a clang. The noise roused the enemy, who, thinking they were attacked, flew to arms; but being half asleep, and the night being pitchdark, they could not distinguish friend from foe, and falling on each other, fought with such fury that by next morning not one was left alive! And then, as may be imagined, great were the rejoicings at Prince Victor's prowess. 'It was a mere trifle!' remarked the valiant little gentleman modestly; 'when a man can shoot a mosquito with a shuttle, everything is child's play.'

So he received half the kingdom, and ruled it with great

dignity, refusing ever afterwards to fight, saying truly that kings never fought themselves, but paid others to fight for them.

Thus he lived in peace, and when he died every one said Valiant Vicky was the greatest hero the world had ever seen.

VIII

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

The Cabuliwallah was translated from the Bengali original by Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble). It appeared first in a volume of stories entitled '*Hungry Stones*' (1916). It was reproduced again in '*Stories from Tagore*' published by Messrs Macmillan in 1918. I have followed the text of the story as it is given in the latest edition of '*Stories from Tagore*.' Sir Rabindranath was born in 1861. He was privately educated: at the age of 24 he left Calcutta and went to live in the country to look after his father's estates. There he wrote his books. 'The Gitanjali' was published in English in 1912, 'The Gardener' and 'The Crescent Moon' were published in 1913. Sir Rabindranath has written stories, poems, novels. In 1913 he was awarded the Nobel Prize. He has visited Europe several times and has been honoured in China and Japan.

'*The Cabuliwallah*' is a story of child-life. But it is not only that. It goes far beyond that. For it lays bare all those springs of tenderness and love for a child which nourish the life of the parent even when he is separated from the child by long ranges of mountains and many years of exile. A little child—it may be said—forges the golden chain which binds the whole round earth. The thought of their little ones draws together all the parents of the world. It is the love of a child which is the light in the parent's soul. It makes summer of winter and illuminates the darkness of a dungeon with its radiance. In '*The Cabuliwallah*' Rahman is separated from Parvati who lives in far-off Afghanistan, but the light of his love for Parvati burns steadily in his heart. Rahman and Mini's father have little in common in social position, race, or creed, but as fathers loving their daughters with the same intensity they feel their close kinship to each other.

Tagore treats the subject in a refreshingly original way. He builds his story on a father's romantic love for his daughter. Not many writers have turned their attention to this theme, though, ever and anon, poets have celebrated in song a mother's love for a child. And yet there can be little enough difference between either parent's passionate love of their children.

Tagore's story has a vivacious opening. It begins with a rush of Mini's talk, her fusillade of questions and comments. Presently she is introduced to the Cabuliwallah and the acquaintance develops rapidly into intimacy. The wheel of Fortune turns round, however, and the Cabuliwallah is sentenced to several years of imprisonment. When he returns to Mini's place, he finds himself in a changed world. The little child whom he knew has become a bride, and will not talk and joke with him. It is then that the Cabuliwallah shows Mini's father the impression of his little daughter's hand on a piece of paper which he had carried always next his heart. Mini's father is deeply touched. Thus the story which opens gaily ends on a pathetic note. Tagore takes a slice of Mini's life and gives it unity. It begins with the early days of her childhood and finishes with her marriage. The whole of this phase of Mini's life corresponds to another phase of Rahman's life—his acquaintance and warm friendship with Mini, the long imprisonment, and his last meeting with the little one. Rahman is attracted to Mini because she reminds him of his daughter and Mini's father is drawn to Rahman because Rahman loves his (Rahman's) daughter passionately. In this way the various parts of the story fit harmoniously into each other and a unity of impression is left on the mind of the reader.

Little Mini with her irrepressible tendency to talk, her pride in her superior knowledge, her contempt of Ramdayal's ignorance, her endless curiosity and interest in all things, her fear of the Cabuliwallah conquered by her love of sweets, the exchange of old jokes which provoked a fresh peal of laughter every time they met, her subsequent absorption in her own life and comparative and complete neglect of her father and the Cabuliwallah—all this is charmingly portrayed. Mini is a very attractive little person. She wins our love by her innocent speech and actions (witness the drumming on the knees), her vivacity and gaiety. Tagore understands children and delineates their life with loving minuteness and care. He may be described as the laureate of children.

Mini's father is kindly and cultured, tolerant, sympathetic and humane. He has a lively sense of humour. Tagore has endowed him with something of his own understanding of children. He will not interfere with their natural instinct to talk and ask no end of questions. He does not discourage Mini's intimacy with the Cabuliwallah. Further, he is a wise father and helps Mini to get rid of her false fear of the Cabuliwallah. He is generous in the truest sense of the word, for he gives a currency-note (Was it a hundred rupee note?) to Rahman though he knew he would have to curtail the marriage festivities as a result of this gift. Above all, we love him because he recognizes his equality with Rahman as a loving father who regards his daughter as the light of his house, whose departure to her husband's house would leave her father's in shadow.

The Cabuliwallah who gives his name to the story, is the most picturesque figure in it. With his tall turban, the bag on the back, the boxes of grapes, almonds, raisins, his talk of Abdur Rahman and the Russians, his clasp-knife—it is easy to recognize

him as one of our familiar acquaintances in the streets of Bombay or Calcutta. The author keeps in the background the shady side of Rahman's character. He is presented in the light of his love for Mini and the harshness, the sternness of his disposition, are toned down, softened, by his warm attachment to Mini. His love for her is pure and unselfish. He will not accept any payment for the sweets he offers to Mini. He is ready at all times to laugh and joke with her. His mind is in truth not far removed from that of the child. Perhaps that is one reason why he enjoys so completely Mini's joke about the elephant in the bag. All the same, the change in Mini's life affects him as much as her father. It is the tragedy of the passing years which robs children of their childhood and young men of their youth.

During the course of the narrative, Tagore glances at many things – the ignorance and timidity of the mother, her orthodox notions of bringing up children as contrasted with the 'new-fangled' notions of her father, the quaint dress of the bride, the preparations for the marriage and the Puja Holidays. These things deepen our impression of reality. The story is a transcript from common life. The author 'throws over it a colouring of his imagination,' and bathes it in the sunshine of his genial humour.

Abdur-Rahman, Ameer of Afghanistan between 1880 and 1901. He is said to have done much to strengthen the power of his country, define its boundary, and improve its social conditions.

Frontier Policy, the attitude of the Government of India towards Afghanistan, and the measures adopted by it from time to time to protect the North-West of India from a foreign invasion.

The Puja Holidays, this is a long holiday in autumn in honour of Durga's visit to her father's home. Durga is the daughter of the Himalaya Mountains. She married Shiwa, the Lord of Kailasa. At the end of the festival Durga goes back to her husband's place.

Bhadravi, one of the rāgas, melodies in Indian music suggestive of sadness.

THE CABULIWALLAH

My five-year-old daughter Mini cannot live without chattering. I really believe that in all her life she has not wasted a minute in silence. Her mother is often vexed at this, and would like to stop her prattle, but I would not. For Mini to be quiet is unnatural, and I cannot bear it long. And so my own talk with her is always lively.

One morning, for instance, when I was in the midst of the seventeenth chapter of my new novel, my little Mini stole into the room, and putting her hand into mine, said :

"Father! Ramdayal, the door-keeper, calls a crow a krow! He doesn't know anything, does he?"

Before I could explain to her the difference between one language and another in this world, she had embarked on the full tide of another subject. "What do you think, Father? Bhola says there is an elephant in the clouds, blowing water out of his trunk, and that is why it rains!"

And then, darting off anew, while I sat still, trying to think of some reply to this: "Father! what relation is Mother to you?"

With a grave face I contrived to say: "Go and play with Bhola, Mini! I am busy!"

The window of my room overlooks the road. The child had seated herself at my feet near my table, and was playing softly, drumming on her knees. I was hard at work on my seventeenth chapter, in which Pratap Singh, the hero, has just caught Kanchanlata, the heroine, in his arms, and is about to escape with her by the third-storey window of the castle, when suddenly Mini left her play, and ran to the window, crying: "A Cabuliwallah! A Cabuliwallah!" And indeed, in the street below, there was a Cabuliwallah, walking slowly along. He wore the loose, soiled clothing of his people, and a tall turban; he carried a bag on his back, and boxes of grapes in his hand.

I cannot tell what my daughter's feelings were when she saw this man, but she began to call him loudly. "Ah!" thought I, "he will come in, and my seventeenth chapter will never be finished!" At that very moment the Cabuliwallah turned, and looked up at the child. When she saw this, she was overcome by terror, and running to her mother's protection, disappeared. She had a blind belief that inside the bag, which the big man carried, there were perhaps two or three other children like herself. The pedlar meanwhile entered my doorway and greeted me with a smile.

So precarious was the position of my hero and my heroine, that my first impulse was to stop and buy something, since Mini had called the man to the house. I made some small purchases, and we began to talk about Abdur Rahman, the Russians, the English, and the Frontier Policy.

As he was about to leave, he asked: "And where is the little girl, sir?"

And then, thinking that Mini must get rid of her false fear, I had her brought out.

She stood by my chair, and looked at the Cabuliwallah and his bag. He offered her nuts and raisins, but she would not be tempted, and only clung the closer to me, with all her doubts increased.

This was their first meeting.

A few mornings later, however, as I was leaving the house, I was startled to find Mini, seated on a bench near the door, laughing and talking, with the great Cabuliwallah at her feet. In all her life, it appeared, my small daughter had never found so patient a listener, save her father. And already the corner of her little *sari* was stuffed with almonds and raisins, the gift of her visitor. "Why did you give her those?" I said, and taking out an eight-anna piece, I handed it to him. The man accepted the money without demur, and put it into his pocket.

Alas, on my return, an hour later, I found the unfortunate coin had made twice its own worth of trouble! For the Cabuliwallah had given it to Mini; and her mother, catching sight of the bright round object, had pounced on the child with: "Where did you get that eight-anna piece?"

"The Cabuliwallah gave it me," said Mini cheerfully.

"The Cabuliwallah gave it you!" cried her mother greatly shocked. "O Mini! how could you take it from him?"

I entered at the moment, and saving her from impending disaster proceeded to make my own inquiries.

It was not the first or the second time, I found, that the two had met. The Cabuliwallah had overcome the child's first terror by a judicious bribe of nuts and almonds, and the two were now great friends.

They had many quaint jokes, which amused them greatly. Mini would seat herself before him, look down on his gigantic frame in all her tiny dignity, and with her face rippling with laughter would begin: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah! what have you got in your bag?"

And he would reply, in the nasal accents of the mountaineer: "An elephant!" Not much cause for merriment, perhaps; but how they both enjoyed the fun! And for me, this child's talk with a grown-up man had always in it something strangely fascinating.

Then the Cabuliwallah, not to be behindhand, would take his turn: "Well, little one, and when are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

Now nearly every small Bengali maiden has heard long ago about her father-in-law's house; but we were a little newfangled, and had kept these things from our child, so that Mini at this question must have been a trifle bewildered. But she would not show it, and with ready tact replied: "Are *you* going there?"

"Amongst men of the Cabuliwallah's class, however, it is well-known that the words *father-in-law's house* have a double meaning. It is a euphemism for *jail*, the place where we are well cared for, at no expense to ourselves. In this sense would the sturdy pedlar take my daughter's questions. "Ah," he would say, shaking his fist at an invisible policeman. "I will thrash my father-in-law!" Hearing this, and picturing the poor discomfited relative, Mini would go off into peals of laughter, in which her formidable friend would join.

These were autumn mornings, the very time of year when kings of old went forth to conquest; and I, without stirring from my little corner in Calcutta, would let my mind wander over the whole world. At the very name of another country, my heart would go out to it, and at the sight of a foreigner in the streets, I would fall to weaving a network of dreams,—the mountains, the glens and the forest of his distant land, with his cottage in their midst, and the free and independent life of far-away wilds. Perhaps scenes of travel are conjured up before me and pass and re-pass in my imagination all the more vividly, because I lead an existence so like a vegetable that a call to travel would fall upon me like a thunder-bolt. In the presence of this Cabuliwallah, I was immediately transported to the foot of arid mountain peaks, with narrow little defiles twisting in and out amongst their towering heights. I could see the string of camels bearing the merchandise, and the company of turbanned merchants, some carrying their queer old firearms, and some their spears, journeying downward towards the plains. I could see——. But at some such point, Mini's mother would intervene, and implore me to "beware of that man."

Mini's mother is unfortunately very timid. Whenever she hears a noise in the street, or sees people coming towards the house, she always jumps to the conclusion that they are either thieves, or drunkards, or snakes, or tigers, or malaria, or cockroaches, or caterpillars. Even after all these years of experience, she is not able to overcome her terror. So she was full of doubts about the Cabuliwallah, and used to beg me to keep a watchful eye on him.

If I tried to laugh her fear gently away, she would turn round seriously, and ask me solemn questions:—

Were children never kidnapped?

Was it not true that there was slavery in Cabul?

Was it so very absurd that this big man should be able to

carry off a tiny child ?

I urged that though not impossible, it was very improbable. But this was not enough, and her dread persisted. But as it was a very vague dread, it did not seem right to forbid the man the house, and the intimacy went on unchecked.

Once a year, in the middle of January, Rahman, the Cabuliwallah, used to return to his own country, and as the time approached, he would be very busy, going from house to house collecting his debts. This year, however, he could always find time to come and see Mini. It might have seemed to a stranger that there was some conspiracy between the two, for when he could not come in the morning, he would appear in the evening.

Even to me it was a little startling now and then, suddenly to surprise this tall, loose-garmented man laden with his bags, in the corner of a dark room : but when Mini ran in smiling, with her "O Cabuliwallah ! Cabuliwallah !" and the two friends, so far apart in age, subsided into their old laughter and their old jokes, I felt reassured.

One morning, a few days before he had made up his mind to go, I was correcting proof-sheets in my study. The weather was chilly. Through the window the rays of the sun touched my feet, and the slight warmth was very welcome. It was nearly eight o'clock, and early pedestrians were returning home with their heads covered. Suddenly I heard an uproar in the street, and, looking out, saw Rahman being led away bound between two policemen, and behind them a crowd of inquisitive boys. There were blood-stains on his clothes, and one of the policemen carried a knife. I hurried out, and stopping them, inquired what it all meant. Partly from one, partly from another, I gathered that a certain neighbour had owed the pedlar something for a Rampuri shawl, but had denied buying it, and that in the

course of the quarrel Rahman had struck him. Now, in his excitement, the prisoner began calling his enemy all sorts of names, when suddenly in a verandah of my house appeared my little Mini, with her usual exclamation: "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!". Rahman's face lighted up as he turned to her. He had no bag under his arm to-day, so that she could not talk about the elephant with him. She therefore at once proceeded to the next question: "Are you going to your father-in-law's house?" Rahman laughed and said: "That is just where I am going, little one!" Then, seeing that the reply did not amuse the child, he held up his fettered hands. "Ah!" he said, "I would have thrashed that old father-in-law, but my hands are bound!"

On a charge of murderous assault, Rahman was sentenced to several years' imprisonment.

Time passed, and he was forgotten. Our accustomed work in the accustomed place went on, and the thought of the once free mountaineer spending his years in prison seldom or never occurred to us. Even my light hearted Mini, I am ashamed to say, forgot her old friend. New companions filled her life. As she grew older, she spent more of her time with girls. So much, indeed, did she spend with them that she came no more, as she used to do to her father's room, so that I rarely had any opportunity of speaking to her.

Years had passed away. It was once more autumn, and we had made arrangements for our Mini's marriage. It was to take place during the Puja Holidays. With Durga returning to Kailas, the light of our home also would depart to her husband's house, and leave her father's in shadow.

The morning was bright. After the rains, it seemed as though the air had been washed clean and the rays of the sun looked like pure gold. So bright were they, that they made even the sordid brick-walls of our Calcutta lanes radiant. Since early dawn the wedding-pipes had been sounding, and at each burst of sound my own heart throbbed. The

wail of the tune, *Bhairavi*, seemed to intensify the pain I felt at the approaching separation. My Mini was to be married that night.

From early morning noise and bustle had pervaded the house. In the courtyard there was the canopy to be slung on its bamboo poles; there were chandeliers with their tinkling sound to be hung in each room and verandah. There was endless hurry and excitement. I was sitting in my study, looking through the accounts, when some one entered, saluting respectfully, and stood before me. It was Rahman, the Cabuliwallah. At first I did not recognise him. He carried no bag, his long hair was cut short and his old vigour seemed to have gone. But he smiled, and I knew him again.

"When did you come, Rahman?" I asked him.

"Last evening," he said, "I was released from jail."

The words struck harshly upon my ears. I had never before talked with one who had wounded his fellow-man, and my heart shrank within itself when I realised this; for I felt that the day would have been better-omened had he not appeared.

"There are ceremonies going on," I said, "and I am busy. Perhaps you could come another day?"

He immediately turned to go; but as he reached the door he hesitated, and said: "May I not see the little one, sir, for a moment?" It was his belief that Mini was still the same. He had pictured her running to him as she used to do, calling "O Cabuliwallah! Cabuliwallah!". He had imagined too that they would laugh and talk together, just as of old. Indeed, in memory of former days, he had brought, carefully wrapped up in paper, a few almonds and raisins and grapes, obtained somehow or other from a countryman; for what little money he had, had gone.

I repeated: "There is a ceremony in the house, and you will not be able to see any one to-day."

The man's face fell. He looked wistfully at me for a moment, then said, "Good morning," and went out.

I felt a little sorry, and would have called him back but I found he was returning of his own accord. He came close up to me and held out his offerings with the words: "I have brought these few things, sir, for the little one. Will you give them to her?"

I took them, and was going to pay him, but he caught my hand and said: "You are very kind, sir! Keep me in your memory. Do not offer me money!—You have a little girl: I too have one like her in my own home. I think of her, and bring this fruit to your child—not to make a profit for myself."

Saying this, he put his hand inside his big loose robe, and brought out a small and dirty piece of paper. Unfolding it with great care, he smoothed it out with both hands on my table. It bore the impression of a little hand. Not a photograph. Not a drawing. Merely the impression of an ink-smeared hand laid flat on the paper. This touch of the hand of his own little daughter he had carried always next his heart, as he had come year after year to Calcutta to sell his wares in the streets.

Tears came to my eyes. I forgot that he was a poor Cabuli fruit-seller, while I was——. But no, what was I more than he? He also was a father.

That impression of the hand of his little Parvati in her distant mountain home reminded me of my own little Mini.

I sent for Mini immediately from the inner apartment. Many difficulties were raised, but I swept them aside. Clad in the red silk of her wedding-day, with the sandal paste on her forehead, and adorned as a young bride, Mini came, and stood modestly before me.

The Cabuliwallah seemed amazed at the apparition. He could not revive their old friendship. At last he smiled and said: "Little one, are you going to your father-in-law's house?"

But Mini now understood the meaning of the word "father-in-law," and she could not answer him as of old. She blushed at the question, and stood before him with her bridelike face bowed down.

I remembered the day when the Cabuliwallah and my Mini had first met, and I felt sad. When she had gone, Rahman sighed deeply, and sat down on the floor. The idea had suddenly come to him that his daughter too must have grown up, while he had been away so long, and that he would have to make friends anew with her also. Assuredly he would not find her as she was when he left her. And besides, what might not have happened to her in these eight years?

The marriage-pipes sounded, and the mild autumn sunlight streamed round us. But Rahman sat in the little Calcutta lane, and saw before him the barren mountains of Afghanistan.

I took out a currency-note, gave it to him, and said: "Go back to your daughter, Rahman, in your own country, and may the happiness of your meeting bring good fortune to my child!"

Having made this present, I had to curtail some of the festivities. I could not have the electric lights I had intended, nor the military band, and the ladies of the house were despondent about it. But to me the wedding-feast was all the brighter for the thought that in a distant land a long-lost father had met again his only child.

IX

ARNOLD BENNETT

'*Hot Potatoes*' is described as a 'Frolic' by Mr. Arnold Bennett. He gives the title 'Frolic' to one of the two types of stories which were published in '*The Matador of the Five Towns*' in 1912. "*The Matador of the Five Towns*" from which the volume takes its name is a tragic story. 'Hot Potatoes' is placed by the author in the 'Frolic' class. Mr. Bennett was born in North Staffordshire in

1867. He was educated at Newcastle-under-Lyme, and matriculated at London University about 1885. After this, he entered the office of his father, who was a solicitor, and devoted himself to the study of law. In 1893 he abandoned law for journalism. Mr Arnold Bennett has written novels, short stories, dramas, and 'pocket-philosophies' for the guidance of the young and inexperienced. His work is in demand everywhere and journalists and publishers are willing to pay him—as Mr Robert Lynd expresses it humorously—something between a shilling and a guinea a word. '*Old Wives Tale*' (1908), '*The Clayhanger*' trilogy (1910-1916), and '*Riceyman Steps*' (1923) are among the best novels written by Mr. Bennett. Apart from '*The Matador of the Five Towns*' (1912), he has written other volumes of short stories '*Tales of the Five Towns*' (1905), and '*The Grim Smile of the Five Towns*' (1907). '*Milestones*' (1912), written in collaboration with Mr. Edward Knoblauch, is among his successes on the stage. '*The Great Adventure*', another of his plays, was published in 1913.

'*Hot Potatoes*' is a comedy of ordinary life. The story is built round an absurd little incident of everyday life. To Mr. Bennett, everyday life is infinitely interesting, being full of romance, mystery and endless wonder. He needs not princes and jewels, giants and genu to achieve his effects of romance. All about us, even in our trivial actions and speeches, romance lies hidden. Mr Bennett goes in quest of this romance of ordinary things. He enjoys himself when he discovers the hidden treasure, and infects us with his own naive wonder and delight as he narrates the story of his various finds.

In the story selected in our text, Mrs. Swann goes to Mrs. Clayton Vernon's to give her son two *hot potatoes* of medium size which would help him to keep his fingers warm and to play better in the Musical Festival of the town. Trivial as the incident is, Mr Bennett turns it into a most diverting little drama. He does this by laying bare the humorous contrast between the wild enthusiasm of the Five Towns for the Musical Festival and their daily pursuit of 'cash' and the solid things of life. The citizens of Hanbridge are keen on this Musical Festival only because they were determined not to be outdone by other towns in this matter of having a Musical Festival of their own. Few in the town could appreciate music and its spiritual delights, but all were ready to subscribe handsomely to help make a great success of the Musical Festival. In such a humorous setting as this, Mrs. Swann is introduced. She is perfectly self possessed, sane and balanced in all matters except those which concern the musical exploits of her son, Gilbert. Her passionate absorption in her son, her trepidation and nervous excitement as the momentous night of the Festival approaches in which her son is to play on the 'cello, and the errand of personally delivering the two potatoes on which she embarks—this abnormal romance of Mrs. Swann's nature as contrasted with her normal sanity, independence and calm of character adds further to the humour of the situation. Finally, there is the contrast between Mrs. Clayton Vernon and Mrs. Swann. Mrs. Clayton Vernon is ample in figure, magnificently dressed: her manners are unapproachable. She is

serene, her hall is imposing : it is lighted by electricity : she has a maid 'who must cost her a pretty penny in aprons !' In her presence Mrs. Swann looks small and diminutive. She is agitated, and the consciousness of the hot potatoes she has in her muff makes her feel more than usually awkward. She is on tiptoe the whole time and quite at a loss what to do. She offers her left hand to Mrs. Vernon and lies boldly to cover up all the traces of the precious potatoes she is carrying on her person.

Mr. Bennett makes the most of his material. He puts things in perspective by giving us a detailed history of Mrs. Swann, her son Gilbert, and the Five Towns where they lived and moved and had their being. The result is the comedy in the final stage when the potatoes turn treacherous and threaten to betray Mrs. Swann's secret is most keenly relished by the reader. Mr. Bennett makes his readers see things from the right angle of vision. Carefully he prepares the ground and leads us on to the supreme crisis where we watch the show spell-bound by the humour and the narrative skill of the author till Mr. Bennett breaks the bubble with a whiff of his breath by making Mrs. Vernon say casually that at the instance of Mr. Millwain she has herself provided those hot potatoes which (though Mrs. Vernon knows it not) had brought Mrs. Swann to the brink of disaster. Mrs. Swann is tremendously relieved and the reader shares her relief and laughs with joy as she sweeps the ruin of the potatoes into the fire and bolts.

Mr. Bennett begins in the middle of the story after the manner of epic poets. The dramatic moment of Gilbert's departure is described in the opening section—"*He was gone ! The boy was gone !*" And Mrs. Swann feels desolated. Then the author turns aside to narrate the history of the Musical Festival, Mrs. Swann and Gilbert. This is the second part. The visit to Mrs. Clayton Vernon's with two hot potatoes and its sequel are described in the third part. The story has an attractive beginning, an interesting middle, and a joyous end. Mr. Bennett acquits himself well in the story-teller's task. The six sections of '*Hot Potatoes*' make up together an exquisite pattern. They range themselves alongside each other like cells in a honeycomb.

One of Mr. Bennett's striking merits as a story-teller is that he is never in a hurry, he never forces pace. He lets the crisis evolve itself naturally, waits, so to speak, for the culminating event without feeling nervous or fidgety. In spite of this leisurely evolution, our interest in the story never flags, because Mr. Bennett knows how to hold our attention. He provides variety of incident and character, description and detail. He breaks the even flow of narrative lest it should become monotonous by giving it a twist and turn, by arranging for a surprise now and again which shakes us out of our drowsiness. Above all, we are kept interested and amused by the humorous commentary of the author which accompanies the events and persons in the narrative. Further, everything in Mr. Bennett is on a small scale. There are no sensational murders or abductions. He presents truth as he sees it. He is content to work on a bit of ivory—as Jane Austen put it. Sincerity is the out-

standing quality of his writing. And sincere presentation of truth makes for humour, for it exposes the little vanities and pretences which play such a large part in our lives.

It is a small incident which Mr. Bennett describes when Mrs. Swann tries to board a car and lets go the car rail for fear of dropping the potato in the muff. She began again, and the conductor taking her for a hysterical woman remarked—"Now, Missis, up with ye." Another such incident is described later when Mrs. Swann asks the conductor to put her out opposite to Mrs. Clayton Vernon's. He nodded as if to say disdainfully—"Do I know the house? Do I know my pocket?" Mr. Bennett's story abounds in such diverting little incidents. Mrs. Swann is not only contrasted with Mrs. Vernon; her gentle son and loyal husband are also contrasted with this 'comely little thing' lively and energetic, determined and daring, proud, above all, independent, keenly conscious of her wealth and her appreciation of art. Further the decision of the Five Towns to have a Musical Festival of their own just because other towns have had theirs is most happily described. "Men who had never heard of Wagner, men who could not have told the difference between a sonata and a sonnet to save their souls, were invited to guarantee five pounds apiece against possible loss; and they bravely and blindly did so." The description of Gilbert's talk as his mother helps him with the unfamiliarities of evening dress is equally happy. The story is slightly diverted from the straight path when the childhood of Mrs. Swann's son is described at great length. The inability of the capricious Countess of Chell to patronize the Festival is a pleasant, piquant surprise. Mrs. Clayton Vernon's habit of the lorgnon is an exceedingly illuminating detail. When Mrs. Swann says "I'm not too warm," the author comments—"This, to speak bluntly, was an untruth." The posters announced that the box-plan could be consulted at the stations, and the author remarks dryly that the Alexandra Hall contained no boxes whatever.

As he tells the story, Mr. Bennett assists us to form our impressions of characters and events, and creates the Five Towns world which he knows so well. He is a conscientious artist, working with minute care and deliberation. It may be said of him that he knows how every brick in the edifice which he builds came to be in the place which is assigned to it. Mr. Bennett is like the supervising Providence of the world he creates, and accompanies the reader, explaining and elucidating things as the story moves from scene to scene. He writes in a clear, matter-of-fact, vigorous style, which is an expression of his personality. And when he says that Mrs. Clayton Vernon knew no more about music than she knew about the North Pole, or when he observes that 'one cannot properly nurse, either a baby or a 'cello with two hands full of potatoes,' or again when he remarks that the violoncello 'was fragile as a pretty woman, ungainly as a navvy and precious as honour,' we seem to hear his own voice, describing objects and persons emphatically, quizzically with a quaint delight in the aptness of the words employed.

The Five Towns are the well-known "Pottery District" in north Staffordshire. They are engaged in the manufacture of china and earthenware goods. The Five

Towns which Mr. Bennett refers to under slightly disguised names are Tunstall (Turnhill), Burs'lem (Bursley), Hanley (Hanbridge) Stoke-upon-Trent (Knype) and Longton (Longshaw). Mr Bennett was born in the district of Shelton, north-east of Hanley. He has what is called the genius of place and has immortalized in his books the Pottery District and its hard-headed, prosperous, self-satisfied, stiff-necked, but very human (they possess all our strength and weakness) inhabitants.

Scouting Iroquois, Iroquois is a North American Indian. It is the name given to one of the great divisions of North American Indians. Scouting Iroquois is a North American Indian engaged in the work of scouting—that is—getting information of the movements of the enemy ; such a scout has to look behind and before, lest the enemy should seize him.

Wagner (1813-1883) one of the greatest of German musicians. His music we are told, is strikingly original, and he assigned an equal degree of importance in his work to poetry, music and scenery.

Sonata, a species of instrumental musical composition. *Sonnet*, a poem originally sung to a musical accompaniment, but now only a poem of fourteen iambic lines divided into two groups.

Staffordshire Signal, this is Mr. Bennett's description of the *Staffordshire Sentinel* a local paper to which he must have contributed early in his life.

The Graphic, a large-sized weekly illustrated London newspaper established in 1859. It reproduces the masterpieces of ancient and modern art.

Thalberg's variations, Thalberg (1812-1871) was a pianist and composer for the piano. *Variation* is repetition of the same tune or theme in a changed form.

Waltz, popular music produced for Waltz, a dance performed by persons who dance in couples.

Reverie, a dreamy piece of instrumental music.

Nem.-Con., unanimously.

Judas Maccabeus, a sacred opera—musical drama—by Handel, a famous German composer.

Décolletée wearing a low-necked dress.

HOT POTATOES

It was considered by certain people to be a dramatic moment in the history of musical enterprise in the Five Towns when Mrs. Swann opened the front door of her house at Bleakridge, in the early darkness of a November evening and let forth her son Gilbert. Gilbert's age was nineteen and he was wearing evening dress, a form of raiment that

had not hitherto happened to him. Over the elegant suit was his winter overcoat, making him bulky, and round what may be called the rim of the overcoat was a white woollen scarf, and the sleeves of the overcoat were finished off with white woollen gloves. Under one arm he carried a vast inanimate form whose extremity just escaped the ground. This form was his violoncello, fragile as a pretty woman, ungainly as a navvy, and precious as honour. Mrs Swann looked down the street, which ended to the east in darkness and a marl-pit, and up the street, which ended to the west in Trafalgar Road and electric cars; and she shivered, though she had a shawl over her independent little shoulders. In the Five Towns, and probably elsewhere, when a woman puts her head out of her front door, she always looks first to right and then to left, like a scouting Iroquois and if the air nips she shivers—not because she is cold, but merely to express herself.

"For goodness sake keep your hands warm," Mrs. Swann enjoined her son.

"Oh!" said Gilbert, with scornful lightness, as though his playing had never suffered from cold hands, "it's quite warm to-night!" Which it was not.

"And mind what you eat!" added his mother. "There! I can hear the car."

He hurried up the street. The electric tram slid in thunder down Trafalgar Road, and stopped for him with a jar, and he gingerly climbed into it, practising all precautions on behalf of his violoncello. The car slid away again towards Bursley, making blue sparks. Mrs. Swann stared mechanically at the flickering gas in her lobby, and then closed her front door. He was gone! The boy was gone!

Now, the people who considered the boy's departure to be a dramatic moment in the history of musical enterprise in the Five Towns were Mrs. Swann, chiefly, and the boy, secondarily.

II

And more than the moment—the day, nay, the whole week—was dramatic in the history of local musical enterprise.

It had occurred to somebody in Hanbridge, about a year before, that since York, Norwich, Hereford, Gloucester, Birmingham, and even Blackpool had their musical festivals, the Five Towns, too, ought to have its musical festival. The Five Towns possessed a larger population than any of these centres save Birmingham, and it was notorious for its love of music. Choirs from the Five Towns had gone to all sorts of places—such as Brecknock, Aberystwyth, the Crystal Palace, and even a place called Hull—and had come back with first prizes—cups and banners—for the singing of choruses and part-songs. There were three (or at least two and a half) rival choirs in Hanbridge alone. Then also the brass band contests were famously attended. In the Five Towns the number of cornet-players is scarcely exceeded by the number of public houses. Hence the feeling, born and fanned into lustiness at Hanbridge, that the Five Towns owed it to its self-respect to have a Musical Festival like the rest of the world! Men who had never heard of Wagner, men who could not have told the difference between a sonata and a sonnet to save their souls, men who spent all their lives in manufacturing tea-cups or china door-knobs, were invited to guarantee five pounds apiece against possible loss on the festival; and they bravely and blindly did so. The conductor of the largest Hanbridge Choir, being appointed to conduct the preliminary rehearsals of the Festival Chorus, had an acute attack of self-importance, which, by the way, almost ended fatally a year later.

Double-crown posters appeared magically on all the hoardings announcing that a Festival consisting of three evening and two morning concerts would be held in the Alexandra Hall, at Hanbridge, on the 6th, 7th, and 8th

November, and that the box-plan could be consulted at the principal stationers. The Alexandra Hall contained no boxes whatever, but "box-plan" was the phrase sacred to the occasion, and had to be used. And the Festival more and more impregnated the air, and took the lion's share of the columns of the *Staffordshire Signal*. Every few days the *Signal* reported progress, even to intimate biographical details of the singers engaged, and of the composers to be performed, together with analyses of the latter's works. And at last the week itself had dawned in exhilaration and excitement. And early on the day before the opening day John Merazzi, the renowned conductor, and Herbert Millwain, the renowned leader of the orchestra, and the renowned orchestra itself, all arrived from London. And finally sundry musical critics arrived from the offices of sundry London dailies. The presence of these latter convinced an awed population that its Festival was a real Festival, and not a local make-believe. And it also tranquillized in some degree the exasperating and disconcerting effect of a telegram from the capricious Countess of Chell (who had taken six balcony seats and was the official advertised high patroness of the Festival) announcing at the last moment that she could not attend.

III

Mrs. Swann's justification for considering (as she in fact did consider) that her son was either the base or the apex of the splendid pyramid of the Festival lay in the following facts:

From earliest infancy Gilbert had been a musical prodigy, and the circle of his fame had constantly been extending. He could play the piano with his hands before his legs were long enough for him to play it with his feet. That is to say, before he could use the pedals. A spectacle formerly familiar to the delighted friends of the Swanns

was Gilbert, in a pinafore and curls, seated on a high chair topped with a large Bible and a bound volume of the *Graphic*, playing *Home, Sweet Home* with Thalberg's variations, while his mother, standing by his side on her right foot, put the loud pedal on or off with her left foot according to the infant's whispered orders. He had been allowed to play from ear—playing from ear being deemed especially marvellous—until some expert told Mrs. Swann that playing solely from ear was a practice to be avoided if she wished her son to fulfil the promise of his babyhood. Then he had lessons at Knype, until he began to teach his teacher. Then he said he would learn the fiddle, and he did learn the fiddle; also the viola. He did not pretend to play the flute, though he could. And at school the other boys would bring him their penny or even sixpenny whistles so that he might show them of what wonderful feats a common tin whistle is capable.

Mr. Swann was secretary for the Toft End Brickworks and Colliery Company (Limited). Mr. Swann had passed the whole of his career in the offices of the prosperous Toft End Company, and his imagination did not move freely beyond the Company's premises. He had certainly intended that Gilbert should follow in his steps; perhaps he meant to establish a dynasty of Swanns, in which the secretaryship of the 20 per cent. paying company should descend for ever from father to son. But Gilbert's astounding facility in music had shaken even this resolve, and Gilbert had been allowed at the age of fifteen to enter, as assistant, the shop of Mr. James Otkinson, the piano and musical instrument dealer and music-seller, in Crown Square, Hanbridge. Here, of course, he found himself in a musical atmosphere. Here he had at once established a reputation for showing off the merits of a piano, a song, or a waltz to customers male and female. Here he had thirty pianos, seven harmoniums, and all the new and a lot of classical music to experiment with,

He would play any 'piece' at sight for the benefit of any lady in search of a nice easy waltz or reverie. Unfortunately ladies would complain that the pieces proved much more difficult at home than they had seemed under the fingers of Gilbert in the shop. Here, too, he began to give lessons on the piano. And here he satisfied his secret ambition to learn the violoncello, Mr. Otkinson having in stock a violoncello that had never found a proper customer. His progress with the 'cello had been such that the theatre people offered him an engagement, which his father and his own sense of enormous respectability of the Swanns compelled him to refuse. But he always played in the band of the Five Towns Amateur Operatic Society, and was beloved by its conductor as being utterly reliable. His connection with choirs started through his merits as a rehearsal accompanist who could keep time and make his bass chords heard against a hundred and fifty voices. He had been appointed (*nem. con.*) rehearsal accompanist to the Festival Chorus. He knew the entire Festival music backwards and upside-down. And his modestly expressed desire to add his 'cello as one of the local reinforcements of the London orchestra had been almost eagerly complied with by the Advisory Committee.

Nor was this all. He had been invited to dinner by Mrs. Clayton Vernon, the social leader of Bursley. In the affair of the Festival Mrs. Clayton Vernon loomed larger than even she really was. And this was due to an accident, to a sheer bit of luck on her part. She happened to be a cousin of Mr. Herbert Millwain, the leader of the orchestra down from London. Mrs. Clayton Vernon knew no more about music than she knew about the North Pole, and cared no more. But she was Mr. Millwain's cousin, and Mr. Millwain had naturally to stay at her house. And she came in her carriage to fetch him from the band rehearsals; and, in short, any one might have thought from her self-satisfied demeanour (though she was a decent sort of woman at

heart) that she had at least composed *Judas Maccabeus*. It was at a band rehearsal that she had graciously commanded Gilbert Swann to come and dine with her and Mr. Millwain between the final rehearsal and the opening concert. This invitation was, as it were, the overflowing drop in Mrs. Swann's cup. It was proof, to her, that Mr. Millwain had instantly pronounced Gilbert to be the equal of London 'cellists, and perhaps their superior. It was proof, to her, that Mr. Millwain relied on him particularly to maintain the honour of the band in the Festival.

Gilbert had dashed home from the final rehearsal, and his mother had helped him with the unfamiliarities of evening dress, while he gave her a list of all the places in the music where, as he said, the band was "rocky," and especially the 'cellos, and a further list of all the smart musical things that the players from London had said to him and he had said to them. He simply knew everything from the inside. And not even the great Merazzi, the conductor, was more familiar with the music than he. And the ineffable Mrs. Clayton Vernon had asked him to dinner with Mr. Millwain! It was indubitable to Mrs. Swann that all the Festival rested on her son's shoulders.

IV

"It's freezing, I think," said Mr. Swann, when he came home at six o'clock from his day's majestic work at Toft End. This was in the bedroom. Mrs. Swann, a comely little thing of thirty-nine, was making herself resplendent for the inaugural solemnity of the Festival, which began at eight. The news of the frost disturbed her.

"How annoying!" she said.

"Annoying?" he questioned blandly. "Why?"

"Now you needn't put on any of your airs, John!" she snapped. She had a curt way with her at critical times. "You know as well as I do that I'm thinking of

Gilbert's hands.....No! you must wear your frock-coat, of course!.....All that drive from the other end of the town right to Hanbridge in a carriage! Perhaps outside the carriage, because of the 'cello! There'll never be room for two of them and the 'cello and Mrs. Clayton Vernon in her carriage! And he can't keep his hands in his pockets because of holding the 'cello. And he's bound to pretend he isn't cold. He's so silly. And yet he knows perfectly well he won't do himself justice if his hands are cold. Don't you remember last year at the Town Hall?"

"Well," said Mr. Swann, "we can't do anything; anyway we must hope for the best."

"That's all very well," said Mrs. Swann. And it was.

Shortly afterwards, perfect in most details of her black silk, she left the bedroom, requesting her husband to be quick, as tea was ready. And she came into the little dining-room where the youthful servant was poking up the fire

"Jane," she said, "put two medium-sized potatoes in the oven to bake."

"Potatoes, mum?"

"Yes, potatoes," said Mrs. Swann, tartly.

It was an idea of pure genius that had suddenly struck her; the genius of common sense.

She somewhat hurried the tea; then rang.

"Jane," she inquired, "are those potatoes ready?"

"Potatoes?" exclaimed Mr. Swann.

"Yes, hot potatoes," said Mrs. Swann tartly. "I'm going to run up with them by car to Mrs. Vernon's. I can slip them quietly over to Gil. They keep your hands warm better than anything. Don't I remember when I was a child! I shall leave Mrs. Vernon's immediately, of course, but perhaps you had better give me my ticket and I will meet you at the hall. Don't you think it's the best plan, John?"

"As you like," said Mr. Swann, with the force of habit.

He was supreme in most things, but in the practical details of their son's life and comfort she was supreme. Her decision in such matters had never been questioned. Mr. Swann had a profound belief in his wife as a uniquely capable and energetic woman. He was tremendously loyal to her, and he sternly inculcated the same loyalty to her in Gilbert.

V

Just as the car had stopped at the end of the street for Gilbert and his violoncello, so—more than an hour later—it stopped for Mrs. Swann and her hot potatoes.

They were hot potatoes—nay, very hot potatoes—of a medium size, because Mrs. Swann's recollections of youth had informed her that if a potato is too large one cannot get one's fingers well around it, and if it is too small it cools somewhat rapidly. She had taken two, not in the hope that Gilbert would be able to use two at once, for one cannot properly nurse either a baby or a 'cello with two hands full of potatoes, but rather to provide against accident. Besides, the inventive boy might after all find a way of using both simultaneously, which would be all the better for his playing at the concert, and hence all the better for the success of the Musical Festival.

It never occurred to Mrs. Swann that she was doing anything in the least unusual. There she was, in her best boots and her best dress, and her best hat, and her sealskin mantle (not easily to be surpassed in the town), and her muff to match (nearly), and concealed in the muff were the two very hot potatoes. And it did not strike her that women of fashion like herself, wives of secretaries of flourishing companies, do not commonly go about with hot potatoes concealed on their persons. For she was a self-confident woman, and after a decision she did not reflect, nor did she heed minor consequences. She was

always sure that what she was doing was the right and the only thing to do. And, to give her justice, it was; for her direct, abrupt common sense was indeed remarkable. The act of climbing up into the car warned her that she must be skilful in the control of these potatoes; one of them nearly fell out of the right end of her muff as she grasped the car rail with her right hand. She had to let go and save the potato, and begin again, while the car waited. The conductor took her for one of those hesitating, hysterical women who are the bane of car conductors. "Now, missis!" he said. "Up with ye!" But she did not care what manner of woman the conductor took her for.

The car was nearly full of people going home from their work, of people actually going in a direction contrary to the direction of the Musical Festival. She sat down among them, shocked by this indifference to the Musical Festival. At the back of her head had been an idea that all the cars for Hanbridge would be crammed to the step, and all the cars from Hanbridge forlorn and empty. She had vaguely imagined that the thoughts of a quarter of a million of people would that evening be centred on the unique Musical Festival. And she was shocked also by the conversation—not that it was in the slightest degree improper—but because it displayed no interest whatever in the Musical Festival. And yet there were several Festival advertisements adhering to the roof of the car. Travellers were discussing football, soap, the weather, rates, trade; travellers were dozing; travellers were reading about starting prices; but not one seemed to be occupied with the Musical Festival. "Nevertheless," she reflected, with consoling pride, "if they knew that our Gilbert was playing 'cello in the orchestra and dining at this very moment with Mr. Millwain, some of them would be fine and surprised, that they would!" No one would ever have suspected, from

her calm, careless, proud face, that such vain and twopenny thoughts were passing through her head. But the thoughts that do pass through the heads of even the most commonsensed philosophers, men and women, are truly astonishing.

In four minutes she was at Bursley Town Hall where she changed into another car—full of people equally indifferent to the Musical Festival—for the suburb of Hillport, where Mrs. Clayton Vernon lived.

"Put me out opposite Mrs. Clayton Vernon's, will you?" she said to the conductor, and added, "You know the house?"

He nodded as if to say disdainfully in response to such a needless question: "Do I know the house? Do I know my pocket?"

As she left the car she did catch two men discussing the Festival, but they appeared to have no intention of attending it. They were earthenware manufacturers. One of them raised his hat to her. And she said to herself: "He at any rate knows how important my Gilbert is in the Festival!"

It was at the instant she pushed open Mrs. Clayton Vernon's long and heavy garden gate, and crunched in the frosty darkness up the short winding drive, that the notion of the peculiarity of her errand first presented itself to her. Mrs. Clayton Vernon was a relatively great lady, living in a relatively great house; one of the few exalted or peculiar ones who did not dine in the middle of the day like other folk. Mrs. Clayton Vernon had the grand manner. Mrs. Clayton Vernon instinctively and successfully patronized everybody. Mrs. Clayton Vernon was a personage with whom people did not joke. And lo! Mrs. Swann was about to invade her courtly and luxurious house, uninvited, unauthorized, with a couple of hot potatoes in her muff. What would Mrs. Clayton Vernon think of hot potatoes in a muff? Of course, the Swanns were "as good as anybody." The Swanns knelt before nobody. The Swanns

were of the cream of the town, combining commerce with art, and why should not Mrs. Swann take practical measures to keep her son's hands warm in Mrs. Clayton Vernon's cold carriage. Still, there was only one Mrs. Clayton Vernon in Bursley, and it was impossible to deny that she inspired awe, even in the independent soul of Mrs. Swann.

Mrs. Swann rang the bell, reasssuring herself. The next instant an electric light miraculously came into existence outside the door, illuminating her from head to foot. This startled her. But she said to herself that it must be the latest dodge, and that, at any rate, it was a very good dodge, and she began again the process of reassuring herself. The door opened, and a prim creature stiffly starched stood before Mrs. Swann. "My word!" reflected Mrs. Swann, "she must cost her mistress a pretty penny for getting up aprons!" And she said aloud curtly:

"Will you please tell Mr. Gilbert Swann that some one wants to speak to him a minute at the door?"

"Yes," said the servant, with pert civility. "Will you please step in?"

She had not meant to step in. She had decidedly meant not to step in, for she had no wish to encounter Mrs. Clayton Vernon; indeed, the reverse. But she immediately perceived that in asking to speak to a guest at the door she had socially erred. At Mrs. Clayton Vernon's refined people did not speak to refined people at the door. So she stepped in, and the door was closed, imprisoning her and her potatoes in the imposing hall.

"I only want to see Mr. Gilbert Swann," she insisted.

"Yes," said the servant. "Will you please step into the breakfast-room? There is no one there. I will tell Mr. Swann."

VI

As Mrs. Swann was being led like a sheep out of the hall into an apartment on the right, which the servant styled the

breakfast-room, another door opened, further up the hall, and Mrs. Clayton Vernon appeared. Magnificent though Mrs. Swann was, the ample Mrs. Clayton Vernon, discreetly *décolletée*, was even more magnificent. Dressed as she meant to show herself at the concert, Mrs. Clayton Vernon made a resplendent figure worthy to be the cousin of the leader of the orchestra—and worthy even to take the place of the missing Countess of Chell. Mrs. Clayton Vernon had a *lorgnon* at the end of a shaft of tortoise-shell; otherwise, a pair of eyeglasses on a stick. She had the habit of the *lorgnon*; the *lorgnon* seldom left her, and whenever she was in any doubt or difficulty she would raise the *lorgnon* to her eyes and stare patronizingly. It was a gesture tremendously effective. She employed it now on Mrs. Swann, as who should say, "Who is this insignificant and scarcely visible creature that has got into my noble hall?" Mrs. Swann stopped, struck into immobility by the basilisk glance. A courageous and even a defiant woman, Mrs. Swann was taken aback. She could not possibly tell Mrs. Clayton Vernon that she was the bearer of hot potatoes to her son. She scarcely knew Mrs. Clayton Vernon, had only met her once at a bazaar! With a convulsive unconscious movement her right hand clenched nervously within her muff and crushed the rich mealy potato it held until the flesh of the potato was forced between the fingers of her glove. A horrible sticky mess! That is the worst of a high-class potato, cooked, as the Five Towns phrase it, "in its jacket." It will burst on the least provocation. There stood Mrs. Swann, her right hand glued up with escaped potato, in the sober grandeur of Mrs. Clayton Vernon's hall, and Mrs. Clayton Vernon bearing down upon her like a Dreadnought.

Steam actually began to emerge from her muff.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Clayton Vernon, inspecting Mrs. Swann. "It's Mrs. Swann! How do you do, Mrs. Swann?"

She seemed politely astonished, as well she might be. By a happy chance she did not perceive the wisp of the steam. She was not looking for steam. People do not expect steam from the interior of a visitor's muff.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Swann, who was really in a pitiable state. "I'm sorry to trouble you, Mrs. Clayton Vernon. But I want to speak to Gilbert for one moment."

She then saw that Mrs. Clayton Vernon's hand was graciously extended. She could not take it with her right hand, which was fully engaged with the extremely heated sultriness of the ruined potato. She could not refuse it, or ignore it. She therefore offered her left hand which Mrs. Clayton Vernon pressed with a well-bred pretence that people always offered her their left hands.

"Nothing wrong, I do hope!" said she gravely.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Swann. "Only just a little matter which had been forgotten. Only half a minute. I must hurry off at once as I have to meet my husband. If I could just see Gilbert——"

"Certainly," said Mrs. Clayton Vernon. "Do come into the breakfast-room, will you? We've just finished dinner. We had it very early, of course, for the concert. Mr. Millwain—my cousin—hates to be hurried. Maria, be good enough to ask Mr. Swann to come here. Tell him that his mother wishes to speak to him."

In the breakfast-room Mrs. Swann was invited, nay commanded by Mrs. Clayton Vernon, to loosen her mantle. But she could not loosen her mantle. She could do nothing. In clutching the potato to prevent bits of it from falling out of the muff, she of course effected the precise opposite of her purpose, and bits of the luscious and perfect potato began to descend the front of her mantle. The clock struck seven, and ages elapsed, during which Mrs. Swann could not think of anything whatever to say, but the finger of the clock somehow struck motionless at seven, though the

pendulum plainly wagged.

"I'm not too warm," she said at length, feebly 'but obstinately resisting Mrs. Clayton Vernon's command. This, to speak bluntly, was untruth. She was too warm.

"Are you sure that nothing is the matter?" urged Mrs. Clayton Vernon, justifiably alarmed by the expression of her visitor's features. "I beg you to confide in me if——

"Not at all," said Mrs. Swann trying to laugh. "I'm only sorry to disturb you. I didn't mean to disturb you."

"What on earth is that?" cried Mrs. Clayton Vernon.

The other potato, escaping Mrs. Swann's vigilance, had run out of the muff and come to the carpet with a dull thud. It rolled half under Mrs. Swann's dress. Almost hysterically she put her foot on it, thus making pulp of the second potato.

"What?" she inquired innocently.

"Didn't you hear anything? I trust it isn't a mouse! We have had them once."

Mrs. Clayton Vernon thought how brave Mrs. Swann was, not to be frightened by the word 'mouse.'

"I didn't hear anything," said Mrs. Swann. Another untruth.

"If you aren't too warm, won't you come a little nearer the fire?"

But not for a thousand pounds would Mrs. Swann have exposed the mush of potato on the carpet under her feet. She could not conceive in what ignominy the dreadful affair would end, but she was the kind of woman that nails her colours to the mast.

"Dear me!" Mrs. Clayton Vernon murmured. "How delicious those potatoes do smell! I can smell them all over the house."

This was the most staggering remark that Mrs. Swann had ever heard.

"Potatoes?" very weakly.

"Yes," said Mrs. Clayton Vernon, smiling. "I must tell you that Mr. Millwain is very nervous about getting his hands cold in driving to Hanbridge. And he has asked me to have hot potatoes prepared. Isn't it amusing! It seems hot potatoes are constantly used for this purpose in winter by the pupils of the Royal College of Music, and even by the professors. My cousin says that even a slight chilliness of the hands interferes with his playing. So I am having potatoes done for your son too. A delightful boy he is!"

"Really!" said Mrs. Swann. "How queer! But what a good idea!"

She might have confessed then. But you do not know her if you think she did. Gilbert came in, anxious and alarmed. Mrs. Clayton Vernon left them together. The mother explained matters to the son, and in an instant of time the ruin of two magnificent potatoes was at the back of the fire. Then, without saluting Mrs. Clayton Vernon, Mrs. Swann fled.

X

H. G. WELLS

'*The Stolen Bacillus*' was published in a collection of stories which came out in 1897 under the delightful title of *Thirty Strange Stories*. This was one of the earliest of Mr. Wells's books. In the 'nineties when the book came out, the short story was a very popular form of writing. It was in fact the hey-day of the short story. As Mr. Wells put it, short stories broke out everywhere; and he himself helped the harvest by bringing out his '*Thirty Strange Stories*'. '*The Stolen Bacillus*' has that touch of fantasy which entitles it to a legitimate place in Wells's book of *Strange Stories*. Herbert George Wells was born in 1866 at Bromley in Kent. He was educated at a private school, but later studied under Huxley at the Royal College of Science and took the B.Sc. degree of London University. Mr. Wells has written numerous novels and sociological essays. He published other collections of short stories apart from the one noticed above, such as '*Tales of Space and Time*', (1899) and '*Twelve Stories and a Dream*' (1903). In '*The Country of the Blind and other Stories*' (1911) he collected all those short stories of

his which he wished 'anyone to read again'. Of his novels, '*Kipps*' was published in 1905, '*Tono-Bungay*' in 1909, '*The Dream*' in 1924, and '*Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island*' in 1928. '*The Outline of History*' which came out in fortnightly parts in 1920 is an attempt to bring the teaching of history into line with modern developments.

In '*The Stolen Bacillus*' Mr. Wells has harnessed science to the service of romance. And so pleasant is his humour, so delightful is the play of his fancy that as we read the story we submit ourselves to his direction and are willing, like the children in Browning's story drawn by the music of the Piper, to be led wherever it pleases the story-teller to lead us. The analogy of Browning's Piper would seem to be very appropriate in this connection. For Mr. Wells has something of a wizard in him, something that defies well-established rules and canons of the art of story-telling. And yet he works the miracle of creation as well as any other story-teller.

In his theory of the short story, Mr. Wells refuses to recognise any hard and fast type for the short story. "Insistence upon rigid forms and austere unities seems to me", he asserts, "the instinctive reaction of the sterile against the fecund". Mad as this doctrine appears, there is a method in the madness. For elsewhere Mr. Wells lets us into the secret of his own manner of story-telling which explains the miracle of his creation. "I found", he says, "that taking almost anything as a starting-point and letting my thoughts play about it, there would presently come out of the darkness in a manner quite inexplicable, some absurd or vivid little incident more or less relevant to that initial nucleus." '*The Stolen Bacillus*' is a happy illustration of this method of writing a story. The cholera bacillus with the possibilities of killing the population of a whole city which lurk in it—this is the initial nucleus. Mr. Wells lets his fancy play round it, and when he has conjured up the vision of death spreading through the city, the anarchist who is sworn to the destruction of all government emerges on the scene naturally enough. His appropriation of the tube, the discovery of the Bacteriologist's mistake at the end, which turns what threatened to be a tragedy into a delightful comedy, and the desperate race of the cabs with the cabmen hulloing and hurrying as the cabs rush past them—these are suggested by Mr. Wells's humour and the lively sense of the grotesque and the fantastic which the author of '*The Stolen Bacillus*' has in common with the author of '*The Pickwick Papers*'.

The story follows a natural line of development. From the death-dealing cholera bacillus to the anarchist is one short step. The theft of the tube and the pursuit of the thief is another. The discovery of the error and the return home is the third. '*The Stolen Bacillus*' has not the machine-like, mechanical unity of some story by Edgar Allan Poe in which the bolts and screws are all tightly fixed up. It moves more freely and dashes forward to its end like a wave that gathers momentum and speed even as it sweeps fast to its goal.

Everything in Mr. Wells is, in fact, on the move. He has the gift of a mobile imagination. If the incidents in '*The Stolen Bacillus*' hurry forward to the

entire and the construction of the story reveals the dynamic quality of his mind, the characters are etched with the same rapidity.

The Bacteriologist is portrayed as a harum-scarum, eccentric man of science who loves his subject, loves his wife and loves humanity. Rhetoric is his weakness. When he meets a sympathetic listener like the anarchist in our story, he lets his enthusiasm run away with him and depicts vividly the awful ruin which the living bacteria might work if they were let loose in a supply of drinking water. Happily science has imprisoned the little beasts in a bottle. Even here, directly the Bacteriologist remembers what has been said about his weakness, he pulls himself up sharply. Such charming modesty wins us over at once. He is, again, a kindly, humane character. I wish, he says, referring to the bacteria of cholera, we could kill and stain everyone of them in the universe. And when he realizes that the tube of living bacteria has been stolen, he sets off in hot pursuit of the thief, determined at all costs to prevent him from emptying the tube into a water-supply. Towards his wife he is most affectionate. He thanks her for bringing his things to him and agrees to wear a coat on a hot day only because she insists on it. But he endears himself to us most by his keen sense of humour. He notices how the anarchist gloated on those cultivations of disease-germs. And when the latter tells him that he has drunk the cultivation, a smile hangs in the corner of his mouth. He laughs at himself when he thinks of his mistake and the idea of blue patches appearing on the anarchist's body. He talks rapidly and is quick in action, but he resembles his creator most in his enjoyment of the absurdity of things.

The anarchist in the story is true to type. He is vain and egotistic, fanatical and unscrupulous. The one aim which he has set before himself is the destruction of organized authority, and if that prize is to be won by sacrificing his own life, he would glory in that sacrifice. Such is the mentality of the anarchist; and his pale face, the limp white hand, the lank black hair, the haggard expression and nervous manner proclaim that this friend of the Bacteriologist is the true-blue article. He is quick to seize the clue in the scientist's speech and hastens to pocket the tube which will enable him to accomplish his end. As he thinks of the revenge he would have on those who had slighted him and of his own far-shining renown in future, he becomes a comic figure. When he drinks the contents of the tube, shouts 'Vive l'Anarchie', waves a dramatic farewell, and strides off *jostling his infected body against as many as possible*, the comedy turns into a farce. Mr. Wells adds a grotesque touch to the whole by mentioning the blue patches which might show themselves on the anarchist's person.

Minnie is slightly sketched. She is a slave to convention while her husband defies it and will not wear a coat on a hot day only because they might meet Mrs. Jabber. Minnie lives in a world of social forms and is outraged by the sight of her husband running about London—in the height of the season too—hatless and coatless in pursuit of the anarchist. She is delicate, fragile, and sensitive. Even the knock on the door suggests the delicacy of her character. A gentle rap, a mere light touch of

the finger nails, says Mr. Wells describing the knock, was heard at the door. She is disturbed again by the applause of the cabmen, but does not mind it, knowing that she is doing her duty. Finally, her husband is afraid lest she should faint as soon as an anarchist visitor is mentioned. Minnie is, in fact, the essential better half of an eccentric man of science. It is her duty to love and admire her husband, to look after his creature-comforts and prevent him from making himself ridiculous in the eyes of the world. She fills well the part which is assigned to her, nevertheless we feel that she is something of a puppet.

The crowning charm of the story is to be sought, however, in the imaginative, humorous blend of science and romance which it accomplishes with such perfect ease and naturalness. 'In the 'nineties,' it has been said, 'Mr. Wells wrote largely for the fun of writing, and for the sheer joy in inventing things.' *'The Stolen Bacillus'* is an example of this sheer joy in invention and writing for the fun of writing. For the story resembles nothing so much as a castle of sand built with child-like delight, and then pulled down with the same innocent pleasure in unmaking the things one has made. The tube containing the germ of cholera is stolen by an anarchist and the dreadful vision of a whole city being decimated is called up before the mind. That is how Mr. Wells's imagination works. His humour follows close behind. The thief gets into a cab, the Bacteriologist into another. The Bacteriologist's wife into a third. Never did cabs race after each other in such desperation. Mr. Wells gets all the fun he can out of these hare-brained racers. Old Tootles, Tommy Byles (What delicious names!) and Company who watch the show and their excited comments are a rare feast of delight. "She's a-follown' him. Usually the other way about", remarks old Tootles with fine irony (Is it a dig at Shaw one wonders?). It is humour of the Dickens type, uproarious, broad, farcical. Primarily it consists in inventing a fantastic situation (such as this of the racing cabs) and adding to our joy by introducing the dialect of cabbies, ostler boys and other low-class characters. The pleasure lies in abandoning ourselves to the fun of the moment without being too fine or finicking. Mr. Wells reminds us again of Dickens when he describes the last moments of the anarchist who has drunk cholera poison (as he thinks). "He waved his cabman out of existence, so to speak, and stood with his arms folded upon his breast..... You are too late my friend, I have drunk it. *The cholera is abroad.*" On the other hand, there is genuine comedy in the casual confession of the Bacteriologist that he had mistaken the new species of bacterium for Asiatic cholera. In the same strain of refined humour he talks to his wife when she requests him to put on his coat. The comic imaginings of the anarchist as he gloats over the ruin he will work and the revenge he will have after his death on all those who have slighted him in life is also written in a vein of genuine comedy. The humour of Mr. Wells plays round the whole story like a lambent light. There is not a dull line in it from end to end. Bacteria and microscopes existed before Mr. Wells. It is to his everlasting glory that he brought them into short story literature and conquered a new province for romance. Murders and ruin of all kinds were brought about earlier by dagger and sword and fire. Mr. Wells replaces

diggers and swords by living germs of disease and makes bombs and other weapons of destruction appear crude by comparison. And his genial humour is as delightful as his novelty of invention. It invests such hideous things as anarchists and cholera germs with a dreamlike freshness and beauty.

Mr. Wells writes in an easy, conversational style. It is like a stream that flows swiftly without the slightest check or hindrance. Mr. Wells's writing has been often compared to bright conversation. It is, in truth, a reflection of his mind which works rapidly. It has—as we have seen—a dynamic quality. And yet he has an eye for significant detail (witness the ginger-coloured screw of a horse driven furiously) and he stops to describe things in detail when the occasion calls for fulness of description. (Observe his description of death spreading in the town when the water-supply is poisoned).

Bacillus, a minute living being which can be seen only under a microscope. A microscope is an instrument which shows objects in an enlarged form. It magnifies objects which cannot be seen by the naked eye. A slide (a piece of glass) on which a drop of solution containing bacilli—small germs of disease—is put, is placed under a microscope. We cannot see them with our naked eyes, but the microscope shows them to us. By raising or lowering the lens (the glass of a microscope through which one looks at objects placed under it) one can bring the object into focus—within reach of one's sight.

Bacteriologist, one who watches the habits and movements of germs of disease. These are known as bacteria—extremely minute living creatures—described as micro-organisms, because they are so small that they can be seen only under the microscope. Bacilli, microbes, bacteria, germs—all these words practically mean the same thing. Bacteria appear under a microscope like rods—streaks and shreds—as the anarchist calls them. They have to be stained, coloured, for microscopic examination. The Bacteriologist stains and kills them. And he also prepares a culture or cultivation of them, *i e.*, helps them to grow by giving them the nourishment they need. *Bacterium* was at first used in the sense of a group, class, division, of which there are many species or sub-divisions, but now it is used indefinitely.

Bacillus of cholera, this is the *comma bacillus*, discovered by the German bacteriologist - Koch—in 1883. It is curved in shape, hence its name. It is grown in a gelatin medium, that is, reared artificially by a bacteriologist. In its natural state it flourishes in a warm, damp soil, and is carried into the body by water. Cholera has its home in every province in India, and kills a large number of people every year. *Asiatic cholera* is the species of the disease which flourishes in India.

Anarchist rascals, a contemptuous description of the colleagues who had slighted him. Anarchists aimed at giving complete liberty to individuals. They were enemies of power and authority of every kind. They hated all government. The best government is, in their view, the worst. As a means of achieving their object, they threw bombs and murdered kings and presidents of republics. Most European countries

passed severe laws to stamp out anarchism. Great Britain was the only exception. As a result of these severe laws, *Ravachol* and *Vaillant* were executed in Paris in 1892 and 1893 respectively, being guilty of bomb outrages against innocent citizens. The anarchist in our story seems to be a Russian. For musing on his ethnology (racial characteristics), the Bacteriologist says that the man was neither Teutonic (German), nor Latin (French or Italian, Spanish or Portuguese). 'A morbid product anyhow,' he concludes—one with a sickly, diseased mind.

Blue ruin, complete, hopeless ruin. *Bloomin' loonatic* is an excessively mad fellow. *Bloomin'*,—blooming 'an intensive epithet meaning 'confoundedly, very.' *Blowed if there ain't*, this is slang for 'Curse me if there is not a lunatic here'. 'Blowed' is short for 'I'll be blowed', ...confound me etc.

Ain't he a-clawing out of the keb, isn't he looking out of the cab with stretched neck.

Strike me giddy, may heaven strike me giddy, if I do not.....*Fieldmale*, female. *Bloomin' lark*, a huge joke.

Vive l'Anarchie, Long live Anarchy

THE STOLEN BACILLUS

"This again," said the Bacteriologist, slipping a glass slide under the microscope, "is a preparation of the celebrated *Bacillus* of cholera—the cholera germ".

The pale-faced man peered down the microscope. He was evidently not accustomed to that kind of thing, and held a limp white hand over his disengaged eye. "I see very little," he said.

"Touch this screw," said the Bacteriologist; "perhaps the microscope is out of focus for you. Eyes vary so much. Just the fraction of a turn this way or that."

"Ah! now I see," said the visitor. "Not so very much to see after all. Little streaks and shreds of pink. And yet those little particles, those mere atomies, might multiply and devastate a city! Wonderful!"

He stood up, and releasing the glass slip from the microscope, held it in his hand towards the window. "Scarcely visible," he said, scrutinising the preparation. He hesitated. "Are these alive? Are they dangerous now?"

"Those have been stained and killed," said the Bacterio-

logist. "I wish, for my own part, we could kill and stain every one of them in the universe."

"I suppose," the pale man said with slight smile, "that you scarcely care to have such things about you in the living—in the active state?"

"On the contrary, we are obliged to," said the Bacteriologist. "Here, for instance—" He walked across the room and took up one of several sealed tubes. "Here is the living thing. This is a cultivation of the actual living disease bacteria." He hesitated. "Bottled cholera, so to speak."

A slight gleam of satisfaction appeared momentarily in the face of the pale man. "It's a deadly thing to have in your possession," he said, devouring the little tube with his eyes. The Bacteriologist watched the morbid pleasure in his visitor's expression. This man, who had visited him that afternoon with a note of introduction from an old friend, interested him from the very contrast of his dispositions. The lank black hair and deep grey eyes, the haggard expression and nervous manner, the fitful yet keen interest of his visitor were a novel change from the phlegmatic deliberations of the ordinary scientific worker with whom the Bacteriologist chiefly associated. It was perhaps natural, with a hearer evidently so-impressionable to the lethal nature of his topic, to take the most effective aspect of the matter.

He held the tube in his hand thoughtfully. "Yes, here is the pestilence imprisoned. Only break such a little tube as this into a supply of drinking-water, say to these minute particles of life that one must needs stain and examine with the highest powers of the microscope even to see, and that one can neither smell nor taste—say to them, 'Go forth, increase and multiply, and replenish the cisterns,' and death—mysterious, untraceable death, death swift and terrible, death full of pain and indignity—would be released upon this city, and go hither and thither seeking his victims. Here he would take the husband from the wife, here the child

from its mother, here the statesman from his duty, and here the toiler from his trouble. He would follow the water-mains, creeping along streets, picking out and punishing a house here and a house there where they did not boil their drinking-water, creeping into the wells of the mineral-water makers, getting washed into salad, and lying dormant in ices. He would wait ready to be drunk in the horse-troughs, and by unwary children in the public fountains. He would soak into the soil, to reappear in springs and wells at a thousand unexpected places. Once start him at the water supply, and before we could ring him in, and catch him again, he would have decimated the metropolis."

He stopped abruptly. He had been told rhetoric was his weakness.

"But he is quite safe here, you know—quite safe."

"The pale-faced man nodded. His eyes shone. He cleared his throat. "These Anarchist-rascals," said he, "are fools to use bombs when this kind of thing is attainable. I think....."

A gentle rap, a mere light touch of the finger-nails was heard at the door. The Bacteriologist opened it. "Just a minute, dear," whispered his wife.

When he re-entered the laboratory his visitor was looking at his watch. "I had no idea I had wasted an hour of your time," he said. "Twelve minutes to four. I ought to have left here by half-past three. But your things were really too interesting. No, positively I cannot stop a moment longer. I have an engagement at four."

He passed out of the room reiterating his thanks, and the Bacteriologist accompanied him to the door, and then returned thoughtfully along the passage to his laboratory. He was musing on the ethnology of his visitor. Certainly the man was not a Teutonic type nor a common Latin one. "A morbid product, anyhow, I am afraid," said the Bacteriologist to himself. "How he gloated on those

cultivations of disease-germs!" A disturbing thought struck him. He returned to the bench by the vapour-bath, and then very quickly to his writing-table. Then he felt hastily in his pockets, and then rushed to the door. "I may have put it down on the hall table," he said.

"Minnie," he shouted hoarsely in the hall.

"Yes, dear," came a remote voice.

"Had I anything in my hand when I spoke to you, dear, just now?"

Pause.

"Nothing dear, because I remember—"

"Blue ruin!" cried the Bacteriologist, and incontinently ran to the front door and down the steps of his house to the street.

Minnie, hearing the door slam violently, ran in alarm to the window. Down the street a slender man was getting into a cab. The Bacteriologist, hatless, and in his carpet slippers, was running and gesticulating wildly towards this group. One slipper came off, but he did not wait for it. "He has gone mad!" said Minnie; "it's that horrid science of his"; and opening the window, would have called after him. The slender man, suddenly glancing round, seemed struck with the same idea of mental disorder. He pointed hastily to the Bacteriologist, said something to the cabman, the apron of the cab slammed, the whip swished, the horse's feet clattered, and in a moment cab, and Bacteriologist hotly in pursuit, had receded up the vista of the roadway and disappeared round the corner.

Minnie remained straining out of the window for a minute. Then she drew her head back into the room again. She was dumbfounded. "Of course he is eccentric," she meditated. "But running about London—in the height of the season, too—in his socks!" A happy thought struck her. She hastily put her bonnet on, seized his shoes, went into the hall, took down his hat and light overcoat from the

pegs, emerged upon the doorstep, and halted a cab that opportunely crawled by. "Drive me up the road and round Havelock Crescent, and see if we can find a gentleman running about in a velveteen coat and no hat."

"Velveteen coat, ma'am, and no 'at. Very good, ma'am. And the cabman whipped up at once in the most matter-of-fact way, as if he drove to this address every day in his life.

Some few minutes later the little group of cabmen and loafers that collects round the cabmen's shelter at Haverstock Hill were startled by the passing of a cab with a ginger-coloured screw of a horse, driven furiously.

They were silent as it went by, and then as it receded—"That's 'Arry 'Icks. Wot's *he* got?" said the stout gentleman known as Old Tootles.

"He's a—using his whip, he is, *to* rights," said the ostler boy.

"Hullo!" said poor old Tommy Byles; "here's another bloomin' loonatic. Blowed if there ain't."

"It's old George," said Old Tootles, "and he's drivin' a loonatic, *as* you say. Ain't he a-clawin' out of the keb? Wonder if he's after 'Arry 'Icks?"

The group round the cabmen's shelter became animated. Chorus: "Go it, Georgel!" "It's a race." "You'll ketch 'em"! "Whip up!"

"She's a goer, she is!" said the ostler boy.

"Strike me giddy!" cried old Tootles. "Here! *I'm* a—goin' to begin in a minute. Here's another comin'. *At* all the kebs in Hampstead ain't gone mad this morning."

"It's a fieldmale this time," said the ostler boy.

She's a-followin' *him*," said old Tootles. "Usually ~~he~~ other way about."

"What's she got in her 'and?"

"Looks like a 'igh 'at."

"What a bloomin' lark it is! Three to one on old George!" said the ostler boy. "Nexst!"

Minnie went by in a perfect roar of applause. She did not like it but she felt that she was doing her duty, and whirled on down Haverstock Hill and Camden Town High Street with her eyes ever intent on the animated back view of old George who was driving her vagrant husband so incomprehensively away from her.

The man in the foremost cab sat crouched in the corner, his arms tightly folded, and the little tube that contained such vast possibilities of destruction gripped in his hand. His mood was a singular mixture of fear and exultation. Chiefly he was afraid of being caught before he could accomplish his purpose, but behind this was a vaguer but larger fear of the awfulness of his crime. But his exultation far exceeded his fear. No anarchist before him had ever approached this conception of his. Ravachol, Vaillant, all those distinguished persons whose fame he had envied dwindled into insignificance beside him. He had only to make sure of the water supply, and break the little tube into a reservoir. How brilliantly he had planned it, forged the letter of introduction and got into the laboratory, and how brilliantly he had seized his opportunity! The world should hear of him at last. All those people who had sneered at him, neglected him, preferred other people to him, found his company undesirable, should consider him at last. Death, death, death! They had always treated him as a man of no importance. All the world had been in a conspiracy to keep him under. He would teach them yet what it is to isolate a man. What was this familiar street? Great Saint Andrew's Street, of course! How fared the chase? He craned out of the cab. The Bacteriologist was scarcely fifty yards behind. That was bad. He would be caught and stopped yet. He felt in his pocket for money, and found half-a-sovereign. This he thrust up through the trap in the top of the cab into the man's face.

"More", he shouted, "if only we get away."

The money was snatched out of his hand. "Right you are," said the cabman, and the trap slammed, and the lash lay along the glistening side of the horse. The cab swayed, and the Anarchist, half-standing under the trap, put the hand containing the little glass tube upon the apron to preserve his balance. He felt the brittle thing crack, and the broken half of it rang upon the floor of the cab. He fell back into the seat with a curse, and stared dismally at the two or three drops of moisture on the apron.

He shuddered.

"Well! I suppose I shall be the first. *Phew!* Anyhow, I shall be a martyr. That's something. But it is a filthy death, nevertheless. I wonder if it hurts as much as they say."

Presently a thought occurred to him—he groped between his feet. A little drop was still in the broken end of the tube, and he drank that to make sure. It was better to make sure. At any rate, he would not fail.

Then it dawned upon him that there was no further need to escape the Bacteriologist. In Wellington Street he told the cabman to stop, and got out. He slipped on the step, and his hand felt queer. It was rapid stuff this cholera poison. He waved his cabman out of existence so to speak, and stood on the pavement with his arms folded upon his breast awaiting the arrival of the Bacteriologist. There was something tragic in his pose. The sense of imminent death gave him a certain dignity. He greeted his pursuer with a defiant laugh.

"Vive l'Anarchie! You are too late, my friend, I have drunk it. The cholera is abroad!"

The Bacteriologist from his cab beamed curiously at him through his spectacles. "You have drunk it! An Anarchist! I see now." He was about to say something more, and then checked himself. A smile hung in the corner of his mouth. He opened the apron of his cab as if to demand

at which the Anarchist waved him a dramatic farewell and strode off towards Waterloo Bridge, carefully jostling his infected body against as many people as possible. The Bacteriologist was so preoccupied with the vision of him that he scarcely manifested the slightest surprise at the appearance of Minnie upon the pavement with his hat and shoes and overcoat. "Very good of you to bring my things," he said, and remained lost in contemplation of the receding figure of the Anarchist.

"You had better get in," he said, still staring. Minnie felt absolutely convinced now that he was mad, and directed the cabman home on her own responsibility. "Put on my shoes? Certainly, dear," said he, as the cab began to turn, and hid the strutting black figure, now small in the distance, from his eyes. Then suddenly something grotesque struck him, and he laughed. Then he remarked, "It is really very serious, though."

"You see, that man came to my house to see me, and he is an Anarchist. No—don't faint or I cannot possibly tell you the rest. And I wanted to astonish him, not knowing he was an Anarchist, and took up a cultivation of that new species of Bacterium I was telling you of, that infest, and I think cause, the blue patches upon various monkeys; and like a fool, I said it was Asiatic cholera. And he ran away with it to poison the water of London, and he certainly might have made things look blue for this civilised city. And now he has swallowed it. Of course, I cannot say what will happen, but you know it turned that kitten blue and the three puppies—in patches, and the Sparrow—bright blue. But the bother is, I shall have all the trouble and expense of preparing some more.

"Put on my coat on this hot day! Why? Because we might meet Mrs. Jabber. My dear, Mrs. Jabber is not a draught. But why should I wear a coat on a hot day because of Mrs.—? Oh!—very well."

