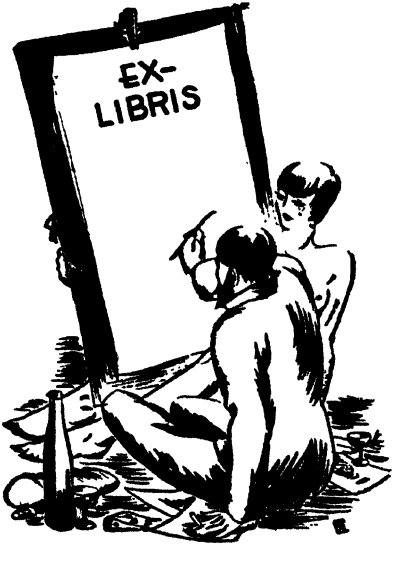
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FRANCIS CARCO

THE LAST BOHEMIA

FROM MONTMARTRE TO THE QUARTIER LATIN

BY

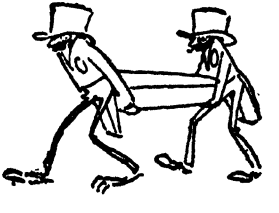
FRANCIS CARCO

TRANSLATED

BY MADELEINE BOYD

DECORATIONS

BY CARLÈGLE



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THE LAST BOHEMIA

I

OF course it is far, very far, farther than one might think, perhaps, from Montmartre to the Latin Quarter, but one of my generation who wishes to gather his memories will find them nowhere so plentiful and so varied as in these vicinities.

Because about 1910 we all lived either in Monmartre or near the Boul' Miche. Happy times! They still conjure up verses such as I used to write in the Rue Racine, in a small room which the concierge agreed to keep in order for me, against a chance of gambling away at lotto any money she might receive for her services. At that time I knew no one in Paris but this concierge, a good woman ruined by her passion for lotto. Thanks to her, I had a chance to earn my dinner by giving French lessons to the gentleman on the second floor who was studying for some examination at the Prefecture de la Seine.

He passed his examination and the dinners lost their providential regularity. Then, they assumed an importance equal to their uncertainty. Even when I was lucky they were more like picnic lunches than real meals, as sparing and sketchy as the free lunches served in the big bars on the Left Bank. My good-for-nothing companions were hardly better off than I was. They waited for the hungry hours of the early morning to enter rooming houses and steal the still warm rolls and milk left outside the apartments on each floor. Some of us had big appetites and had to go all the way to the top. Ah, what good legs it took to escape being caught! I ran as fast as my friends and came downstairs faster than I went up. As I look back upon it now, it seems like good sport. At any rate it kept us from getting fat.

Let us be thankful for that practice, which enabled us to combine flights of stairs and flights of fancy with the exigencies of a poet's stomach! For we were poets. Poets in verse and poets in prose. Who is not a poet at that age, when the

memory of François Villon places a halo around the head of modern Bohemia? There was another halo around its head as well, the one which we could see at dawn, crowning with a pallid light the roofs of the tall buildings, as they stood outlined against the still dark sky. We were not so proud of our haloes! And yet how pleasant and touching it is to remember and to evoke later for oneself, *et pour quelques amis,* the kind of ecstasy born of all the fatigues and limitless joys of our early twenties.

Today from the room where I write these lines, I can see across the Seine the quays where we roomed: the Pont-Neuf which we crossed as we came back from the Halles or from Montmartre, and the beginning of the Rue Dauphine. Through the branches, across the glassy waters, the scene seems like a mirage. Now nobody walks past the sleeping houses. It is a scene strange to me, and I look in vain for any survivals of my past; nothing I see recalls it to me. Heavens! What a lot of water has run under the bridge since our youth! How many faded

dawns, how many days, weeks, seasons have followed those dawns, those days, weeks, seasons!

Le fleuve est pareil à ma peine,
Il s'écoule et ne tarit pas

Apollinaire used to sing. . . .

But Apollinaire is dead. Jean Pellerin is dead. André du Fresnois, who lived on the quay of the Grands Augustins, is dead; and Claudien has left the Quarter. As for the carefree companions who lived on stolen rolls and milk, they might not even recognize me if I met them. Where can they be? Where? But who has ever been able to answer such a question? Villon asked it in vain, one sad evening, of all the echoes in the town. Poor Villon! Where, indeed, is he?

Villon, qu'on chercherait céans,
N'est plus là ni Verlaine,

nor so many others who roamed where we roamed, in the taverns, the bars, the beer shops, on the deserted Pont-Neuf, along those narrow

streets that zigzagged like lizards between the dark houses. I stir only ashes with my recollections—very fragile ashes which are lifted on the night wind and shaped like disembodied spirits—ghosts . . .

And yet however far it may be from Montmartre to the Latin Quarter, the same ghosts are there, everywhere, alive and smiling and quick to touch me with the heady bitterness that rises from the past. But for them, I should not have been tempted to write this book. Should I have needed to set down here, like a guide, the record of our follies and of the places we used to haunt? Mostly we would meet around Frédéric's table or with Hubert the Magnanimous, circulating from one to another to smoke a cigarette, chat, thumb over some books and keep alive our friendships. It needs nothing more than this to make life full of charm. We desired nothing better; it seemed so simple to live, to have friends and to work. Time might separate us, or chance, but a letter, a book, a note in the newspapers, or an article mentioning our

names was sufficient to hold us together then, for we were travelling the same road. And if, occasionally, one of us thought of the future, he found there a place for the rest.

Alas! See what remains: memories, and some empty places. We would not dare to sit now at Frédéric's table . . . What would be the use? The young men who have succeeded us are all there. May it be long before they find more sorrow than pleasure in counting over their friends!



II

THE first time I met Utrillo it was not in the street, nor in one of those bars where every one else seems to have met him. That legend has had its day, but, as it was based upon his continuous and unconcealed drunkenness, Utrillo's admirers place more emphasis upon the legend than upon their pretended love for his painting and will never have done with it. Yet there is no painter who can evoke as somberly as he the height of Montmartre nor who is comparable to him in tragic bitterness of vision, compactness of colour, detail, atmosphere and direct but tormented language which moves us as soon as we hear it. No, it was not in the street, staggering and in rags, that Utrillo first appeared to me. I met him, one winter's night, on the Butte, after innumerable negotiations with M. G. (who is currently known in Montmartre as *le père G.),* because M. G. had taken

charge of him and was trying to stop his debauchery.

The room contained a bed, a chair, a mirror and an easel and looked out upon the Rue du Mont-Cenis. It was lighted by a poor unshaded lamp.

"Monsieur Maurice!" called *Père G.*

He introduced me. Utrillo peered out at us from behind his easel, upon which he was covering a piece of cardboard with lines drawn with a ruler.

"It is a gentleman who has come to see you," explained his landlord, manager and pupil. M. G. combined all his functions with an air of the greatest gravity and conviction.

He repeated:

"It is a gentleman . . ."

"Yes," said Utrillo.

M. G. pointed to a chair:

"Sit down, sir," he said and as Utrillo did not offer to begin a conversation with the intruder I was, the man simpered:

"It is very nice of you to pay a visit to our

Monsieur Maurice. If you only knew how hard he works! He has been so good since he came here, he has not wanted to go out at all. You would hardly believe it. In my opinion he even works too hard. It makes him thirsty to work so hard . . . the oil, the zinc white, nothing makes one so thirsty."

"Yes, yes," approved Utrillo.

He had put down his pencil and his ruler and a timorous smile of combined mockery and resignation was fixed upon his face like a nervous twist. Such a smile! I shall remember it all my life. His face looked like a wax mask brightened by his sweet, tender eyes. Judged by his eyes it was a child's or a hermit's face, but this was contradicted by the bitterness of the line of his mouth. No, it was hardly a smile. There was in it too much restraint, it was too mechanical, too fanatical, it showed too much dissimulation and hidden weakness.

"Well?" asked M. G., coming up to the easel, which he pointed out to me with the same gesture he had used when offering me a chair.

"May we have just one look at your painting, Monsieur Maurice?"

Utrillo drew aside. His expression became so mobile and anxious that I thought he was going to speak, but he kept silent and continued smiling. He was quite indifferent. We might have "just one look," as his host had asked. What did he care? His work did not belong to him. It belonged to M. G. because of some agreement or other they had made, and M. G. could have been less formal in asking the painter's consent.

However, he kept watching us from the distance and the lamp cast shadows upon his forehead, his sunken yellow cheeks and his black eyes full of a brewing storm. It threw into relief the bumps on his high intelligent forehead up to his dark and oily hair and I noticed that it grew very wide towards the temples; it showed clearly the firm arch of his eyebrows, accentuated the straight line of his nose and cast light upon his chin and the double line of his lips, though they were hidden by a dark drooping

mustache. It showed plainly his sunken cheeks as far as his ears, and behind them the disappearing line of his neck. What a brutally realistic and significant picture, full of intense distress and misdirected enthusiasm! I could not keep my eyes from him. And it was no ordinary portrait I saw, but a full-length one, from the old slippers on his feet, his trousers tied around his waist by some twine, his collarless shirt, his coat covered with spots, to his hair which he kept brushed back without the aid of a comb.

While looking at him so closely, I was rather astonished to find that he was, in every way, exactly as I had thought from his paintings. An aura of exaltation, pain, submission, hostility, distrust, naturalness and sensitive, ironical confusion surrounded him and emanated from him. It could not be expressed in words. M. G. could shout with admiration and praise the talent of so great a painter, but I was now less interested in his talent than in his personality. For me he was only one of those men who, what-

ever they may do, continually need to be helped and are less to be admired for what they accomplish than for their fight against that other inner self which possesses and relentlessly betrays them.

M. G. was describing complacently the life Utrillo was leading and the ceaseless care he took of his astonishing boarder. Words flowed out of his mouth like lukewarm water, monotonously and endlessly. Which Utrillo was he talking about? To hear him name the one who stood in front of us, I would have sworn that M. G. was thinking about the other and that he was very much afraid that the other would sometime take the place of the unassuming M. Maurice whom he was praising. And my own preoccupation was not with M. Maurice either . . . M. Maurice? It sounded incongruous to hear that Christian name applied to Utrillo. How could such a sombre and strong name as Utrillo be applied to the same man who answered to the unctuous "M. Maurice" of the much too glib M. G.? I could not become accustomed to it.

Moreover, it seemed to me that Monsieur G. was avoiding the name Utrillo when he spoke of the painter and that the latter was waiting for an opportunity to react to the sound of that name.

Several times this occurred to me and yet I could not believe it possible, because in the end I had to admit that the pact between Utrillo and his host had been based upon their friendship and was not one of those abominable bargains by which the honourable M. G. was keeping the artist locked up to make up for what he spent. Nowadays, thank God, no one is ever kept a prisoner against his will! Besides had not M. G. shown me his own work before introducing me to Utrillo? There was evident in it the disconcerting influence of the painter of Montmartre. Leprous walls, livid skies, cold and mournful perspectives of suburbs, it seemed as if M. G. had neglected nothing in trying to equal his master, or at any rate, to deserve his encouragement. On the back of his canvases, one could read in Utrillo's large handwriting: *Good, Fair* or *My*

compliments to my best pupil G. Those notes meant a great deal to the pupil and it was evident that he was very proud of them.

"Only," he pointed to me, "sometimes I add a snow effect. It is very funny and not at all difficult. What do you think of it?"

How did I know? I had come to M. G. to see a painter and I had found two, but not the one I was looking for. Where was he? Here was only a very extraordinary M. Maurice, who said nothing, and another gentleman who spoke all the time. In the end I was at a loss. I must go. I had started to go. I opened the door. M. G. followed me.

"Well?" he asked. "Will you come back soon to pay us another visit?"

"Yes, certainly," I answered him.

"Monsieur Maurice will be pleased!"

"I am sure he will."

The kind man looked at me without saying a word.

"You see," he said, while seeing me out, "you must not be astonished about Monsieur Mau-

rice's manners. He is always like that the first time, and please call him simply: Monsieur Maurice. It is better. Because Monsieur Maurice reminds him of the time when he was small and easy to lead. I know him so well, you see! And if I wanted him to leave at once and never come back, I would only have to call him Utrillo. You have no idea,—at the sound of the name Utrillo, he would go out for a drink . . . and what a disaster that would be! We would have to begin all over again . . ."



III

MAX JACOB was more discreet; he lived at 9 Rue Ravignan, in a kind of greenhouse in a court, where the sole ornament, the signs of the zodiac drawn with green and pink chalk, spread over the walls and offered a delightful rebus to his comrades.

I had met him at Edouard Gazanion's, the poet who was my host at the time and who carried hospitality so far that he never left Paris without marking on each piece of his furniture with chalk the order in which I could sell it and distress him least. Max's kindness, his distinguished manners, his readiness to help others and his clever talk inclined the people in the house to put up with him. If, for example, some poor woman in the neighbourhood who knew his reputation came to ask him to bring back her son to the house,—he would put on a small bowler hat—which he only wore on such oc-

casions—and hurry off. He always managed to bring the runaway back to his mother. Sometimes, a neighbour would come surreptitiously and, not afraid of being in the way, ask him to read the cards for her. Max would leave his work and do so. The small coin he found later under the pages of a manuscript he would give to "his" poor in the street.

What a charming and precious friend Max was to me! He often walked about Paris with me at night talking about the poets. I remember a story published in a review which began with these words: "As they had taken the wrong road, they had to begin the funeral all over again." His fantasy changed everything; it was natural and spontaneous; he played cleverly with the most water-tight reasoning to overthrow it and to build with the pieces small tales where one could see as in coloured glass balls a thousand glistening reflections. Thanks to him, I really learnt what life is or ought to be for the artist and that there is nothing of which one ought ever to tire. Wasn't he curious about

everything? Wasn't he always ready to listen to what the passers-by were saying, to their reflections and their most intimate thoughts? He read people's faces and could see through them at once; then from this quick divination he would draw very apt conclusions and improvise marvellous stories. He was never at a loss. Sometimes it was "the question of servant girls in Mexico"; sometimes "Fantomas," or "the birth of *Orphism.*" One evening, Frédéric, at the *Lapin Agile,* asked him to write a line in his guest book. Max took the pen and wrote the following poem:

9 P.M.

Trouver la rime à Frédéric,
Voilà le hic!
J'aime mieux attendre d'être ivre
Pour m'inscrire à bord de ton livre!

2 A.M.

A bord! Piano A. Bord.
Livre de bord.
Paris, la mer qui pense, apporte

Ce soir au coin de ta porte,
O tavernier du quai des Brumes,
Sa gerbe d'écume.

The agility of his mind, which his friends perhaps helped him to cultivate, is shown very plainly in this small poem, and also his way of using one word successively in all its meanings and aspects. That was how unthinkingly he belonged to the Cubistic Movement which Picasso and he rendered fashionable about 1900, to the astonishment of the crowd.

But what did Cubism matter to him? He played with it as he did with everything else and was not greatly in earnest. He left to Apollinaire the task of discussing it, on the terrace of the café de Flore, with that good-natured seriousness of his which dazzled so many foreigners who were slow to understand, but were convinced before they understood. For him it was a game he enjoyed playing as soon as he tried it and he pushed it to the limits of absurdity until his fantasy mastered him. And what did Max

Jacob not invent to amaze people? He told the famous story of the lozenge which Picasso showed him one Sunday, asserting it was the portrait of a peevish mistress. That lozenge amused Max immensely and with the idea of complicating matters he provoked the discovery of the cube. I am not inventing anything. Max told me that himself, and more interesting is the fact that he made a hundred stories out of it, because he was a chatterbox.

It seemed to be his greatest pleasure to lead well-intentioned men astray, so that afterwards he might teach them to rise above their pettier natures and know themselves. But who gave heed to his lessons? None ever followed Max any further than the astonishment into which he plunged them, and they were only angry with him for that. But Max did not care. Rich only in his fantasy, he had for himself humbler disciples who listened to him, made use of his words and got out of them what they could—humble people, small people. His imagination was his only wealth. Indeed, how many times have I

seen Max, as he was dressing to go out, put on an old pair of too-wide trousers which he had inherited from his father and tie on a stiff shirt-front a very narrow black tie which he could only have found in his father's wardrobe in Quimper. He used to laugh at himself. His small round mirror, which he gave me one day in return for one in which he could see better, dated from ancient times. Maclet would corroborate my story. He shared Max's lodgings, slept on a chair and frequently appealed to him to write letters to convince the amateurs who were considering buying his paintings.

There was always at least one painter at Max's, for he loved the arts and himself drew the people he watched in the streets. The *gouaches* and water-colours which he painted helped him to make a living, and are much sought after today, and rightly so. Salmon, who made an inventory of Max's palette, mentions "some so-called Chinese pencils worth a sou apiece"; a Conte pencil presented at the *Lapin Agile,* by a fifteen-year-old painter, full of gen-

erosity and enthusiasm; a carpenter's blue pencil; charcoal "very much better than the usual charcoal sold to painters" and some pastels in a few ochre and pink tints, all shades of blues and a beautiful light green. Max even went so far as to buy a green pencil, rather soft, of the kind called "Raphael." He also owned a brush, white-lead in a tube and a bottle of China ink, pleasing to the eye with its label covered with undecipherable signs and its yellow silk ribbon dangling like that on a package of cigars. Speaking of cigars, I must not forget the cigar ashes, left by the artist and his guests, which were carefully kept in a china bowl.

"Also, on the little snoring devil—the stove on which he used to dry the water-colours—some coffee was always boiling, kept hot as long as the lamp lasted. Max Jacob needed it for his backgrounds."

How he loved manipulating his paraphernalia and painting his friends when they came to see him! I have my portrait done in ink on a parch-

ment envelope. But how could he stand Maclet after Picasso? Max was not finicky. Of course he was devoted to Pablo Picasso, he had made him known and established a name for him at the price of a thousand visits to dealers and he had worked for him, as he did for everybody —and later for Maclet. Poor Maclet painted at night by the light of a candle, after Max had cleared off the table upon which he painted all day, and began writing the *Terrain Bouchaballe.* A splendid comradeship existed between the painter and the poet. They shared their earnings, which will not surprise any of Max's old friends who have dined at his expense more than once, in a *bistro* in the Rue Cavalotti.

I also shared the amiability of the restaurant owner who gave credit to Max. I even recall one winter's night when Max came to my house after I had gone supperless to bed, made me get up and took me with him. I was exceedingly hungry, and we had only a twenty-sou piece between us. This allowed us afterwards to take

the bus to the Gare Saint-Lazare, where Max had to go to bid farewell to his brother, the explorer, who was going back to Brittany.

We devoured what was given us, but the dog belonging to the establishment sat on his hind-legs and looking at us so pitifully that unthinkingly I took the slate on which Max's expenses had accumulated, poured some sauce on it and held it out to the dog. He licked it clean and thus wiped out my friend's debts, which goes to prove that a good action is never without its reward.



IV

WE did not feel the want of money so very badly then, for we could always find something to eat at Frédé's, the *Lapin Agile,* and a drink in exchange for a song, which we did not begin till our glasses had been refilled. Frédé was not stupid and he loved artists of all kinds, so that one met at his place, poets, painters and writers. The amiable ladies who shared our destinies at that time were not hard to please. They always answered when asked what they wanted to drink:

"The cheapest there is!"

They all knew and admired Max, and would follow us to his house to ask his advice on some problem or other, which he would solve very cleverly. Sometimes, when blessing one of those unions which lasted as long as they generally last in Montmartre, Max Jacob would accompany his blessing with one of his drawings which, according to the love he bore the lady in

question, was signed with a J., large or small, sometimes very small. Max's affection could be measured by the size of that J., but only a few of us knew this and we kept his secret.

Only one of us, an actor named Ollin who had some talent, would enlighten the ignorant on that point and take a malign pleasure in making trouble. Ollin was one of Max's evil geniuses. He encouraged him to drink, tormented him, talked of the Boulevard, and, to be different, pretended he believed only in success. Not one of us had seen him act, as we hardly ever left the Butte; but his reputation had preceded him at the different places where we met him at night. He was supposed to have acted in Marseilles with de Max in the *Houppelande* and that was enough to give him prestige with us. But Ollin was not only an actor and could be very entertaining when he allowed a free rein to his fantasy.

For several weeks at the beginning of winter this tall and amusing young man spent all his afternoons in the big shops under the pretext

of buying an overcoat. He gave his address to the cashier and those of us who had no roofs over our heads and shared the actor's garret were regularly awakened by a knock at the door and a voice saying:

"The Louvre!" or "The Samaritaine!" . . . "The Bon Marché!" . . . "Pygmalion!"

"I can't open," Ollin would answer very gravely. "Leave it downstairs with the concierge."

And when he asked downstairs if there were any parcels for him:

"Monsieur Ollin," the *pipelette* would answer, "what do you expect? They are not such fools!"

But Ollin never gave up and would try again every day, explaining to us in all good faith:

"If you want to dress for nothing, you have only to be lucky enough to have the coat brought by a stupid delivery boy. Wait . . . I am damned if it won't work one of these days." But Ollin went without an overcoat all that winter.

Generally his companion was the song writer

Gaston Couté, whom one could always see at the *Lapin Agile* lying dead drunk upon a bench. Couté, the author of *Chansons d'un gars qu'a mal tourné,* "Songs of a boy who took the wrong turning," was to end in a hospital, but at that time he came willingly with us. Ollin looked after him as if he were his mother, and if we had no money to pay, Couté recited his verses and squared matters.

One morning in a bar in the Rue Lepic frequented by street walkers and gunmen, Couté, who had already drunk too much, asked Max to take his place. At that time, Max, full of his approaching conversion to Catholicism, spoke of the Virgin Mary and the ladies and gentlemen in question were quite bewildered. We were getting uneasy about what would come of it, when one of those ladies, quite tired after her work, entered the bar. Max at once tried to catechise her. He walked up to her and began to praise the delights of religion, giving Ollin the time of his life. The woman listened to him with open mouth. But her friend, a very tall

Negro, came in and, before any of us had time to interfere, took Max Jacob's hands between his huge paws and broke his thumbs. This painful adventure, which Ollin told all over Montmartre with great glee, enlightened us as to his character and we soon stopped going around with the actor, who shortly afterwards went on tour.

Max's other evil genius remained, a much cleverer one than Ollin, the mathematician Princet.

We respected him, for he earned a princely living as consulting counsel in a big business and was always well dressed. When he sat at Frédé's table he looked like a slightly tired gentleman, sad and given to persiflage. His conversation had the effect of exasperating Max and inspired him with irresistibly sharp remarks. Princet, however, was not easily upset and with his insinuating logic he could convince even Max and rob him of his success.

So there were all sorts of people in our group during those happy days when Picasso, to strike

a great blow, declared: "When you paint a landscape, it first must look like a plate." Then something happened which was to be full of consequences for Cubism. Max's brother, whom we called the explorer, came back from the colonies and brought with him his portrait, which I believe had been done at Dakhar by a Negro. The likeness, very much neglected for the sake of size, struck all the painters at once and they noted that the gold buttons of his coat were not represented where they ought to have been, but as a halo around his face. Surprising discovery! Thus was the dissociation of objects discovered, accepted and acquired. It must have been a stepping-stone to Picasso's first researches, for he asserted a short time afterwards: "If you paint a portrait, you must put the legs beside it on the canvas."

And everybody applauded.

Roger Allard was to write: "M. Picasso's career is a masterpiece—one of the rare masterpieces of our time. So much patience combined

with so much decision, such minute application hidden under an attitude of nonchalance, such calculated audacity, such prudence masked with an air of lightness, artistic genius regulated to the utmost yet free in its artificiality, all these qualities were combined in a singularly pleasing personality. Everybody knows the edifying anecdote told by the authors of moral schoolbooks, in which M. Lafitte picks up a pin in a banker's corridor and the banker, greatly impressed by this action, gives him the position he had just refused him. M. Picasso always knew how to pick up the pin at the right time, even if he had to take it from a dangerous or too long-drawn-out game."

There is a typical story about Picasso which is worth telling. Vlaminck, the untamable, had just discovered in a Bougival *bistro* a Negro statue and he had acquired it by treating everybody in the place with white wine. Vlaminck at that time was always with Derain, with whose aid he founded the famous school of Chatou.

Vlaminck brought his statue to Derain, placed it in the middle of the studio, looked at it and said:

"Almost as beautiful as the Venus de Milo, don't you think?"

"It is as beautiful," said Derain emphatically.

The two friends looked at each other.

"Shall we go to Picasso?" Vlaminck proposed. They went, bearing their piece of wood, and Vlaminck repeated:

"Almost as beautiful as the Venus de Milo! Yes . . . almost . . . and perhaps! . . ."

"As beautiful," Derain repeated.

Picasso thought for some time and at last, deciding he could go no further than they, whose opinions were very daring for the times, he asserted:

"It is more beautiful!"

I hope Picasso will forgive me, but this little story is most instructive. The person who told it to me will not deny it when he finds it here. As Adolphe Basler notes in his work on *Painting—A new religion:* "Picasso then started de-

spoiling the Negro as he despoiled the Egyptian, the Phœnician and as he would later despoil the Pompeian decorator, the Coptic carpet designer and all the artistic peoples of the earth."

And yet it was only necessary to see the inventor of Cubism at the *Lapin,* where the walls were ornamented with one of the paintings of his blue period, to be convinced of the extraordinary radiance which hovered around him. He had stopped coming every evening when I first went there. And yet the conversation was all about him and it was easy to know when he was there from the animation which his paradoxes always provoked. The Negroes, made fashionable by him, by Luc-Albert Moreau, and by Vlaminck, who had already retired to far-away Montparnasse, were already taking their rank as classics, and it is undoubtedly to them that our generation owes its freedom, for the most part, from aimless fantasy, sarcasm and facetiousness.

Of course Pierre MacOrlan, a young man who differed greatly in his conversation and

manners from the ordinary clients of Frédé, used to frequent the *Lapin.* He was listened to with respect. He sat at the head of the table, and no one, when he began the chorus of the *Legion* or the *Bataillonnaires* would have dared to interrupt him. Compared to his, my songs were only banal repetitions of music hall airs, but one evening, chance bringing me to the *Lapin,* he heard and liked them and made me sit beside him.

That evening is still engraved on my memory. I had never been inside that Montmartre cabaret before and did not know a soul there. All I knew of that magnificent place was what I had read when still in the provinces, in a little review, *La Nouvelle Plume,* which had praised its charm and offered a free drink there in return for a subscription. A photograph of the *Lapin* on the back of the review had astonished me greatly. I had cut it out together with the coupon for the free drink and for five years I had been carrying them in an old note-book which I had always with me. Would I pay for

my glass with the ticket? I had made up my mind to do so, but MacOrlan decided otherwise and I was added henceforth to the clients of the famous cabaret of whom Frédé never asked a sou!

Thus ties of friendship are established when luck is on your side and suddenly confronts you with the one man who can make them lasting and attractive. Pierre MacOrlan lived by doing the most discouraging literary jobs, and by composing songs which he sold in the Faubourg Saint-Denis for what the song-writers would give him, and by drawing for some newspapers. He made very little money, even for that time, but was establishing a reputation under his *nom-de-plume* of MacOrlan, and the *Journal* was publishing his tales.

Those tales sparkled with humour and were in keeping with the very Scotch name of their author. Was it the result of a bet, a joke? I think rather that, in adopting the *nom-de-plume* of MacOrlan, this attractive young man gave free rein to his tastes. He loved all sports and

when I knew him was on the U.A.I. team as back and was very proud of a magnificent blue and red sweater, the colours of the Union. He had spent two years at a sea-port and his experiences there were sufficient excuse for him to dress as an athlete or even as a cow-boy. If you understand that such was our only taskmaster; that we were enthusiastic about Bohemia, adventure, Negroes, Cubism and travellers' tales and that we had a certain presentiment of the events which were later to upset the world, you will understand Pierre MacOrlan in spite of his poses.

They were not extravagant for the good reason that the low cafés of a great commercial port teach decency. In those bars Pierre MacOrlan had met seamen of all colours, their officers and those specimens of the four human races who live picturesquely in such places. He had modelled himself upon them, borrowing their practical morality and trying, with an energy one could read upon his face, to be ready for any eventuality. To us, he was a man and life had



painted by Sauvayre

PORTRAIT OF PIERRE MACORLAN

taught him, as it had taught Kipling's soldier who even when in irons does not lament his fate but declares bravely:

I paid my price for findin' out.

Like the hero of *On the Road to Mandalay,* for whom he did not hide his sympathy, Pierre MacOrlan had paid, but to his experiences, however rough they had been, he brought gaiety and a lightheartedness which re-established his mental balance.

He had started as a painter about 1900 and had exhibited some canvases at the Sagot Gallery which, happily for the admirers of the great novelist he has become, did not attract any attention. Pierre did not even earn enough money for food by his painting and he had to try something else. For a long time Montmartre was to him only a corner of the wide world, to which he came back between two unsuccessful business ventures. He would stay a week and then his adventurous spirit would urge him to seek another field. He tried his fortune in Florence,

where he lived more than two years, in Bruges, Antwerp, Sluis and Amsterdam. He was a master of many trades and did many things, from reading proofs at a printer's in Rouen to guarding a villa through the winter in a small half-dead town abroad. He always accepted what was offered him, was always poor and always tried cheerfully not to remain so. Alas, how deceiving life is to such a very young man as he, who, unable to live by his brush, thought he could live by writing verses! Because MacOrlan was a poet. Poet and sportsman, shooting inedible seabirds on the sand dunes of Belgium and mastering himself, battling with fate and standing up to it. None of his poems remain, and yet they were inspired by the rhythm, the spontaneity, the intense vibration which we saw later in the *Inflation sentimentale.*

The best of MacOrlan may be there, in the perverted taste of the men of his generation for the most delightful uneasiness and a bitter enjoyment of it. But at the time of which I am writing he was drawn to Antwerp in the Ship-

pers-Wartier, to hear the last vestiges of the Rut-Dyk sung by Georges Eekhoud. I can see MacOrlan, standing in water-front bars, already feeling his way. If, like Salmon in Russia, during a certain period, he was only a very minor poet, there was no doubt that the ardent and unconscious desire to express his own individuality and to use a new language made him capable of understanding his youthful joys and sorrows. His rough life was urging him on, tormenting him and forcing him to find himself when he came back to Paris, at the end of his resources. Necessity drove him to assume responsibilities. Speaking of that subject, I recall that once at Max Jacob's in the Rue Ravignan, we remarked that only when a poet is abandoned by the whole world and battered by the bitterest or the tenderest disillusionment, does he know why he was born and what fate has in store for him.

At that time we all suffered from a deep and incurable disillusionment, but as recompense we had our friendships and experiences, premature and incomplete perhaps, but bought at their full

value. I can't help coming back to that subject. All of us paid with our best years for the sad knowledge of life and only the stronger amongst us have been able to stand it.

To understand how the men of my generation used to fight against taking themselves too seriously one must have heard MacOrlan tell stories, on returning from his long journeys. For instance, on winter nights, in Holland, he would go on board one of the boats anchored along the quays, at the invitation of some captain or other. In the cabin a bottle of whiskey would be placed between the two men and each in turn would take a long drink. At the second or third bottle, Pierre's host, who until then had not uttered a word, would suddenly become very loquacious, but as nine times out of ten he did not know French, he would simply utter proper names, then look at Pierre triumphantly, wait a moment, shake his head, utter a cry, until MacOrlan would answer him, whereupon they would shake hands very affectionately.

"Napoleon!" the seaman would say with a

very Swedish or American accent. "Napoleon, ah!"

"Ah! Yes!"

"Yes! Yes!"

There would be a moment of silence, or more exactly preparation, then they would smile at each other and MacOrlan would go on:

"Of course, Napoleon . . . But Tierra del Fuego, well, little brother, what about it? Tierra del Fuego? . . ."

"Oh! yes . . ."

"And Pondichéry?"

"I know," the seaman would assert . . . "Yes, Pondichéry . . . Very good!"

And so on till the early morning.

From those extraordinary encounters, with proper names the only means of communication between the two drinkers, MacOrlan has probably acquired the neat and quick style which is admired in his books; and their great power of evocation.

No superfluous talk. Words, facts, a few sincere statements, is that not enough for people of

his kind? MacOrlan never wasted time in speeches. At Frédé's table as he sat smoking his clay pipe he always listened more than he talked, but no matter how brief and desultory the observations he contributed to the conversation, they were always significant!



V

HIS first friends had been Guillaume Apollinaire, Salmon, Max Jacob and then Warnod, nicknamed *petit père Dédé,* and Roland Dorgelès. Both the latter and MacOrlan drew. Warnod sketched the little street walkers and the girls of the *brasseries* and Dorgelès drew immense plans, for he intended to become an architect. Does that not partly explain the subject of the *Reveil des Morts?* It is worth looking up. But Dorgelès had long hair and wore a cloak with a most magnificent and romantic effect. Warnod also adopted that queer fashion. He looked so well, indeed, that his models used to pursue him everywhere he went.

Dorgelès, who preferred the papers and the big restaurants to our stories and meagre repasts, and who only climbed to the *Lapin* to fight against the ready-made admirations everybody entertained there, is certainly the one of us who

has changed least. Although he has repudiated his clothes and has cut his hair, his enthusiasm and his generous heart and spirit have still the same intensity which they had then and he retains the same surprising verve. He was always ready to fight windmills, even those which were the ornament of the Butte and only turned to the wind of paradoxes. He spent his forces trying to convince the most indifferent amongst us. Who in Montmartre does not remember the adventure of Frédé's donkey? Dorgelès, on a bet, had sworn to make the beast famous. It also happened that on a certain occasion he had wagered with the painters who were annoyed by his enthusiasms that he would exhibit in the *Indépendants* the most original and revolutionary canvas of the exhibition. His challenge was taken up and Dorgelès racked his brains. Accompanied by Warnod, *petit père Dédé,* he arrived one day at Frédéric's with a sheriff at his heels whom he at once asked to draw up an affidavit. The poor man of law was frightened,—to impress him Dorgelès had put in his button-

hole the enormous rosette of an officer of Public Instruction,—for he did not understand what the joke was all about. The donkey was brought. A brush was tied to his tail and he was given something to eat.

"Please, don't do any harm to my Lolo," Frédé kept saying. "You see, he is a good donkey . . . He has no guile . . ."

"All right . . ." Dorgelès replied . . . "You'll see!"

The brush full of colour, *petit père Dédé* brought a big canvas, and as the good animal showed his contentment by swishing his tail, the brush began its work.

"Whereas . . ." was writing the sheriff, very much astonished to be taking part in such an affair . . . "Whereas, a brush having been affixed to the caudal extremity of the said donkey, Messrs. Dorgelès and Warnod in the presence of Mr. Frédéric, owner, etc. . . ."

"It is stunning," the last would say.

The brush was doing its work and, slowly but surely, a nameless motley was covering the sur-

face which was to be presented for the admiration of the snobs. The picture was taking shape. To tell the truth, it was not a work carefully thought out, but by dint of emptying many tubes, one could see occasionally very curious effects, rare values and relations, and all sorts of intentions.

"Well, isn't it extraordinary," Dorgelès would exclaim. "Lolo is lucky. His first daub will bring a lot of money."

"And we'll drink it all, you can count on that," Warnod would assert to Frédé, who was scratching his head.

"Gentlemen," interrupted the sheriff, whom this artistic and zoological affidavit had completely bewildered, "what is the name of this work?"

"Of course . . ." said Dorgelès.

"Write down: *Still life,*" proposed Frédéric.

"No . . . no . . ." cried Roland, "wait: still life, do you think?"

He gave his accomplice a dig with his elbow and asked:

"What do you think?"

Petit père Dédé was not sure.

"We could," he began, "call it . . ."

"Silence!" Dorgelès, wrapped in meditation, was tapping his forehead and had at last found an idea. "Sheriff, write this down."

He dictated:

"Title: *Et le soleil se couche sur l'Adriatique,*" then he signed it in big letters: *Joachim Raphael 'Aliboron.*

At the *Indépendants* the success of this canvas went much further than they had dared to hope. In the exhibition rooms, the amateurs asked only for the donkey's picture and crowded close around it to see it better. And they all laughed and shouted so much admiration that the most remarkable paintings of that year were neglected for the benefit of Lolo. Dorgelès won his bet easily.

Such jokes were in fashion at that time and Dorgelès, if he had not succeeded, would have found another. He had inventiveness, audacity and a great need to rid himself of his superfluous

energy. Wasn't it he who installed in the Louvre, in the Gallery of Antiquities, a bust that he had picked up at the studio of a sculptor friend, telling him that all Paris would soon be talking of it? The episode created a great scandal, for the bust was left among the perfect examples of statuary till Dorgelès himself and its creator went to claim it. Every minute he would have an idea for astonishing the idiots and he would carry it out at once. Sometimes he would discuss medicine when writing about an exhibition of painting, sometimes, urged by his unconventional mind, he would put up in the Paris streets barriers and signs in big letters: *Street Closed,* with lanterns which he would light at night, thus upsetting the traffic. Nothing frightened him. He made certain photographers quite rich. When he could not get a sheriff to witness his amazing adventures, he used photographs to illustrate his articles and bear witness to their amusing authenticity.

Since he came from the Artois, as did MacOrlan, Dorgelès carried a joke to the bitter end.

From the years he had spent at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts he had gained habits, which are still in good repute in the studios of the Rue Bonaparte but scandalize the bourgeois. But Dorgelès had this in his favour, he was always inventing new jokes and would draw the wisest conclusions from them, so that everybody was obliged to laugh, and yet, he tells himself that his efforts at the School, far from being rewarded, brought down upon him the Director's wrath.

"That, a leg?" Jean-Paul shouted as he watched him working hard . . . "No, my boy . . . It is anything else you can think of, but not a leg. Upon my word, young fellow, you draw like a blind man."

"Really!" said Dorgelès politely.

"Yes, really."

Dorgelès did not protest. He was satisfied to smile happily behind the Director's back and from that day on never put his foot inside the place.

I don't know who was blind, the pupil or the

master, nor whether or not the master has repented since, because the chief quality of the author of *Les Croix de Bois* consists precisely in his eye for things and for people and his acute observation. Dorgelès never interprets falsely the spectacle of life. He sees first, before he starts to write, before he even chooses his words. Whatever he is writing about, his keen perception is so direct that it arrests and startles you from the first line. He is a blind man one can envy!

But to display this gift, since his common sense is allied to a sense of humour, Dorgelès prefers to use satire and farce. We are indebted to him and to Gus Bofa for the astonishing "Petite Semaine" which he edited for the *Sourire,* and for a hundred extremely amusing articles and beautiful bits of reporting. Without Bofa's advice, Pierre MacOrlan, who was then drawing for the papers, might never have thought of expanding his captions into tales, for he was a poet and wanted to remain one. We do not regret the change. MacOrlan as a

humourist has widened his appeal; he made a mixture which has all the savour of cocktails and at the same time their well-balanced strength. But MacOrlan was not the only one who changed for the better through a friend's advice; his friend also has improved and the only proof needed is the following verse written by Roland Dorgelès, which he sent me instead of saying good-by:

Marseille, poison pénétrant . . .
Sur le vieux port passe, sans presse,
Le tram du boul'vard Vauban.
Les cagoles de ta jeunesse
Montent-elles toujours pour trois francs
Et ce Blan, chez qui l'on danse, est-ce
Au Prado qu'il a ses gonzesses
Ou Cimetière Saint-Vincent?

The allusions of this charming poem may be obscure to those who have never frequented the *Lapin*, but they go straight to my heart and recall to me the happy times when, in spite of our common poverty, I sang at Frédé's as best as I could this Marseilles song:

De la rue des Saules
Au Boul'vard Vauban
Toutes les cagoles
Vont danser chez Blan!

Yes, I am right: Dorgelès was a poet, in his way. Impulsive, generous, excitable, erratic, enthusiastic. If he did not admit it to any one, even denied it, his life and his temperament gave him away. He adored red waistcoats, the Boers, the cabarets where we lived, luck, great men, and although he absorbed a great many incredible ideas, his real nature would always burst forth. What did it matter then if his "copy" was for newspapers only! He was to take it elsewhere after the war and give us his unrivalled book, *Les Croix de Bois.*

If I should try to describe him as he was before the war, youthful and ardent, I would conjure him up in the red shirt and the linen trousers he wore when in the country. He looked like a real bandit. People pointed him out. And since he earned a lot from his newspaper work, the amount of money he spent was amaz-

ing. One Sunday we went to see him near Paris with Warnod and Marc Brésil and the four of us walked from Fourqueux to Saint-Germain to take the train. Some one proposed that we should drink a last glass in a café. It was late and we could not choose. We entered a very unattractive place where, as the owner preferred to close up rather than to serve us, a rather lively discussion ensued, which brought the police. Charming evening! Dorgelès's shirt contributed in making it memorable. Ten minutes later, indeed, we were all at the police station, and we spent the night in the lock-up.

The story ran thus through the town, "The police have arrested a gang of bandits, the chief was dressed all in red and had a large sum of money on his person. He had not had time to divide it with his accomplices . . ."

Warnod was engaged to be married, so he missed the splendid luncheon we were tendered the next day. The gentlemenly police released us only with great regret, after having investigated us carefully.

It was to one of his charming friends, Mademoiselle Rara, who had such tiny feet that one of them would go into a beer glass, that I owed my introduction to the attractive André Warnod. During his period of military service, Mademoiselle Rara did not leave me for a moment, because she said we were so much alike that no one could call her unfaithful. My resemblance to *petit père Dédé* saved appearances until the day when he reappeared in Montmartre. Rara introduced us to each other and sealed our great friendship for ever.

Happy times, when the days passed uselessly and ended by our meeting at dear Frédé's:

La Misère aussi faisait rage.

We bore our poverty lightly, without uneasiness or care of any kind since each of us, impelled by fate, was answering his own call. There were Asselin, Girieud, Mario Meunier, Alfred Lombard, Warnod, Brésil, Dorgelès, MacOrlan, Gazanion, Max Jacob, Manolo, Princet, Durio, Chas. Laborde, Utrillo, Couté,

Picasso, Vaillant, Ollin, La Vaissière, Marie Laurencin, Falké, Julien Callé, Markous, Daragnès, Pichot, Jean Pellerin, Bannerot . . .

We only thought about life and living; the poorest lived with the others and paid their shares in songs. We were always together. No one was missing and it is because I remember the names of those who never again will sit down at the *Lapin's* long table that I wrote the following verses full of their dear presence:

Tout le jour je vous ai cherchés
Comme au temps de notre jeunesse,
Dans les cafés . . . Ce temps renaisse
Et nos amours et nos péchés! . . .
Je vous ai cherchés en moi-meme
Comme un disparu, ceux qu'il aime,
Les appelle et se tient caché.

I remember Jean Pellerin especially. I brought him to Montmartre and he was the most faithful and tactful of friends. I see him still, with his dark felt hat, his thin silhouette, his warm, sincere glance. Every one loved him. He was the last comer to our band and his

poems impressed us by their rhythm, made us value and esteem him. We recited them sometimes, when he was not there, as we do today, with the difference, alas, that if then Jean Pellerin was absent for a night or two, now he will be absent during all the nights and days we still have to go.



VI

I MUST speak now of a curious person sometimes seen at Frédé's who, through pure love of mischief, I suspect helped in the birth of the novel of adventure as conceived by MacOrlan. He was a cool, polite young man who knew Asselin and who did some painting himself. He was said to be captain of a freighter, and indeed he appeared only occasionally at the *Lapin,* supposedly between trips all over the world, and he always tried to dampen our enthusiasms about other countries.

"In Tahiti, for example," he asserted when one of us spoke excitedly of Gauguin, "it is always raining and the women are dressed in oilcloth."

We would argue with him, but he made his assertions so confidently that we ended by believing him. He knew what he was talking

about for he had been there. When Max Jacob tried to trip him up by saying:

"There is an alarm-clock on the top of each mountain in Switzerland."

"It is quite possible," would reply this quiet well-mannered man.

"And do you know to what an extent cleanliness is carried in Holland?" MacOrlan would ask. "I assure you that, in certain towns, it is not rare to meet smokers coming out of the saloons to empty their pipes beyond the town limits, so as not to spoil its cleanliness."

"Why not?"

His "Why not" took our breath away by its perfectly phlegmatic indifference and the superior tone in which it was uttered.

But after all, why not? The man was right. Since in Tahiti Gauguin's girl-flowers were only a myth, anything was possible. One could give free rein to one's imagination; it was only necessary to keep within certain limits. Frédé's cabaret with its low ceiling and the unsteadiness which came to us from drinking and telling

stories became a kind of drunken boat upon which we were sailing without either compass or map. On some nights the illusion was perfect.

Nous étions deux, nous étions trois,
Nous étions trois marins de Groix . . .
Il vente!
C'est le vent de la mer qui nous tourmente,

the whole crew of us would sing.

The wind was strong indeed, but the gay companions clinging to the table were not the kind of friends which the wind carries away! On the contrary they clung strongly to each other through heavy weather, folly and adversity.

Had Georges Delaw not discovered at the very door of the *Lapin,* in the small Saint-Vincent cemetery, the tomb of Admiral de Bougainville? The melancholy lines on the tomb inspired him and strengthened our convictions and when Girieud the painter, at the foot of the Rue des Saules, hired a fleet of taxis in which we could all pile and start a pleasure tour of

the less savory quarters of Paris we could all have sworn in good faith that our vessel was in port and that we had just landed.

On our way back the man who had revealed Tahiti's secrets to us and who never worried would invite us to his place. He lived in the Rue Lamarck in an empty apartment where we squatted on the floor and passed bottles of tafia from one to the other. Big flat steamer trunks, a sextant, binoculars and canvases piled up in the corners, a hammock and a medicine chest were all his furniture. He also had sailor's clothes hanging on the wall. And at once marvellous tales would begin,—he filled us up with them as he walked up and down among us as on his bridge.

The more his revelations were outside the realm of common sense, the more we were inclined to believe them, until one day he disappeared completely and we learned that, although once upon a time perhaps he had travelled, he had been living for a long time on his property in Touraine and that he was only

a rich and ordinary farmer whose innocent mania was to take himself seriously as a sailor.

But what did it matter after all; he had given us the impulse. A love of the sea combined with the love we all had for the unknown kept us from changing and urged us on. Brittany, where some of us spent the summer painting, seemed the promised land. Asselin, Vaillant and MacOrlan brought back from Brigneau-en-Moëlan and Pont-Aven such colourful impressions that we swore only by them, and we bought boats in frames and heavy canvas trousers. Naturally we were longing for the adventures of pirates and of the Brothers of the Coast.

Jacques Vaillant, who was certainly the most enterprising of our crowd, ended by abandoning Montmartre to run up a fantastic bill at *La mère Baron,* and to enjoy life in every way without bothering to do anything. What a gay young man he was, a great drinker and a perfect friend . . . He only abandoned Brigneau when he signed up in August 1914 to go from the territorials to a regiment at the front, where

he became second-lieutenant and won magnificent citations.

I remember meeting him on the Butte during the war when we were on leave. We dined in the Place du Tertre and the news which came to us from the front was not very reassuring. Vaillant, when he was spoken to by an anxious and sorrowful comrade, left us hastily. He put on his uniform and then took us to an hotel where we spent the night drinking and dancing in spite of the regulations and the cannon thundering in our defense. In the morning he shook hands without any fuss, put his packs in a taxi and, although he was entitled to five days more of good living away from the lines, left to rejoin his regiment which had been decimated at the Chemin des Dames. He shouted to us:

"I shall come back!"

Adventure with those men was not only a word and it was under such circumstances that this could be seen most clearly. Pierre MacOrlan's heroes resemble them; they have a joyful air and playful manners, quick minds, and

whatever has been said of them, a trueness to life which is always recognisable because of their virile determination. There is in MacOrlan's work an unmistakable energy and his character is revealed in a way which justifies his work. Even when miserably poor he let no one know of it and never complained. He lived courageously. Without saying a word to any one, he slept one whole winter on a pile of newspapers in his small room because he had sold his last sticks of furniture. Is that worthy of mention? I tell it only because even if Pierre does spend his days comfortably now in his modest apartment in the Rue de Ranelagh, it would be doing him an injustice to call him a bourgeois.

At his table and among his books, his pictures and his musical instruments, some very important guests meet his friends. Sometimes a soldier of the Legion passing through Paris will open his door, and his presence in that peaceful and studious atmosphere puts everything in a revealing light. After dinner MacOrlan plays his phonograph, or better still, when urged by the

deep and obscure attachment which draws both of us toward the lower strata of humanity, he takes up his accordion and, fingering its mother-of-pearl keys, plays a rhythmic and quick air of Java.

Once he owned a hunting horn which his neighbours could not endure. He does not play it now in Paris and any one who wants to judge MacOrlan and his hunting horn must take the train for Saint-Cyr-sur-Morin.

. . .

That village, which the battle of the Marne was to draw out of its sleep, has a story for us. It became to the clients of the *Lapin* synonymous with the reaction of the country lovers against Brittany, and was the annual rendez-vous of those painters who were disgusted at not meeting pirates at Brigneau and who preferred to give them up once and for all or to seek them in other places.

Frédé owned in Saint-Cyr a tiny house where he sometimes spent the warm months of the year.



from a sketch by Dignemont

ALONG THE MARNE

Astride his donkey, the same Lolo made famous by Roland Dorgelès, he rode through the fields in his pointed hat, surrounded by his dogs and his sheep. Did he give his address to any one? I do not know. But at any rate people in Montmartre began to talk about Saint-Cyr around 1911. Julien Callé,—of whom I shall speak later in this chapter, for he is well worth it,—Georges Delaw, Marcoussis and Zyg Brunner were the first to revolutionize the countryside and to accustom the inhabitants to anything. They gathered fruit by shooting at it with guns; in the night they filled the river with dried herrings into which live fishes had been sewn, thus making the herrings seem alive and swimming; they went to bathe, quite naked, on their bicycles, and when a theatre at a fair gave performances they took the places of the actors and greatly complicated the action.

With Zyg Brunner and Georges Delaw I acted an unactable part in *Roger la Honte.* I caught the *garde-champêtre,* the policeman of the village, behind nut-trees peering at the

painters bathing with their young models. So I asked the good man why he did not fine them.

"Why should I? If I did they would never come back."

The natives of that charming country place were as clever as the *garde-champêtre*. They let the Parisians do as they pleased so that they might fleece them better and laugh at them and tell tales about them, later on, during the long winter evenings. We lived in the hotel. I don't know who was paying. Gazanion was there, and Girieud and Coccinelle with his lovely voice, and Sauvayre. The others had rented houses beyond the church or lived like MacOrlan in a neighbouring village.

In that beautiful country life was easy, fresh and restful and we did not know what to do to expend our energy and spoil our health. And yet in the end MacOrlan settled there and he still can be seen shooting partridges, followed by his dog Friquette.

Once MacOrlan had an adventure of which the peasants still tell with astonishment. One day when watching in the fields he shot an

extraordinary bird. When he looked at it, he scratched his forehead. What was it? He had never seen one like it. A huge beak, a silly air, webbed feet, and smoke-grey feathers. Pierre hesitated a long time, then threw it in his hunting pouch and in the evening consulted his neighbour. The neighbour could not make head or tail of it. He inquired in the village if any one had any idea what kind of bird it was, but no one could help him.

"A strange bird!" people said.

Books and encyclopedias were consulted, but in vain, and MacOrlan, quite rightly intrigued, took the train for Paris. Well, such a mysterious bird had never been seen in Paris either and when the sportsman came back to Saint-Cyr, after many long consultations with naturalists of all kinds, he was obliged to calm public opinion by declaring that he had by chance killed an authentic *chevalier bécassin,* a very rare bird indeed.

The name of that bird is attached to Pierre MacOrlan's reputation in Saint-Cyr, and the inhabitants are not very far from believing that

he is a sorcerer. Luckily for him, Julien Callé gave these good people something new to talk about. He was clerk of the court somewhere in Alsace and came every year to be present at the Bal des Quat' Z'arts. He did better still,—through his efforts an Inn was opened which he called the *Auberge de l'Oeuf dur et du Commerce.* The prospectus was as follows:

Société des Grands Hôtels borgnes

English Spoken — Se habla español
Man spricht nicht deutsch — Si parla italiano

AUBERGE DE L'ŒUF DUR ET DU COMMERCE

Julien CALLÉ, Successeur général

à SAINT-CYR-SUR-MORIN (Seine-et-Marne)

(sur la ligne de la FERTÉ-SOUS-JOUARRE à MONTMIRAIL)

A 1 h. 1/2 de la Gare de l'Est. A 40 jours de chameau d'Alger.

Établissement fondé par Napoléon en 1814 — Reconnu d'utilité publique en 1918 — Honoré de souscriptions en 1919 par la Municipalité de Saint-Cyr-sur-Morin; les Sociétés locales; l'A. des Étudiants; la Commune libre de Montmartre; le Mercure de France; l'Orphéon Cyclocubiste de l'École des Beaux-Arts; la Compagnie du Gaz en poudre; les Bateaux Parisiens, etc., etc.

PRIX TRÈS MODÉRÉS

RABAIS pour SÉJOUR durant la SAISON DES BAINS

1 seule Table - 1 seul Cœur - 18 Marmites

These are unusually good references but strangely enough the *Auberge de l'Oeuf dur* is famous now and frequented by so many good clients that Callé can live on its profits.

This curious gentleman has always had a genius for organisation and the idea was not so stupid as it seems.

Once in the Rue du Mont-Cenis, in his small shanty which looked out upon the courtyard of Jenny, the working-girl's well-known house, he treated his friends superbly and offered them parties which lasted for days. He closed the shutters, nailed bags over each window, and placed the wardrobe on its side. It then became a bar and, with all the lamps lighted, he poured out all kinds of liquid incessantly. It was here that I once saw MacOrlan as he sat on the back of a chair empty bottle after bottle and still manage to keep his balance all night. Those who could go on no longer slept upstairs, all in the same room, or else were pushed discreetly under the furniture so that the others might continue to amuse themselves. Dunoyer de Segon-

zac sometimes took part in the revels and the happy *petit père Dédé* would tell about them in *Comœdia* and describe their splendours and glories. I also went several times accompanied by the poet Edouard Gazanion with whom I boarded, but tragedies followed. One morning when we had returned to the house, while undressing Edouard awoke his wife and drew her attention to him by a sad discovery:

"Think of it, it is really very annoying, I have lost my braces."

Why did he not think of borrowing mine!

. . .

Callé, when I first knew him, had no fixed idea as to what he wanted to do, or rather he was embarking upon the career which chance offered him. We still can read his tales in the papers. Would he have succeeded as a writer? Possibly, because at that time no one could tell what the future had in store for us. As for myself, without the help of Charles-Henry Hirsch, who begged me to give up Montmartre for a

more regular life, I would rather have kept a café than do anything else, and today I would not be any worse off. Life has her unfathomable designs, she leads us according to her own sweet pleasure, and if I had not, for example, followed the good advice that Maeterlinck once gave me about how to work, I should never have written any other verses than the following:

Prends l'omnibus, crains le métro,
On ne se soigne jamais trop . . .

which, thank God, represents all my Montmartre production during those happy years.

"The only thing to do," asserted Maeterlinck, "is to shut yourself in for three hours every day. Even if you can't work, stay in your room for that length of time."

It is an excellent method, but at that time, when I tried it I fell asleep, because we were literally drunk with sleepiness. Our nights, after the *Lapin* had closed, ended at Manière's, in the Rue Caulaincourt, or in the low bars of the Rue Lepic with men hardly fitted to understand

us. It was in those bars that I met *Jésus-la-Caille* and his young friends and, at the bottom of the Rue Tholozé, discovered the oven of a certain bread-making shop, which gave me later the idea of writing *l'Homme Traqué.*

Until dawn, which we tried not to see through the panes, for the first who was imprudent enough to see it paid a last round, we talked,—about poets, or the Boulevard, or the adventure novel, or Cubism . . . Everything was matter for discussion to us and we were all so ingenuous that, for example, we did not realize that Cubism was essentially Jewish in its origins and destined by its development less to enrich us plastically than mentally or, if you like it better, to be of less aid to the triumph of art than to an exchange of ideas and theories where art took second place.

"It has rather the same relation to art," some one said one morning, "as a cheque has to money."

"Yes," some one else replied, "but it is like a cheque without funds."

And the idea was not so bad.

But how could we help laughing at the unexpected and sometimes very pretentious formulas of the new school,—for instance when Picasso, after doing a study on one of the quays of packing cases of all sorts which were being unloaded, called it: *Portrait of my father.* One could even read on the cases the ordinary inscriptions: TOP, BOTTOM, KEEP DRY, and numbers, and tags.

"Now if you saw your father arriving in Paris with such a mug," said either Princet or Max Jacob to Picasso . . . "Well? What would you really think?"

But that did not stop other painters from exhibiting very seriously the following year at the Salon des Indépendants innumerable "portraits of my father" with inscriptions of the same kind, numbers and, sad but true, an eye here, a nose there, some teeth and piece of an ear somewhere else.

VII

MEANWHILE right at the top of the Rue Davignan at friend Emile's in a *bistrot* where they liked paintings, as all the *bistrots* on the Butte do, Markoussis had begun to decorate the walls of the back-room which many people used as a rendez-vous. These decorations, done with care, seemed excellent to us and the story goes that, one evening Utrillo, who had heard about them, came to see them, and that he said nothing, but counted the cubes.

The Rue Davignan however deserved to be consecrated to Cubism because Cubism was born a few yards away from friend Emile's on the Place Emile-Goudeau. Picasso, Max Jacob and Salmon lived on that square at Number 13, in a wooden building which still stands and which looks like one of the boats on the Seine used by washerwomen. Studios look out on the square or damp gardens, and a succession of indefinite



from a sketch by Dignemont

JEUNE OUVRIER AVEC SA GOSSE

cubbyholes open on a long passage. Everywhere is an atmosphere of poverty, abandonment, austere and complete lack of resources, but it is there, nevertheless, that admirers of the gentle Custom Officer Rousseau offered him a great banquet, at which, for a reason still unexplained, he did not arrive until the next day.

The Place Emile-Goudeau is a narrow triangle, on a very steep slope, which on one side boasts of the celebrated building already mentioned and on the other of the Hôtel Poirier, where I found La Vaissière. We had been instructors together at the College in Agen. We had been expelled because of our wild behaviour and a great affection united us. At that time the Viscount Robert de la Vaissière was publishing in the small reviews lovely prose poems which he signed with the name Claudien. When I met him he was beating the owner of the hotel with his cane, shouting in a high-pitched voice as was his custom. I separated the gentlemen and asked them the reason for their disagreement, and I was not surprised to hear

that the host was objecting to the innumerable young ladies the poet was receiving every night. The affair was settled in some way or other, but from that day on I had one more friend in Montmartre and a very dear one.

Any one who has not met Claudien can have no very clear idea of the kind of person he has always been. His red beard, his cane and his clothes are all distinctive. He has a great air. Impertinent, dignified, and imposing. But at that time, his poverty—like ours—was extreme and what astonished me was that there was nothing abject about it. On the contrary, Claudien wore clothes which an old friend secured for him and since they did not quite fit, he looked different with each suit that he put on. Claudien did not much care and was always the first to laugh at his transformations, which used to amuse us greatly. Goodness knows what the author of the *Labyrinthes* lived on at that time. Every year he had as many addresses as costumes, and they hardly fitted him any better. Sometimes it was in a garret, made—one would

have thought—to shelter the tenderest idyll, that he would receive me grandly, sometimes in an empty apartment, or in a room of a none too respectable hotel, or at the poet Gazanion's where I had had lodgings too. Everywhere he was the same, interesting to listen to and to study, calm and Olympian. The only thing he wanted to do was to do nothing. In the street, among the hurrying and agitated passers-by he walked slowly, smoking a big cigar, or else he sat in a café where he pulled from his pocket a small bottle of ether and calmly poured its contents into his drink. Kirsch with ether was his favourite. He had revealed its charm to me in Agen in the small cafés which the other clients, holding their noses, would leave at once. His rare and choice taste, his great knowledge, his conversation, which was always original, made him very attractive, and under a perfectly snobbish exterior he was the most faithful and tactful of friends. How many nights have we spent together walking about the lowest quarters of Paris! He would deliberately enter the most

ignoble and dangerous dens, go in among drunkards and prostitutes, lean his elbow on the bar and order:

"One *vieux marc!*"

Once when we were attacked under the canal Saint-Martin and not unexpectedly, he refused to let himself be searched:

"Here," he said, as if he had been giving charity to a beggar, "here are two francs for you."

Later in the evening he took out his wallet in a bar and I saw three hundred franc notes.

Whatever he attempted his supercilious and quiet manner was always against him at first sight, and among his friends, his picturesque misadventures had become a by-word.

At the *Bon Bock* one evening when he was dining and chatting, a disagreeable remark uttered loudly by one of the clients of that quiet restaurant struck his ear. La Vaissière rose, fixed his monocle and then leisurely walked over to the table where, he thought, some one had dared to mock him. Being very short-

sighted he made a mistake. He slapped the wrong person twice and he happened to be a fencing-master! A duel was inevitable. La Vaissière prepared for it and all of Marc Brésil's cleverness and tact were necessary to make him give up the idea.

Another evening in the Place Saint-Georges, La Vaissière, as he was on his way home, was very much annoyed by the big gold letters of an antique dealer's sign. He stopped, read slowly the name of the well-known Jew, and then, led by his demon, climbed up a balcony, took an enormous W out of the name and put it under his arm.

Soon he had quite a collection of those big W's, because every time the antique dealer replaced the missing letter, La Vaissière stole it. In the end, the dealer complained to the authorities and the police found out the secret of this uncanny disappearance. They arrested the delinquent and took him to the police station where he had much explaining to do.

He never gave rein to his fancy without get-

ting into trouble, but he always faced the music and kept calm through everything.

When he was an instructor, to the great despair of the head of the College of Agen, the school was very parsimonious about light. La Vaissière was not at all disturbed. He would go to the suburbs, take down a lighted street lamp and come back, very seriously, with his lamp in his hand. He wore nothing in the summertime and sat on the mantelpiece of his room explaining that the marble kept him cool.

He was unequalled in the jokes of all kinds which he perpetrated and when he was caught he defended himself in such perfect and pure French that no one could blame him.

The spectacle of Paris at night took him haphazardly from Belleville to Vaugirard, from the Bastille to the fortifications of Auteuil. He was always walking and talking tirelessly of poetry and mathematics. His secret taste, his passion for the degradation and corruption of a large city, took him to places where men, gnawed by their vices, teem and ferment in a state of hor-

rible distress; it was with a perfect knowledge of the most unapproachable dens that he composed his short poems, filled with such an acute torment.

What did it matter where he lived? He wrote to me, or else, if some night I forgot to keep an appointment with him, he broke the pane of a fire-alarm box, telephoned my address and, as the firemen besieged the building where I lived, I would remember my appointment. Such were his simplest antics. He did not boast of them, he was always master of himself, always dignified and impervious to everything. His moves were made under the cover of darkness and when he gave me the address of a new lodging place I wrote it down on a page of my note book kept specially for this purpose.

The only place in Montmartre that he would not go was the old Hôtel du Tertre, where we have all lived. Maybe it was too high up for his laziness, or maybe it was too full of joyful remembrances for his secret humour, uneasy and self-centered. The Viscount Robert de la Vais-

sière has always hated Montmartre. If he lived there years ago it was because he was following his star but we shall see later in this book that another setting suited him better.

Pierre Benoît, the first time he went up to the Place du Tertre, found out why it was so called. According to him it was because of the famous Captain Dutertre, who died in Africa, and whose glorification in the *bistrot Au Clairon de Sidi Brahim,* situated on that square, is thus explained. Depaquit lived once upon a time at the Hôtel du Tertre. He was called the *bon Jules;* he was well-mannered, very discreet, very clever and naturally astute to such an extent that after we had had to give it up, he could continue to drink on credit at the famous *Clairon de Sidi Brahim,* run at that time by old father Spielmann. He had a great deal of childish maliciousness and his repartee was often so good that it was disarming.

One morning, when a creditor knocked at his door and threatened to smash everything, Depaquit answered:

"Monsieur Depaquit has gone out."

"I recognise you," the creditor shouted, "I recognise your voice . . . Come on . . . Open!"

Good Jules obeyed.

"Well," said the creditor, "you see that you are lying!"

"I am not," answered Depaquit. "Monsieur has gone out . . . has been gone now for more than an hour . . ."

"So?"

"I swear."

The creditor was half convinced, but suddenly thinking better of it, he pointed to the shoes of his debtor, and growled:

"Monsieur Depaquit, why are you so obstinate? Look . . . here . . . Your shoes are still there, you have not put them on yet!"

"I?"

"Yes, certainly, you."

Then Good Jules pushed the creditor out saying as he shut his door: "When I go out in the morning I always wear my slippers."

VIII

A HUNDRED stories could be told about Depaquit. He was a very well-behaved man, puny, almost neutral, with no flamboyant fantasy about him, and always so much in the clouds that he seemed to live in a perpetual *qui-proquo.* His big nose, which he was the first to ridicule when he made a self-portrait, his round and surprised eyes gave him the appearance of one of those strange night birds which light blinds and renders unfit for motion. And indeed, the bon Jules carried the resemblance so far, that, when he walked in the streets he crept along furtively, close to the walls. When he came into a *bistrot,* he always seemed to have been pushed in sideways and he looked suspicious, frightened and uneasy. At the *Lapin* the seat he preferred was not in the big room, but in the corner of a narrow alcove, near the fire, where one had to move chairs, tables, furniture, linen, customers'

coats, a thousand objects, in order to see him. Only there did he feel sheltered from the curious. He loved dark places; he would grovel in them delightedly and, by moments, when every one had absolutely forgotten him, he would talk to himself or recite verses. Depaquit's voice! His grating voice, with a register too high or too low, remains in my ears like the wounded cries of village weathercocks in the winter. He himself knew it, because if he was a poet, he sang only about the petty annoyances of life, its mediocre dramas, its obscure despairs and its unwanted idealism. I said that one could hear him sometimes during our noisy nights. The term was wrong, one perceived—rather than one heard—Jules' voice and it was no more than a rusty groaning which, suddenly, would float out from a corner and would recite in a comical tone:

Ah! quel triste sort
A le hareng saur;

or, else, about the street organ:

C'est la musique incomprise
Qui fait vomir et qui grise
Et qui tue . . .
A la fin, on s'y habitue.

It was necessary to get accustomed to him, otherwise no relation with him was possible. He had to be taken as he was, grumpy, sleepy, or when he had been drinking, mocking and disillusioned. Strange young man! He was loved by every one for his childish maliciousness, his common sense, his humour, his very fine and sharp wit. Had he not given to his poems the only title that fitted them! When asked:

"What do you call your poems?"

He would answer: *"Les moments perdus!"*

And he would add:

"So lost indeed, that no editor wants them."

And yet those verses, which he would recite for one or two friends, were beginning to be known on the Butte. Everybody remembered fragments of them, but Depaquit could not endure to have them recited in his presence and if any one did, he would be annoyed and go

away hurt. Under his mocking exterior he was irritable and disconcerting. He had to be known and to be managed, and then there was no one as amiable or as gay.

Unintentionally, he was, we told each other, the author of a magnificent alexandrine, full of effects, of nuances, intentions, meat, balance, and sometimes after a lot of managing we would induce him to recite it so we could admire it. Now this magnificent line was buried in the twaddle of an absurd tragedy, so that we must have had a great longing to hear it, and much leisure, when good old Jules coughed and began. The story was about a King away at the crusades, who was deceived by the Queen with her nephew, regardless of the scandal. Scene followed scene, all the rhymes rhymed, all the expected catastrophes happened. Jules went on. At last, in the third act, the King came back. He hastened to his beloved spouse, anxious to press her to his heart, but he came upon Gontran in her arms and withdrew, disheartened. The author would choose his moment. He showed

us the unhappy crusader pulling his goatee, shaking his head, and then slowly crossing the stage, uttering in a dignified manner:

"Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens! Tiens!"

And the audience was delighted.

* * *

Those jokes were not cruel but they were enough to amuse us, because we were so young at that time that very little sufficed to do so.

But we laughed more with Depaquit than at him. His adventures had always something extraordinary which he used in order to divert us the more.

Alphonse Allais having asked him one day to lunch, good old Jules—he told me this tale many times—put on his Sunday best, took his big umbrella and went to the humourist's house. At that time Depaquit was not celebrated and his dreadful shyness, far from facilitating his going about, regularly brought him a thousand annoyances.

"Whom do you want?" the concierge shouted at him.

"Monsieur Allais."

"Yes, he is here. What do you want?"

"I must see him," Depaquit asserted.

"All right, take the service stairs in the courtyard," grumbled this Cerberus who did not like good old Jules' embarrassed air. "Can't you understand?"

Depaquit hastened to obey. He climbed up the stairs, knocked politely at the door of the apartment, waited till it was opened and then, giving his name and surname, entered:

"Sit there," said the cook. "I shall tell Monsieur, but between ourselves, you are not lucky, my good man, you have come at the wrong moment."

"Why?"

"Because the master is giving a big luncheon today; he won't see you."

"Really."

"Well," said the cook, "have patience, we'll see."

Depaquit sat in a corner and waited for more than an hour. He did not dare to ask the servants to announce him, because seeing them nervous and agitated, "Monsieur's guest hadn't turned up," an unreasonable terror was taking hold of him. Good old Jules sat quietly in his corner and saw very appetizing dishes pass under his nose. He smiled, doing his best to be brave under trying circumstances. He tried to look dignified when, as she sat down to her meal, the cook asked him to join her. As you can guess, Depaquit accepted at once. He ate heartily, lighted his pipe and when Madame Allais came in, and asked him rather brusquely who he was and what he was doing there, Depaquit answered tactfully: "I was waiting . . . You see? I did not want to disturb any one . . ."

. . .

The most dreadful misadventures happened to him all his life and curiously enough, instead of growing tired of them, he began to like them

and collect them. They were, so to speak, foreordained for him, perhaps because:

Par un décret des puissances suprêmes,

they could not happen to anybody else, perhaps because, as he was continually looking for them, he was entitled to them. At the *Lapin,* as at *Marie la Bonne Hôtesse,* he was exactly the same shadowy human being, rather silent, ghostlike, fluid. His grey hair, his clothes always too big and the air he had of moving constantly in a dream, made him a perfect butt. Beside him Utrillo showed off better on account of his manners. Depaquit would frequently disappear for long periods and when by chance one of us would try to find him, it was in vain.

To compensate for Depaquit's absence, M. Maurice, covered with paint, ragged, gesticulating, would make a lot of noise. When he was present at our meetings, it meant that he had escaped his gaoler and then instantly everything was changed. Utrillo, on those nights, very pale, a dark look in his eyes, would empty

bottle after bottle of red wine with surprising rapidity. Then the great painter would begin his stunts. He would approach our tables, hover around, stare at us, and then seize a glass or a bottle and run away. All of us would run after him shouting, but too late, for he would escape to the street, only to come back and knock till the door was opened. Alas, drinking was his vice. He showed as much stubbornness in bringing confusion wherever he went as our friend Jules showed in trying to be forgotten.

The cabaret owners, who all knew him, never missed an opportunity. Some even had tubes, pencils, canvases and brushes for M. Maurice, and they encouraged his drinking because his Montmartre studies were already worth about fifty francs apiece. At Marie's, the most beautiful Utrillos could still be seen at the beginning of the war. They were hung side by side, most of them without frames and nailed crazily up and down the walls. No one paid any attention to them. There were also canvases by the mother of Maurice Utrillo, Suzanne Val-

adon—Maurice Utrillo always signed himself Utrillo V. through filial love—some Thiret-Bognets, some Depaquits, at the *Belle Gabrielle,* because the bills were paid in that hospitable house by paintings, stories or songs, depending upon whether one was a painter or a poet. Marie was not stingy. She kept open house for all who came as long as they were artists, and only thought of getting paid later.

In the Rue Mont-Cenis, between the angle of the stairs and the narrow passage of the Rue Saint-Vincent, her restaurant, its curtain always drawn since 1914, was very attractive. The food was excellent, thanks to Marie, who did the cooking herself, and chose the wines as well. The good hostess deserved her nickname. She had no coquetry, but I really believe that under her easy going exterior she was very shrewd and had a keen critical sense. Otherwise why should she have seen in her neighbour, Utrillo's landlord, *Père G.,* who lived at the bottom of the stairs, a dangerous rival? No one knew at that time what paintings by Utrillo would even-

tually be worth, and while Utrillo lived with *Père G.,* Marie thought about the canvases he had and felt she was badly treated. Heavens! what scenes there were between M. Maurice, *Père G.* and the very quick tempered Marie. What disputes, but M. G. had the guardianship of Utrillo by contract and did not worry.

That very fat and unctuous man was no idiot. If he had agreed to prevent his strange lodger from leading a drunken existence in Montmartre he was paid with his lodger's works. I bought my first Utrillos from him. M. G. sold them to me for a hundred francs and treated me to a drink besides, because he also had a café, as is fitting, and he carried on both callings. Every wine merchant on the Butte is a picture-dealer to some extent. The two businesses go hand in hand and perhaps we would never have had a painter of the strength and greatness of Utrillo without the obscure *Père G.,* his *pinard* and his fantastic alcohols.

Let us come back to Depaquit. He always listened peacefully to the foolish sayings of others, shook his head and never took sides, being always on the defensive. He had other fish to fry, because his carelessness brought him creditors every morning who, not understanding jokes, claimed money from him and worried him. The Dufayel shop, amongst others, annoyed Jules a great deal. Invariably he answered that since he had rented furniture from Monsieur Dufayel, he would only deal with Monsieur Dufayel himself, and that if Monsieur himself would come to collect, he would be paid at once. He lived, or rather burrowed, a little everywhere, he never gave his address, and when once he remained in bed more than a week at Bouscara's, it appeared so strange to us that we all went to see him.

"I have a temperature," he explained to us, a little embarrassed. "I cough, I don't feel at all well."

"Really?"

Depaquit scratched his nose, and then as we

did not seem inclined to believe him, for he looked exceedingly healthy, he began:

"A week ago, I got my money from the *Journal* and I wanted to show off."

"What?"

"Yes."

"You?"

"Well," said Depaquit, "I picked up a girl . . . We dined on the boulevards . . . we came back here . . ."

"And then?"

"Then . . . she left me in the morning . . . yes . . . and . . . since then . . . no more money . . . I have looked everywhere . . . nothing . . . not a sou . . . It sounds stupid . . . So while waiting, I stay in bed. Bouscara brings me food . . . I work."

"And your money," said one of us, "where was it?"

"In my purse."

"And your purse?"

"In my pocket," answered Depaquit.

We were obliged to admit that Jules had been

robbed and we were sympathizing with him, when suddenly the friend who had asked him questions, went on:

"Where are your trousers, Depaquit? Did you look? . . . Did you search well?"

"Oh," moaned Depaquit, "my trousers . . ."

But an idea came to him. He jumped out of bed, lifted the mattress and suddenly cried joyfully:

"Here they are," he cried, "here they are . . . and in the pocket, no, can it be?"

"The purse?"

"And the money," said Depaquit . . . "Look . . . really, it is so stupid of me, so idiotic . . . and I, who thought she had even taken my clothes. La! la! la! how lucky for me that you came . . . otherwise, I would have remained in bed till Doomsday!"

With Georges Delaw, "imagier de la reine," Depaquit ended by creating in Montmartre a kind of reaction against the adventure craze and

the corsairs dear to Pierre MacOrlan. Delaw, who was conscientious and a hardened addict of dry land, hated adventure. He owned, in the Rue Mont-Cenis, a small house furnished with old furniture from the Ardennes, and a clock with a sonorous pendulum. Its windows were decorated with short curtains of blue or pink and white squares. Some pipes and some big and light tempera paintings brightened the walls. He frequented the *Lapin* a lot, but his group were subconsciously hostile to us. The prose poems, the drawings, the sayings of this charming artist, everything made him different from us, even his dog and his hob-nailed boots, indicative of the life he led.

Already, without preaching to us to renounce the extravagant ambitions which warmed our souls, another lover of the country, of the same kind as Delaw and Jules Depaquit, had just been able to fulfil his dreams. His name was Capy. Capy, the humourist, more in love with the suburbs than with the real country, had invested in a shanty near Saint-Ouen and had made it

into a *bistrot*. A sign painted by him pointed his house out to the curious. On the door was another with the inscription: *A l'ancien Conscrit*. And within was a room furnished with a bar, small tables, high stools, mirrors and bottles of all kinds, among which Capy, a napkin over his arm, waited. In the little village where everybody knew the humourist, not one of the inhabitants felt tempted to enter. They mistrusted him. But, one day, a traveller who wanted to lunch quickly passed by that strange inn, sat down and called the waiter:

"Here I am," grumbled Capy.

He himself served his customer, brought him choice wines, coffee, cigars, then some cognac and as the other, in a very good humour, asked for the bill:

"Allow me," said Capy in a murmur, "please don't mention it, you are in my house, sir."

"Well?"

"Well, . . . nothing . . . you don't owe me anything. I am only too happy to have had you to lunch."

"Well, I'll be damned! . . . You . . . Are you joking?"

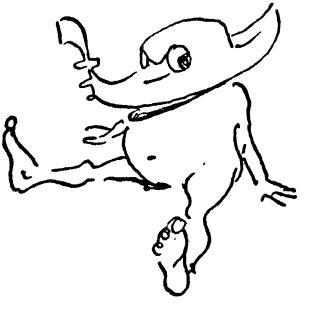
"Good-by," said Capy.

The customer could not make it out. He looked stupidly at his host, then fearful that he might be the victim of a joke, he took to his heels and ran away as fast as his legs could carry him.

There is a great difference between this pleasing story and those of Jack London's buccaneers and I rather suspect Capy of having invented it so that he could laugh at us. What does it matter? Those who loved the land wanted to make us disgusted with desert islands and phantom ships and every means seemed justified to them. If they opposed vagabondage to adventure, they never went further than teasing us and they did not mind drinking a toast with us. In the two camps, a clay pipe made everybody agree that it was best to take life joyously.

And there was room for us all in Montmartre and each one of us could lead freely the existence he chose. For some of us, this happy place with its view of Saint-Ouen and Saint-Denis and

their thick clouds of smoke looked without doubt like a tragic port exposed to the wind of the open sea. For others, it was a tiny village with its narrow streets, its silent and sleepy shops, and I must say that, more than once, if I had been obliged to decide between the lovers of the land and the lovers of the sea, I should have been very embarrassed, as I sometimes saw the sea in the far-off distance, and sometimes those mute spaces which one sees only in the open country and which surround one on every side.



IX

ALAS! with time, how many illusions have I left behind! When I think of them, and when I see Montmartre, not as it was then, but as it is now, with its high buildings and its *guinguettes* full of foreigners, I feel as if I had lived a dream, and I don't know where I am. And yet, there is Frédéric on his threshold, the Hôtel du Tertre, the Coucou, the Belle Gabrielle, and the small church whose bell tolled devotedly every evening. Here behind the wall of the old Calvary graveyard are the big trees, whose leaves in autumn covered the illustrious slabs and fell into our glasses. Here are the innumerable lights of Paris and the same wind which makes them twinkle as before, when we look at them. Nothing has moved or changed its appearance, nothing, except our years and our loves, which though dead may be renewed temporarily, only to disappear at once.

Mon beau navire

cried Guillaume Apollinaire,

O ma mémoire
Avons-nous assez navigué
Dans une onde mauvaise à boire
Avons-nous assez divagué
De la belle aube au triste soir.

What can I answer? He is no longer with us, though his invisible presence still lingers in that setting of palings, studios and small gardens where we used to wander together. At the *Lapin,* when we felt that he was secretly hurt, in spite of his loud laughter and his jokes, did he not leave to his friends the task of evoking him as he really was?

Those who knew him better than I, could tell of this and show him with Salmon, Picasso, Max Jacob, talking of pure poetry, food, Negro art, Cubism, orphism. He loved to teach others, to trouble them, to mystify them, and to laugh afterwards at them and at himself without any malice. No one in Montmartre had his kind-

ness and no matter what he undertook, it brought him sympathy and provoked enchantment. It was royal. It was fairy-like and if I allude to it now, it is because in 1913, I saw much of Guillaume Apollinaire in the cafés on the Left Bank, where he was surrounded by his court.

Long before that date, between those two sections which were so different, the Butte and the Quarter, the fight had opened. Derain, Salmon, Apollinaire, Picasso, Modigliani, only came very rarely to the *Lapin*. They took their pleasures elsewhere, and I am obliged to admit that without them our evenings were rather dull. Another kind of spirit was in us, a more ordinary, earthly one; other cares also and perhaps a deep-seated uneasiness which sometimes made us count ourselves as if we were afraid our group would disappear into space at the first weakness.

However, at the Place du Tertre, at Bouscara's terrace, Charles Laborde, Daragnès, Asselin, Girieud, Deslignières, Warnod, Dorgelès made a joyous company. We dined at the

same table then, and when Frédé's cellar drew us, we would join MacOrlan and our crew was complete. We spent the night thus. Girls and apaches who were fond of poetry made friends at Frédéric's with his ordinary clients. We were treated as comrades by them and they offered us drinks. Those men had tender hearts, "artistic tastes," and when one of their women would pass them up for some one of our group, those gentlemen did not get angry; they would leave us for a while, dance at the Moulin de la Galette and come back with new girls. All were not, luckily, of the same kind, because the place would have lost its charm, but they all loved the easy life one led at the *Lapin* and its very literary poisons.

And indeed, under the lamps veiled with red silk handkerchiefs, and the low dark ceiling of the big room, where Frédéric sang, who did not feel as if drugged with some powerful opiate? No dream nor pleasure even approaches that sensation. It was quite another thing. A very special sort of intoxication, mixed

with fancies and depression, uncertain and voiceless. It seized us, as in autumn the falling rain stops to fall again, to lull us, to make us inert and half-conscious. It really rained on those nights, or else it snowed, while the drunkest lay stretched upon the benches and innocent white mice, friendly yet cautious, trotted along the mantelpiece. How can I describe without a pang, without a feeling akin to the most sorrowful partings, the atmosphere of our long night-watches? Part of it came from the surroundings of confused *bric-à-brac,* from the obscene mouldings, from the immense plaster Christ, from Picasso's canvases, Utrillo's, Girieud's. The heavy smoke of the pipes added to it. And Frédéric with his guitar, MacOrlan dressed as a cow-boy, the dampness of the walls, the barking dogs, the hidden despair of us all, our poverty, our youth, wasted time, completed the atmosphere. Am I right? There were some evenings when we were all drunk and some of us were in the depths of despair and great loneliness, but it did not show. Except for



from a sketch by Dignemont

BETWEEN SHOTS

Couté, who was put to sleep on the ground, under the tables, since he seemed unable to stand, nothing would have been noticeable. But he shouted often and very loudly when he awoke, or else stood up, upsetting bottles and glasses. To stop the scandal we would sing so loudly that we could not hear each other's voices.

Such things happened often then. No one paid any attention to them. They belonged to the customs of the place and even on some nights shots from outside through the panes brought those pleasurable moments to the height of their intensity. If I speak about these shots, it is only to show that the gentlemen whom Frédé did not wish in his place also wanted to take part in the festivities, so they shared in them in their own way and their erstwhile girls felt the thrill of it. For them, it was the call of the street, of its hazards, its furious and threatening loves, and for us a supreme excitement. At other times, the men who had decided to punish their women would make a surprise attack upon the *Lapin*

and, brandishing sharp razors, bring terror with them.

Astonishing hours! These same men who, one winter's night, a little later, surrounded me as I was going home, were huge brutes. Their coats looked as if they were made of sacking and were shaped like Inverness capes, such as those formerly worn by highway robbers, and they carried, tied to their wrists, thick, short sticks. Where did they come from? From what far away quarter? A gay ball at the Butte must have been what attracted them, for they went everywhere . . .

Salmon in his *Tendres Canailles* shows them as they were and in the verses he dedicated to them:

Partageant mon vin, des filous
M'ont laissé caresser leurs armes,

he shows what kind of underhand comradeship existed between the poets and the gangsters. But there was also, at Frédéric's, his son, young Victor, for whom the girls who came from the

Moulin de la Galette did all kinds of foolish things. Victor turned their heads: they were "turned inside out" by him and many mysterious intrigues complicated matters and awe-inspiring gangs watched the entrances of the *Lapin*. In the summer of 1911, about midnight, at the time when the *Lapin* and the *guinches* (dancing halls) close their doors, one could hear Victor being called and threatened. He did not answer, but was behind the counter, peaceful, looking straight ahead, with a smile upon his lips. What happened? I won't tell it all. However, a short while after, the newspapers announced that Frédé's son had been killed at the cashier's desk by a man who, while asking change for ten francs, had emptied his revolver into him.

I heard this news in the provinces and at once I felt everything would be different. I thought of Frédé and imagined him alone in his closed house. An immense pity filled me as I thought of him, forsaken, old and discouraged, in the midst of his café's absurd scenery, decked in his

operatic bandit's costume. Life has such paradoxes. We were all very sorry for him. This adventure plunged us into the deepest gloom. But, on my return, I saw the *Lapin* wide open and its customers installed as usual . . . Doubtless there was a little less gaiety and lightheartedness than formerly, but one evening Frédé sang, we also sang, and life went back to its queer course which nothing could circumvent.

"There you are," said a friend, "we are still the same as ever and can begin all over again."

MacOrlan had married; and had left Montmartre and most of his comrades, who were enjoying the welcome given to them by Gus Bofa at the *Sourire*. He came less often to the Butte and went more and more to the Boulevards and the newspapers. Roland Dorgelès was seen only in taxis. Warnod went to Comœdia, Charles Laborde ran around Paris looking for the kind of people he draws and deserted the *Lapin*. That was the end. And as for myself, one day I decided to work and left the Rue Caulaincourt

for the Latin Quarter. Gradually, through the force of circumstances, we met only rarely at Frédé's, where younger people had taken our place.

Daragnès, Asselin, Girieud, Deslignières, Depaquit, Delaw, Falké and some others alone stubbornly clung to their old habits, led the same life and were wise to do so. However, they also abandoned Frédé a little later. One met them at Adèle's, in her wooden shanty, where the cooking was good, at the *Billard-en-Bois*, at Manière's, who today has assembled the last habitués of the *Lapin* of that time, at Bouscara's, at old Spielmann's, but although still quite numerous the group was losing its unity. The *Billard-en-bois* was discovered by the designer Gassier, and an old rivalry with Poulbot obliged him to keep it up to the mark. The restaurant's arbours in a shaded garden, its customers, tradesmen and young men and young ladies of the Butte were not objectionable, quite the contrary. And to tell the truth, two beautiful Renoirs painted on the walls and a charming canvas by

Marie Laurencin helped to keep us faithful to it.

Any one who has ever known Marie Laurencin without becoming attached to her forever, is a monster, for she certainly is the most charming and most sprightly of friends. Her gaiety, her charm, her talent would move hearts of stone. And besides she had the prestige of having been bitter and sweet to our friend Guillaume and of having inspired his most beautiful poem. When she appeared, with her blonde hair blowing around her face like a halo, her clear eyes, her laughing mouth and her natural amiability, the verses of the *Chanson du Mal Aimé* came to our lips and we would say them over to ourselves while Marie sat down at the table, looked at us and asked us sometimes what we were thinking about. Could any one tell her? No one would have dared.

. . .

Dear Marie! She knew, she could see that we were not angry with her for having made Guil-

laume so unhappy. Sometimes she asked about him. Sometimes, astonished by our silence, she would hum a little song and go away, and it appeared impossible for her not to be at least as upset as we were. So many tender memories clung to her that, in spite of everything, she remained the too-much beloved friend of the poet, and our sister in the amazing sufferings of which she was the cause. Why should I not acknowledge it? It seemed as if her presence through a thousand subtleties prepared us, as well as Guillaume, for despair and to welcome it when it came. What did our Montmartre loves amount to in comparison? Very little, less than nothing, because if we thought about them, a bitter feeling born of disgust and fatigue came over us. Truly, sad love affairs, too mechanical and too obvious. In spite of often borrowing new faces, they were always the same and our mistresses who thought they were making us happy, only succeeded in irritating and tiring us. What was missing? I hardly dare to say it. Perhaps they would have been better if there had been

less joy, less compliance and less stupidity. But no matter how the days and nights passed, if one of the girls left us we were so sorry that we had to hide it somehow.

How many times, as I went back to my room at dawn, I suffered from loneliness and lack of courage. I would have given half of my life to get rid of that emptiness within me, that emptiness which made me tolerate in others and commit myself a thousand excesses! I would have gone to the end of the world, even if I had to come back alone, as always. There was in me, in those moments, such a desire to escape from my life that it seemed to me that I acted, thought, and slept in a dream. It was a great torment. I saw my disorder clearly, I judged myself accurately. I pitied myself, but at the same time, my youth triumphed and far from making a decision, I was carried away by my pleasures, and they blinded me.

In the evenings—I remember it quite well—the streets drew me when the bars and the hotels lighted up. I roamed around Montmartre,

where, lost in those quarters dear to the heart of Robert de la Vaissière, I intoxicated myself by wandering through the rain looking for the most dismal adventures. In Grenelle, at the Bastille, I stayed several days in disgusting lodgings, drinking, smoking, unable to explain the disgusting taste I had for the company of prostitutes and their friends, the thieves. In their noble company I danced in the *bals-musette*. I would forget everything else in the world till the moment when, heartily sick of all that stupid life, I seemed to revert to purer feelings. Then nothing could have held me. I would cross Paris hastily, go back to my house and would feel as sentimental as if I were coming back from a long journey. Everything greeted me with joy and when, in my mail, a *pneumatique* scandalously perfumed would recall to my mind a transient love affair, I was quite sincere in my gladness.

My confidences will have to be excused, but it would be hard to understand without them the following lines:

L'heure amère des poètes
Qui se sentent tristement
Portés sur l'aile inquiète
Du désordre et du tourment

and that bitter hour, so troubled and unsettled, rang on my alarm clock more often than is customary perhaps or good taste to confess to my readers.

Was it my fault? I had to pay that price for my restful hours, and the bad opinion these adventures gave me of myself filled me with delight and pain. Should I have struggled? It was beyond my strength, and the most curious thing is that, while despising myself on that account, I was persuaded that it would be a good enough reason for my absolution. Being in that frame of mind I had very little chance to mend my ways. My lower self decided what tastes I should have, what errors I should make and I laughed at the time lost when some innocent creature tried to awake better feelings in me, and I played up to her. Everything was useful to deceive her; if I gave myself away, I took back

all I said at once, even if I regretted it afterwards and under my matter-of-fact air saw myself as I really was. Of course, I regret none of that period in my life when my real satisfaction came only in doing wrong and in enjoying it. And yet if I suffered I was quickly consoled, and singularly enough, as soon as I had stopped moaning, I started suffering again and did not grudge it.

It has been said of poets that they are always ready to sacrifice their happiness in order to celebrate it better and to find a more humane passion. It is quite possible. Baudelaire and his "voluptuousness of regret" have long fascinated me, but each man has his own nature and has to deal with it. Mine inclined me to the worst excesses and to the lowest pleasures, through sorrow and the want of money. What is the good of theorizing about it? I admired the falseness of women and I was taken in by them. Perhaps one, after telling me she copied my letters in a note book so that she could re-read them as she sat beside her husband, deceived me

with him, perhaps another, wishing me well, yielded to me only in tears and discouraged me. They educated me, they taught me how to play their game, and always furnished me reasons to run away from them.

Thus I spent most of those beautiful years in a perpetual uncertainty and I discovered in my friends the same desire to break off any affair when they began to really fall in love. Why should I not have done as they did? Some of them caused melodrama and were delighted, while I, renewing relations with fallen women, at which I should have blushed, struggled with drunkenness, disgust and awful torment. The more I went on and the more my torment increased, the more I felt the prey of my sad habits. However, it was not only the women I loved but, most of all, the black streets, the low cafés, the cold, the fine rain upon the roofs, the bars, the chance meetings, and in the bedrooms an air of sad abandon which tightened my heart. The tragic winter nights, so dark and so pathetic, fascinated me and gave me such sensa-

tions that, perfectly insensible to other attractions than theirs, I intoxicated myself, as with a bitter wine, with my own misfortunes.

Has not Utrillo expressed in his work that secret and cruel obsession which during a certain period of his life pursued him more than any other? It has laid its weight on our teens with a heavy load and has marked the men of my generation with such a mysterious sign that without it they would have no means of recognizing themselves. In Utrillo it can be seen at once, as he has cherished his illness and has dissected it so minutely that he could not deny it. Recall the perspectives, deserted for the most part, of his Paris streets and of the suburbs. There shines upon the walls, upon the houses with closed shutters, upon the brown windows of *bistrots* a fixed light which comes from nowhere, except from those dream regions which no one dares talk about. And what anxiety there is, an anxiety that cannot be captured, what an ambiguous, fleeting, unattainable presence, what a piercing call! It seems that, at the pre-

cise minute when he could have helped us, the only human being alive in the world had just turned around the corner of those plaster houses and disappeared for ever. Why has he not heard? As I write these lines I am looking at one of Utrillo's canvases in which these qualities which make his greatness and his strength are magically portrayed. In that picture, the whites and the blues and the pinks blend with such perfection that they overwhelm me. A narrow yard, an open door, some leaves on the roofs. Such calm! One thinks of Verlaine, who sighed:

Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, la vie est là,
Simple et tranquille!

and little by little one is struck by the air of that very clean small yard, with the entrance ornamented by an enormous inscription: LAVOIR CHAMPEAU, in big letters; you look at it, you approach it with curiosity, as if, from behind the shutters some one were watching you, and you act as if you had not seen him. But is one sure

of anything? Isn't it rather that other self, which every man spends his life crushing down, who before this canvas awakes as if by enchantment? Those places are so familiar to that other self! He knows them. I mean to say, he recognizes them and the emotion that seizes him —at that moment—is one which only a few human beings can feel if they have been weak the first time, only to push temptation away and to fly from it, afraid of giving in.

Shall I be believed? I felt then a fear and an uneasiness which I did not analyse, and in the streets where I roamed very late, I had the impression of being swept into the confused and blind totality of existence which stalks about at night, in secret, hunts desperately, comes and goes . . . borne by the wind. I can't express myself better: the next day when I came back in broad daylight, it took a long and hard effort to get hold of myself. I was suffering. I was struggling against some one who had taken hold of me—and finding my ordinary self at last, I was irritated and felt cheated. And indeed,

everything was changed,—the poet inspired by the night had been turned by me into a copyist without imagination who, even while writing down verses, would forget their meaning, if not their rhythm and their ambiguous and nostalgic fervour.

Sad home comings! Montmartre was then only an ordinary quarter of Paris, very ordinary, without any character. Creditors rang the bell. The concierge, her receipted bill in her hand, asked for money.

"Rather than get yourself in such a state," this ridiculous person would say, "it might be better . . ."

"Yes!"

Max Jacob used to escape with the aid of a compliment. Others, sitting naked at their work tables, would shout to her: "Come in," and say coolly: "You see, everything has been taken away from me!" Ordinarily, it was outside that the disputes took place and we avoided them by running rather than by insisting. On the fifteenth of every quarter, fatal date, couples

who appeared united would separate because of the rent, and the milkman, the grocer and the butcher would draw a moral to bore us with. However, it was a moral, the only real one, though perhaps if we had followed it, we would have been disgusted before the right age with the chances of life. I remember what happened to me one morning in the Rue Lepic, in a hotel where I was plunged in a deep sleep. I had to give up to the hotel keeper my poems, my clothes, my shoes and, shivering, I soon found myself in a bar on the place Pigalle, without a coat—in spite of winter—and without a hat. How ugly the square seemed that morning, with its fountain and its green buses. Standing in front of the counter, sleepy and cold,

J'admirais comment va le monde

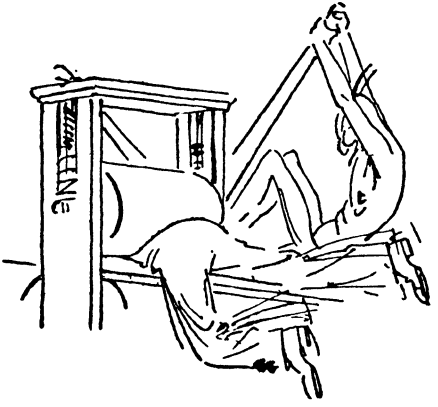
but my heart was failing me. "What?" I said to myself. "Is life only a question of paying, paying all the time!"

I thought of my comrades who must have been thinking as I did, and who discouraged,

understanding that Montmartre was no more than any other place the habitat of artists, did not know where to go. The water in the basin, the streets on the slope which led to Paris, invited one to travel, to go away . . .

Je sens que les oiseaux sont ivres.

"Ah! not the birds! That's enough!" said I, outraged . . . And I went out of the bar at the moment when, throbbing with life, the motor bus "Place Pigalle-Halle-aux-Vins" was starting . . . and I jumped inside.



X

THE contrast between Montmartre and the Latin Quarter can be seen at once on the route followed by the bus Pigalle-aux-Vins. One suddenly discovers other places than the *Moulin Rouge, la Galette,* the *Lapin Agile,* even Sacré-Cœur. And greater memories can be evoked.

The pointed and lacy spire of the Sainte-Chapelle, the towers of Notre-Dame, the *parvis,* Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, in that winter morning appeared to me in a bluish light and although I had no credit whatsoever on that side of the water, I felt quite reassured. When I first arrived in Paris, I had stayed in the Ile Saint-Louis where Charles-Louis Philippe wrote to me, from his little room, that for a poet it was the only place to live. When Charles-Louis Philippe died I went to live on the Quai de Bourbon but I didn't stay long there. The place was too calm, too far away, with the river, its

sad trees and its old houses. It seemed to me that I was still in the provinces. I was bored there and as I often came back very late at night, the concierge was offended by my conduct and I was unhappy about it. Why should I lie? I had no self-assurance at that time. Paris with its brasseries, its cafés, its carriages, its perpetual and feverish animation frightened me. I did not know many people, and when I sat in the bars and looked at the women, they inspired in me more astonishment than desire and I did not dare go near them. One of them whom I met at the Taverne du Panthéon and whom I secretly admired, was very much amused by my shyness. She was a dark girl, very easy-going, who smoked luxurious cigarettes with gold tips, and who, far from being very hard, accepted when the café was closing, anything that was offered. It never occurred to me to take advantage of such a reduction in price and one evening the woman herself spoke to me, explaining that her feet were hurting her and asked me for three francs so that she could take a carriage to go

home. I gave them to her. But to my great surprise I saw the charming borrower forget all about her feet, and run as fast as she could to a bakery, where women of her kind went on feasting the whole night.

That incident taught me more about those women than a whole night spent with one would have, because I missed the three francs dreadfully the next day. At that time one could eat three square meals for that sum, and even drink and smoke as well. In the Rue de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, where Bernouard and I were learning to set type and to print books, our meals cost twelve sous. Bread, ten centimes; meat, thirty centimes; vegetables, fifteen; hot chocolate, one sou, so that from three francs there was enough left for luxury. But I thought philosophically, one must learn, and I did not trouble myself any more about it.

I was richer another night. I can see myself crossing the Petit-Pont and playing with a small gold coin which was going to give me a week of ease. It was about dawn. A fine winter rain

was wetting the pavements and the roadway, the dark shrubs shone along the quay and in a line around the *parvis,* and the gas lights were glowing. No one was abroad at such a time, except a *garde-républicain* who, to keep warm, was stamping his feet in his sentry-box and grumbling under his long coat. He saluted me as I passed near him and as I turned around to greet him in return, the coin I held in my hand escaped me and rolled I don't know where.

"Oh, how stupid!"

"What is the matter?" asked the *garde.*

"I had ten francs . . ."

"Ten francs!"

"Yes," I said, very much upset, "and now it's gone . . ."

"You must look for it," said the *garde* as he stopped stamping his feet on the bottom of his box. "It can't have rolled very far . . ."

At that moment, a miserable beggar, on his way to the Halles, came up. He held the collar of his ragged coat close around his neck:

"What is the matter?" he asked in a raucous voice. "May I help you in any way?"

We explained matters to him, and then I struck a match.

"Wait," mumbled the man. "Come around here. If you move when you look, you won't be able to find anything . . . There, in the gutter, give us a light."

He was down on his knees, feeling in the dirty water, searching on the ground, his fingers moving along slowly in the mud.

"We'll share, hey," he asked, "you promise?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, old man, have patience!"

A great moment! And one after another my matches went out, while the indefatigable beggar carefully explored the pavement. Soon, other individuals as blue with cold as he was, and intrigued by our conduct, had joined us. They came out from under the shrubs which are at the foot of Charlemagne's statue and, hearing what was the matter, began looking also.

Some women came as well and also searched in the rain. I was tired and unhappy at the sight of all those miserable people who, for five francs, silently prayed luck to be good to them and were watching each other covertly. Suddenly I could not stand it any more. I gave up the search and went home very sadly.

"How pitiful!" I thought.

As I was undressing, the small gold coin, which had providentially fallen into a fold of my old trousers, rolled out of its hiding-place to the floor.

I kept for a long time a painful recollection of those ten francs which I used instead of dividing them. I am still ashamed when I think about it. I asked for the beggar the next day of the passers-by, at the same time, at the same place, but nobody was able to give me any information. Necessity kept me from insisting any more. Days and years have passed and if now I think of that night only rarely, it is still very difficult for me to cross the Petit-Pont without feeling a tightness around my heart . . .

Everywhere in that damp quarter the same impression follows me, for no matter where I go I see myself penniless and tormented by a smell of warm chestnuts which aggravated my hunger. In the Rue de Buci, on the Quai Saint-Michel at the corner of the square, in the Rue Saint-André-des-Arts, the smell intoxicated me, and filled me with envy but, as I watched myself as soon as I could see the bag and pan of the vender, no one would have noticed my craving. What did I have to complain about? I had left Montmartre to work and to lead quietly in a corner the kind of life I liked. All the worse for me, or all the better. I was free. I had only to persevere. I had to. Only I had not always the twelve sous which my friends paid for their meals at the Montagne and I had often to go without eating.

After a three days' fast which I spent in bed, in the Rue Visconti, under a gable in the garret where I had taken my abode, I remember going out, at night, not knowing where. The very bitter cold stung me and I trembled; I

had a painful humming in my ears, and the people I met stopped and looked back at me. Through some dark streets, running into each other like a long passage, I went towards the Seine, followed the quays, and crossed the river. A vague impulse drew me towards the Halles. It was not yet the time when the hungry go scavenging amongst the garbage, and the spectacle of the well-swept and clean pavements absolutely discouraged me. I leaned against a door, —I could not wait any longer,—I was done up, vanquished, lost. Such a night! Unsteady on my legs, wandering here and there, light-headed, I soon landed on a bench in the Boulevard de Sébastopol. A raw north breeze which sent gusts of dust into the air was blowing and it froze my legs. I was looking without seeing, listening without hearing, to the trams and the heavy market trucks rumbling by, when an old woman who had been haunting the neighbourhood for a while came and sat down beside me.

She was a sordid creature with an old boa around her neck, its feathers flying in the wind,

a ridiculous hat, mittens and a canvas bag. What did she want? Either I could not understand the words she said or else she was crazy. I drew away slowly.

"Well, are you coming?" she said, looking hard at me. "Well? Come along . . ."

She scanned my face, shook her head and asked:

"And yet you look straight. What is the matter? It does not please you? . . ."

"No, no," I said . . . "Go away!"

And as she was hesitating:

"Don't you see," I cried suddenly, "that I am hungry?"

"What?"

"Oh, leave me alone!"

The old woman came closer and then, convinced I did not lie, went away silently and came back two minutes later with a big hunk of warm and appetizing bread which she laid without a word upon the bench.

It is really true but, at that time, I was a perfect idiot and I believed in all good faith

that because I wrote verses everything ought to be given to me.

"I thought the same," said a comrade to me one day. "If I had not succeeded, you know, what a great failure I would have been!"

His words are right. "If I had not succeeded!" And yet it is better to succeed, even if one regrets it later on. And yet! . . . To succeed! . . . Did we think about it? Moréas' example—he lived at the brasserie and Max Jacob called him *Matamoréas*—did not incite any one to follow it. We dreamed about fame and little did we care about succeeding because Forain's question: "Yes, but in what way?" put everything in proper perspective for us.

In the cafés on the Boulevard Saint-Michel, at the d'Harcourt, at the Source, at the Vachette, which was soon replaced by a bank, at the Panthéon with Bernouard and two or three friends he employed at the printing works, pleasure came first—as well as in the Rue Dupuytren, where the *Belle Edition* was proud of owning an unworkable hand-press and where we earned our

living, the composing-stick in our hands and a smile upon our lips. Jou, the engraver who was to become very well-known later, taught me, and, fine work for a poet, I set up letter by letter in my spare moments the verses of *La Bohême et mon cœur* which was about to be published. Alas! the composition over, we had no paper and an unexpected order decided my fate. I had to break up the type I had assembled and my small book of verse did not appear.

"Come and have a glass," Bernouard said then, to soften the blow.

And showing a handful of gold louis which he had got for the damned order, he added, joyfully:

"Well, anyhow, we have some dough!"

It was something.

And, indeed, what we would not have done to acquire the "dough" when we had none! We sold everything, even the clothes Poiret gave Bernouard on the pretext that he could wear them. I sang in backyards. Jou went around to the booksellers to collect big bills and Clar-

net, a Rumanian, tried nobly to get his relatives interested in our futile efforts. Nothing happened. I got English or Italian pennies for my songs. Jou came back empty-handed from his rounds, Clarnet led a joyous life and Bernouard tore his hair.

His fair hair, very long and brushed back, gave him an inspired air and assured his success with the ladies of the d'Harcourt,—success not as a publisher, but as an artist,—which entitled him to a lot of drinks. How did he get on? That was a mystery, but no one thought about it, because he was a real Parisian and had early been taught "music" as he said. The attractive young man knew and knew also how to prove it. Although he was older than we were, he looked without doubt the youngest of us and, at times, maybe the most romantic. A real personality: looking like a boy, very pale, very much awake, with blue eyes, sensitive, quarrelsome, funny, always master of himself and full of insolence. The only person who could intimidate him was the sheriff when certain bills

falling due required his presence. I would then wrap "the boss" in a big roll of Arches paper, and he was present at the discussion unseen. In the end he would burst out, laughing uproariously. How many times have we laughed instead of being disheartened! How many times have we coolly let things take care of themselves! That was the most sensible thing to do. By a kind of miracle, just when we were the most in need of it, some author who could pay to have his work published would come and pay something in advance, or else a friend passing through Paris or a creditor moved by our distress, or a lady friend from the Quarter would take us to a restaurant. Nothing ever happened to us except providentially and such happenings, far from astonishing us, strengthened our hope that sooner or later everything in life is settled when it is least expected.

Our feasts were not very costly. A small bar in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince was sufficient. We feasted on cafés-crême and on buns, and then on fanciful drinks. That street, which

Barrès made celebrated at the time of the brasseries, was not very prepossessing. Some *bistrots,* some dark little shops, some hotels and third-rate houses of prostitution succeeded each other from left to right and its damp pavements, its panes thick with dirt, its untidy and unclean shop windows gave it altogether a very unpleasant appearance.

It was in that street we met at night as friends of the girls and of the harpies who exploited them. We were very poor clients but we were welcome, they offered us drink and *mère* Charles, sitting in front of a brasero, told us her life. In exchange for stories and songs the white wine was poured *ad libitum* and we shared it with the taxi drivers in those desolate places. Then the ladies, who knew that we were poets, asked us to write acrostics for them and sometimes long letters to very respectable gentlemen.

"My darling," we would dictate, emptying bottles, for which none of us, for a very good reason, ever thought of paying, "I do nothing

except think about you. Since you made me yours . . ."

"Ladies!" *mère* Charles would call.

Outside it was pouring rain. The wind blew and we felt tired and sleepy, sitting near those women who spoke incessantly about the Mondays at Convert, where they danced. A thick air filled the room, between its plastered walls, under the gas-jets on the ceiling which lighted the room crudely. But what did it matter! we were under cover. We listened to the rain falling and to the verses of François Villon:

Vente, gresle, gelle, j'ay mon pain cuit.

They filled us with a greater and more delightful languor.

Must I be frank? No other place pleased us as much. It was a synchronization, in its ordinary setting of fans, divans, mirrors covered with writing, garlands, photos, of a very equivocal world, and it helped us to know that sort of world well and even then, whatever one might

think, to describe it as it really was. Where could we have gone? There was not much choice for us. Here or there, I mean, in the brasseries or in the strange shops of the Quarter, we would have found very much the same people. Shall we be blamed on that account? I don't care. My life is settled and I have neither the time nor the effort to waste on regrets.

And anyway even if *mère* Charles were obliging, perhaps we were freed from the obligations of the expense she incurred for us, for about New Year's we would pay our debt to her very handsomely. At New Year's I used to send my card and wishes to celebrated writers, and the cards which they did not fail to send me in acknowledgment "with their sincere thanks" I gave to *mère* Charles. She was more than delighted. She put all those valuable visiting cards around the mirrors in the place, and when clients asked her questions she pretended, for example, to know the Messieurs de Goncourt quite well, since they sent her cards.

In the Rue de l'Echaudé-Saint-Germain, which we also frequented and where we took Mario Meunier, who confessed and consoled the girls, love of literature made us call a certain house the *Mercure de France* and the proprietress Rachilde. At Rachilde's we were at home. The good woman even kept a room for me where I could write "my poems" and sometime a young person under transparent veils would bring me a glass of champagne to help the Muse. Why did I not make better use of the calm quietness of such hospitality! Why was I not able to convince Rachilde that the work of a poet is not counted by the lines and that sleeping is often better than forced work! She did not believe me and from the poet I was in her eyes, I became a bad boy, I ceased to interest her and lost all my prestige.

Luckily Mario Meunier, with his long hair, his cane with its lapis lazuli knob, his episcopal hands and the big amethyst ring he wore on his finger, kept up the love for artists in the house. He was writing then a noble book of a very high

philosophic import: *Pour s'asseoir au Foyer de la Maison des Dieux,* and, full of his subject, he would exchange ennobling thoughts with the proprietress. Soon one spoke only of God at the *Mercure,* and a certain customer who hid his real calling very badly under ordinary clothes, thought when he heard the conversation that he had been found out and called no more.

"What does it matter?" Rachilde said, "one lost, ten found."

And indeed, enough people came without the poor uneasy man of whom the women had been afraid. Merchants, students, Arabs, bourgeois, workmen and a beadle! The latter used to amuse us enormously every time he came. He waited till all "the ladies" gathered around him, then looked at them one after another and asked:

"How much?"

"Well, five francs."

"Ah!" he would sigh deeply, "five francs, it is expensive, I haven't got them . . ."

"Go on . . ."

"No, no," he would assert and, looking at the nudities which excited him, he would mutter: "What beautiful girls! Oh! . . . what beautiful girls. You are magnificent, you know . . ."

"All right, make up your mind."

"Make me a price," the beadle would ask in a low voice. "What about two francs?"

"No. Five."

"Three. Look, I'll go to three francs . . . Will you take them?"

By that time Rachilde was annoyed:

"Go to the devil! You won't get one of my women for less than five, miser, go, go away, get out!"

And the man, who had been waiting for this, went down the stairs four steps at a time, carrying away with him and treasuring the exciting vision.



XI

THESE people were certainly a welcome change from Montmartre, where our young friends were models and mannequins, rather than humble girls without mind or imagination; they were less annoying, less tyrannical and scarcely stayed a fortnight in the same places, and they did not try to impose themselves upon us. Seeing them regularly making room for newcomers, we never had time to know them too well. They kept all their mystery and the life they led away from the place where we met them was so difficult to define that, in spite of our blasé air, we felt a singular and hungry curiosity.

How, indeed, were we to get to know about the lives of these false creatures? They would wait till it was two in the morning, yawning and listening for the arrival of the taxi which was to call for them then, in a thrice they would



from a sketch by Dignemont

MONTMARTRE AFTER NINE

disappear till the next day. Some of them who lived in the hotels of the Quarter joined the knights of the sweater and cap at a café of rather doubtful reputation in the Rue Mazarine, and when they saw us, they pretended not to recognize us. The gentlemen would stare hard without, however, trying to quarrel with us; they would drink and discuss their next "business." Between them and us there were their women. They knew it and were not surprised on that account, but they opposed an unbending disdain to the tokens of sympathy we could offer them, never giving themselves away. And yet, in the café-bar of the Ancienne-Comédie, in the morning at the time of the aperitive, we met and sometimes, along with *mère* Charles, we clinked glasses with them. These gentlemen were together without their women, and although very little inclined to welcome us, they agreed to play the next round at *zanzi.*

What a café that was! One could rub elbows there with all the bad boys of the Rue de Buci, *patrons* in slippers carrying their net bags for

marketing, sellers of rings and mirrors, thieves, fences and commissionaires. A peaceful and picturesque crowd of clients invaded it in the early morning. How many stories I heard, sordid details of human life. It has furnished me with the rarest material in the world for my need. Whatever the time, poets, bandits, police spies, and actors drank their *momimette* and isolated themselves at different tables to settle and plan their next "business."

At the tobacco store, at the café Mauguin, at the bar on the corner of the Rue de Seine, the choice was less varied. Here, students and old painters; further away, smaller fry, elsewhere, ridiculous drunks, harpies, beggars talking or quarreling. With what could we compare this? There was in all those places a sickening dampness. The dirty walls, the greasy counter, the slippery floor, covered with cigarette butts, were far from attracting us, whilst at the café-bar of the Ancienne-Comédie, where these gentlemen began their day at twelve and tolerated our

presence around the tables they had reserved for themselves, everything shone in the most beautiful way.

The case of the Rue de Buci should be remembered, not so much because of its deplorable frequentations, but on account of its exceptional atmosphere and its setting, where André Salmon's heroes were still present and lived in the light of day. We admired André Salmon; he was celebrated. Poet, writer, art critic, his gifts awed us. As for his clothes, cut out of material with large checks, and his small hat perched on the top of his head, no one could wear them as he did. They were part of his esthetic baggage, his programme, his own idea, and beside Paul Fort, dressed all in black, they opposed the theory of free verse, and other uncommon rhythms. That was obvious. Salmon paraded his colourful poem around the Quarter carrying it on his thin body, and all that he wanted to be talked about, advertised by his extraordinary attire, was reported at once.

We recited by heart the verses of the *Calumet,* on the very spot of the Pont-Neuf where the author had composed them:

Nous rentrions très tard, mêlant
Des vers purs à des chants obscènes
Et l'on s'asseyait sur un banc
Pour regarder la Seine . . .

We evoked the spirit of Moréas, who used to take his favourite disciples to the Halles. Salmon had written in dedicating his *Féeries* to him:

Plus tard je connaîtrai le sort des vieux poètes
Que l'espoir de la palme, hélas! ne soutient plus.
Je serai las, brisé, doigts gourds, bouche muette
Et pourtant glorieux de vous avoir connu,

and we loved him all the more.

But indeed, in spite of appearances, we were devoted to poetry and we put it before everything else, having nothing else to keep our spirits up and therefore praising it loudly. What mattered our poverty? It only deepened the feeling which made us turn instinctively to Moréas and

Paul Fort, who filled us with admiration. I do not want to anticipate. I shall return to the Prince of Poets and his Tuesday evenings at the *Closerie des Lilas.* Let us remain in the Rue de Buci, with its strange aspect where, sometimes, inebriates asked us to witness how unhappy they were and dice players wanted to teach us their tricks. One evening, in a bar, a Negress before whom we were speaking about the *Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier,* came up to us and said:

"Don't go there. It is a theatre run by Protestants who have the blues."

Who was that Negress? She drank with another young person in a red jersey who was called Pépé-la-Panthère and who lived by frequenting dancing-halls. We met her at Bouscatel's, at the old *père* Lunette's, Rue des Carmes, Rue de la Montagne, where she had certainly been mixed up with all the ups and downs of modern painting, and she sang, sitting in front of a salad bowl full of hot wine, these verses written by Salmon:

Quand elle est rev'nue aux Beaux-Arts
Fatiguée de fair' le lézard
Prendre des leçons d'aquarelle,
Comme ell' voulait peindre des fleurs
Et qu'il lui fallait des couleurs,
J'ai vendu mes tableaux pour elle!

The fantastic creature! Pépé-la-Panthère would laugh at the men, assert that she was free, and knowing also the song would take up the second verse:

Elle était si gentille à voir
Quand ell' peignait les arbr's en noir
Que je l'appelais Raphaël . . . le . . .
Elle m'a tant vanté Corot
Que je suis dégouté d' Picasso
J'ai changé ma manièr' pour elle!

"Bravo! Pépé!"

The Negress went on:

Mais les copains de l'atelier
Lui ont fait bien vite oublier
La fidélité conjugale.
C'est un massier de chez Cormon
Qui l'a emm'née à Barbizon
Après une vadrouille aux Halles.

And at last, Pépé and the Negress, joining their voices, would sing the end of this crazy song:

Et me voici triste, indigent,
Sans tableau, sans femm', sans argent,
Plongé dans la débine extrême.
Pourtant il me reste à manger
Une ou deux couleurs sans danger,
Oubliées par celle que j'aime!

Thundering applause burst out. The two women bowed, drank their hot wine, and saying "thou" to the gentlemen of the caps, threw themselves in their arms and danced the Java.

We never heard the name of the Negress. As for Pépé, she was murdered on the Boulevard Beaumarchais before the war, maybe by one of her dancing partners who, wanting to bring her back to the ordinary ways of life, had lost his time, his hopes and his most cherished illusions trying to convince her.

Poor Pépé! I see her still with her short skirts, her red sweater, her patent leather boots, her fair hair and her pretty face. It was a bad

thing for her to be dependent on one of the gentlemen. She was setting a bad example. She was too inclined to laughter, to amuse herself, too easy, too different from the others; and I shall long remember the kind of satisfaction that some women in houses felt who declared, when, in a bar, they heard of her death through the papers:

"One less!"

Pépé dead, her absence left no emptiness at the Rue de Buci, nor in the dancing halls, and no one except us missed her. We had had a very sincere feeling of comradeship for her. She was different from the professional girls of the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, having manners which those creatures lacked. Then we heard that, affiliated with a gang of counterfeiters of the Luxembourg, the unlucky Pépé had talked more than she ought to about her friends and that was the only reason which could explain her death.

At that time the famous gang was under lock and key, but occasionally we would still be accosted at night in certain bars by mysterious

individuals who proposed to exchange five louis for eighty francs.

"Seventy," they would say to tempt us. "Don't you want to do it?"

"What do you think?"

They had in their pockets match boxes which would hold five louis and as soon as one of us made the gesture of lighting his pipe, the boxes of matches would all come out and would be held out to us.

A prince I won't name—he is dead and died bravely during the war—was bothered daily by their offers. Wherever he went his dark complexion and his fuzzy hair attracted counterfeiters. They asked for him at his hotel, they pursued him, and finally, for a small sum, they would end by doing some business. And the Prince threw the dangerous money away in the toilets and no one could say anything about it, when one night a beggar accosted him.

"No," answered the Prince, who was drunk, "go away."

"Please, give me ten cents! . . ." moaned the beggar.

"No."

"Because," said the Prince, "I am absolutely broke . . . Look . . ."

He turned out his pockets, some bread and some tobacco crumbs fell, his handkerchief, a bunch of keys and unluckily one of the damned match boxes, which opened in falling, and the gold coins rolled on the pavement.

"Oh!" exclaimed the beggar.

The Prince threw himself on the box, but the beggar had had time to pick it up and ran away as fast as he could.

"Give it back," shouted the Prince. "Stop . . . Stop . . ."

He started running after the man when some policemen attracted by the noise joined in the chase. They seized the delinquents, took them to the police station where, on brutally searching the thief, a louis fell to the ground and broke. The false louis were made of glass. And the Prince was jailed.

Is it for that reason that, with each gold coin that they received, the proprietors in the Rue de Buci would take out of their drawers a gigantic hammer? No doubt. With such clients one has to be ready for anything. Poets were included in this category, because we were accustomed at that time to stand near the door on tiptoes, waiting for the propitious moment when we could make a get away without paying.

The strangest person in that strange street was assuredly our friend Claudien, of whom I have already spoken. He lived in the Hôtel Jeanne d'Arc. Claudien, either through decency or laziness, hated our wild flights for a glass of three sous. He had the bills put down to him, then, always Olympian, he would tramp the streets looking for adventure. A great friend of the Negro Prince that he had saved from the police, he would often be seen walking around till daylight in his noble company. However, Claudien spent his nights more often with Mario Meunier and myself. His monocle always created a sensation amongst the clients

of the small bars. His conversation intrigued them greatly and even Mario was not far from taking him for Satan himself when he had been drinking too much. Why not? His *nom de plume* Claudien was very equivocal. Claudien what? Which? Mario would remain open-mouthed and ask with anguish whether he were dreaming, and suddenly, hanging on my arm, he would confide to me:

"Yes, he is the devil . . . He is the devil!"

Mario was not wrong. The calmness and indolence of Claudien, an undefinable atmosphere of the supernatural, his yellow and shining eyes, gave him a very uncanny appearance. His body was very straight, but he walked bent on one side, swaying lightly as he walked; his beard as well as his eyes shone with a phosphorescent light very upsetting to look at . . . Claudien gave way sometimes to sudden outbursts of rage for which he tried in vain to find a reason. If he were not the devil, he must have, at least, been one of his intimates after midnight, because at that time rare and astonishing things happened

to him. He was a connoisseur of women and the ones he saw, when they were with him, felt inexpressible terrors. All of them, the lowest as well as the most innocent. However, it was to his room that the women went in the mornings; they climbed his stairs, pushed the door open and, without saying a word, they would get in the bed or on the floor and all together they would go to sleep.

He who has not seen Claudien, naked in his "tub," surrounded by these creatures, some of them coming out of prison and pursued by the police, has seen nothing. He never pitied them. On the contrary. One would have sworn that he enjoyed their troubles coldly and that he took a cruel pleasure in tormenting them with his questions. His attractiveness was as strong as another force within him, more obscure, which repulsed and frightened them. Sometimes one, sometimes the other, predominated. These two conflicting aspects of him were never manifested together. In the daytime he frightened the friends of his that were weak, and at

night he inspired in them a nameless feeling. I am not inventing all this. With all that he was very detached, but the author of *Les Labyrinthes* showed himself the straightest and most faithful of men to some of his men friends. But where did he get his piercing voice, his shouts and his well-balanced enthusiasms? More than all else one spectacle was haunting him: Boulevard de la Chapelle, behind the gratings of the dark hall and the tracks of the Gare du Nord, where the thick smoke of the trains, their signals, blue, white, green or red, tragically complemented each other. The sonorous metal arch of the metro obliging him to raise his voice, Claudien would shout out loudly, before this active and desolate scene, the bitter taste which inspired him. We felt ourselves drawn towards that abyss with the shiny rails, with the innumerable lights until, little by little, vertigo would take hold of us.

Claudien had certainly written the most acute pages that exist about that setting. There is hidden in it a secret fire, without ardour or

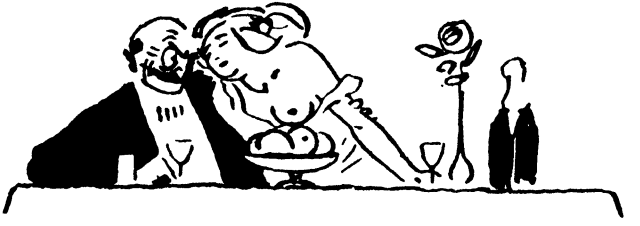
anger, as monotonous as hell and drier to the heart than one can imagine.

He was always haunted by fire! It must have tortured him in secret, in that low-ceilinged room where I can still see him, lying upon my divan. It was my own room, Rue Visconti; I had left it to him after the idea of committing suicide in it had got hold of me to such a point that I had to leave it.

Situated between two floors,—on the right, in the commons of an ancient damp house with flags polished and worn by time, a narrow passage led to that room. Opposite, two policemen whose patrol duties followed each other were my neighbours, and on the left a very old servant was busy dying. There was always a policeman snoring beside me and that old woman, the rollers of whose armchair morning and evening kept scratching along the floor. No noise came from the street, tight between its grey houses, one of which had been Racine's and the other the well-known printing works of Balzac.

The carriages came slowly and very seldom, and at night the lamplighter was the only one who, with the very joyous Baron Maxzen, gave any signs of life.

But the Baron frequently made so much noise that he disturbed the whole street.



XII

WILL any one understand that, thanks to the environment and the sticky dampness, anonymous sister of poverty, we lived extraordinary days on this side of the water? More than in Montmartre, the illusion of a maritime town, with its low pubs, its buildings at the corners with high prows, its poor population, its fog, its houses of prostitution, pursued us at each step. The sharp groanings of the ships' whistles that the wind sometimes brought and the soft breeze full of a sickening smell coming from the Seine made the illusion very real. At Montmartre, the howlings of the trains, of both the Est and the Nord stations, aroused I don't know what presentiment and prevented us from heartily amusing ourselves.

"A great many travellers who stopped at the *Lapin Agile,* which was at that time, for all of us, a first-class waiting-room," has written Mac-

Orlan, "had done their military service in Nancy. Montmartre and Nancy each held an end of the telephone wires, which explains why so few of us were surprised when they met at Dongermain, near Toul, in August 1914."

Rue de l'Hirondelle, at Hubert's, *la Bolée*—the *Lapin Agile's* competitor—offered an hitherto unexplored territory. The clients were anarchists, ex-gaol birds, students, songsters, thieves, milliners' apprentices and miserable women who feasted cheaply, not as in a first-class waiting-room, but as in a third, amongst greasy papers, on sausages and tankers of cider. Between enormous whitewashed walls, barrels, broken-down benches running along the walls, a few seats, unsteady tables, were all the furnishings. Two steps away from the Seine, which could be reached through the narrow and stinking passage of the Rue Gît-le-Cœur, Hubert's porch opened like a night-shelter where the low strata of humanity ate and drank. Inside there were always pale individuals, street-walkers, poets and a doubtful old man whom a

woman of easy virtue had horribly mutilated to punish him where he had sinned. A lamb which ate the cigarette butts covering the floor, as well as the sawdust, and which was rather fond of light wine, was attached to the establishment, as well as several thin and melancholy hunting dogs. Whom did one not meet at Hubert's! He had engraved on a stone upon the wall the list of the habitués and the Americans who often came with a guide to visit his place could read beneath the inscription:

"Here have sat,"

names which added to the glory of the establishment and its proprietor. Among them, in company with the Tharaud brothers and Jacques Dyssord, mine came between François Villon's and Jean Lorrain's. Was that not in Hubert's favour? He loved poets, made room for them at his board, prepared everything for them, and lent them money surreptitiously. Tall, strong, sympathetic, still young, always there, the man whom we called Hubert the Magnanimous, has

deserved well of contemporary French letters. He was proud of it and he always hid the small slate, upon which he wrote our accounts with chalk, when a client he did not know was near.

"How can I tell?" he used to say, "he might be a critic and an allusion in the papers might be enough to destroy your reputation . . ."

Then, very rightly disgusted with critics, he would rub out the accounts on the slate and nothing more would be said about them.

Jacques Dyssord, who had brought me to this astonishing barkeeper who always wore an immense cap and a smock like a market-gardener, knew well the kind of man he was. So he dedicated a piece of verse to him.

Pour célébrer l'honnête cabaret de la Bolée, sis Rue de l'Hirondelle jouxte la Rue Gît-le-Cœur et dire le los de son bon maître.

These lines, dated September 1915, which touched Hubert to such an extent that he pinned them on a wooden panel and hung them well in sight of everybody, were a witness to our friend-

ship for that very good man. But, alas, he was not becoming rich in a trade where he was paid with rhymes. So, for a while, rather than close his doors or not give credit to the artists who needed it, Hubert, after midnight, left his house and went to the markets to work as a porter. He earned his living and ours, saying nothing about it, and we would find him afterwards, a glass in his hand, offering a round.

Some have not been fair to Hubert; he has been considered a joker much too often when he was above all a perfect philanthropist and a bon vivant. He incurred debts for us, shared his soup with poor people, treated them like princes, and then, astonished at their obstinacy, he would give them two francs to go and enjoy themselves across the way.

There, in an atmosphere of low prostitution, under a ceiling with water leaking through, was a kind of common room of which the heavy door was always left ajar. A baroque lantern of beaten iron giving forth a pink light was above it. And women who coughed and held their dressing-gowns tight around them on ac-

count of the cold awaited mariners, sewer-cleaners and petty officials who treated them to white wine. How careful one had to be in leaving *la Bolée* not to enter that awful house! On the threshold a dreadful matron would call us, pull us by the sleeve and, once inside, we were stunned by what we saw, such lamentable sights that they seemed like hallucinations. Near the counter, an esthete with glasses, blue with the cold, pale, as thin as a skeleton, was howling:

J'écoute au lupanar la mazurka fervente
S'éplorer tendrement sur les civilisés,
Que le rythme et le rêve ont dévirilisés
Et qui, devant la mort, pâlissent d'épouvante.

There was also in that cursed place a Newfoundland dog that was offered drinks by eccentric gentlemen. The dog drank, and the impression stamped on us by those motionless painted women, that dog, the walls oozing a sticky dampness and the leprous lustreless mirrors, froze us to the marrow of our bones.

If there are in the world, in ports, places accustomed to human degradation which go beyond those that are near the Seine and spread around the Rue Mazarine, where are they? I would like to know them in order to compare them with the Rue de l'Hirondelle, because I do not think I exaggerate if I say that nowhere else can worse ones be found. In the winter evenings especially, when the wind blows, bringing in the rainy air mixed with snow, and the sharp whistles of tugs, there was no need to meet sailors on the loose to find adventure. It was there, all preened up, in the shops waiting for you. Near the police station of the Rue de la Huchette, where in a narrow opening masts and smoke rise and hover above the water, several of those places are always discreetly ajar. He who has seen them keeps all his life an atrocious picture. Here, in the false luxury of garlands, dolls, gas, behind high frosted windows, women dressed in kimonos, their hair pulled away from their foreheads in the Chinese manner, were busy around the customers. In other places

were stolid servant girls or a pathetic creature sitting in her small compartment, her body wrapped in a woollen shawl. Further away were some half-coloured women, some young girls from Belleville or Vaugirard, old women making signs, some of them behind windows with coloured curtains, some in small shops made into bars. Their "Pssst!" sounded in the empty streets as the call in one's dreams of an impossible love.

Before the war one could count about twenty of those vile places, in addition to the hotels and the rooms where the women from behind the window panes spied the passer-by. In the centre, near the police station with the flag washed colourless by the rain, was a so-called family dancing hall where we went to dance. With Claudien and Mario Meunier, M. Bouscatel, the owner of the place, received us with great ceremony and to charm us still more he would take out his flute, which he played magnificently. At the plaintive sounds of the instrument the couples would pair off and dance. We

followed them with our eyes, carried away by the nasal sounds of the Java and, little by little, intoxicated with a very peculiar kind of drunkenness, we would leave with a thousand polite phrases. M. Bouscatel's was a very peaceful dancing-place, much too peaceful for us. It opened straight off the street and its customers were for the most part humble working-girls, small employees, soldiers and shop assistants. What a change it was, with its peacefulness, from the neighbouring places where well assorted couples seized each other savagely like animals and stared at us contemptuously as we passed. At M. Bouscatel's the girls let themselves go with lowered eyes. They were well-mannered and not once did we see any one fighting over them.

And it is precisely on account of that quiet atmosphere that the dancing-place did not attract us much. We preferred the smoky back-room of a *bistrot* in the Rue des Carmes, where, on the slightest pretext, stupid rivalries and quarrels would arise. The red wine spilt on the

tables, the meagre and insufficient lighting, gave that dive an intense character and when, with its resounding voice, the melodeon would start the first measures of a waltz, we felt carried away by it.

However, the best known of those dancing-places was in the Rue de la Montagne Sainte-Geneviève opposite a creamery where I used to take all my meals. It was called Bal Vachier. One first entered a room, where the proprietor, enthroned behind a counter, watched the gentlemen and ladies and allowed them in or not as he liked. One had to be well-dressed to be permitted to enter. A notice, hung at the entrance of the very narrow passage which led to the dancing, asserted that fact. In big letters carefully written by an expert, one could read: *La tenue est de rigueur,* and I must say that M. Vachier senior knew how to command respect. His son, Milo, played at that time in the small balcony allotted to the musicians. He was an ace at it. He drew such music from his melodeon that the women went into ecstasies, ready to die. The

tables were nailed to the ground, benches surrounded the shining floor and between two iron pillars, at the end of a string, another notice was posted with all the rules of the place. There were nights in that autocratically governed dive when everything was perfect. Then there were nights when guns would be shot off and the men and women would be forced to scramble to safety under the tables. Who had fired the shots? That was the secret of that dancing-hall. Everything was meticulously and carefully arranged and suddenly battles would take place that would end in blood.

. . .

Why can't I as I write these lines prevent myself from thinking of my friend Jean Pellerin? He never frequented those dancing-halls. He hated them. But, in spite of myself, in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, I thought I was in Grenoble, where I loved the brasseries of the Rue Saint-Jacques. Jean Pellerin lived in that street above one of them, the

"Criterion." A sombre passage led to a badly lighted stairway, one went up in the dark, and then a door in the floor opened, everything would be lighted up and Jean Pellerin, holding a lamp very high, would joyously welcome me.

At that time, in the uniform of a Secretary of Staff, Jean Pellerin looked very tall, very thin, and he never sat down without folding one of his thin legs under the other as if he were ashamed of being so long. And he would look one straight in the face, smile, light a cigarette and seem to have no other affectation except the use of his hands which, very delicate and well-cared for even amid the military routine, showed a care for elegance, neatness and natural grace. As soon as one knew the man, one recognized him in his writing. It was astonishing, it emphasized the resemblance, and when I read today the *Bouquet Inutile* published after his death, I found his tall, flowered and easy writing in the following verses:

Le premier frisson du matin.
Une cloche qui tinte.

Le songe est mort. Le feu s'éteint.
La lampe s'est éteinte.

Alas, those young hands—which were writing not only, even in 1909, military orders—have stopped writing, line by line, those clear sentences and those verses which their author tried to fill with a rhythm which he executed to perfection. Even in very short poems which he carefully copied in a thin copy-book, he had shown a great love and a great knowledge of his art. We exchanged our first writings with each other. We had great ambitions for the future and one for the present was to have new verses every day to show each other, a book which the other had not read, or an anecdote which the other did not know. Charming times they were, in spite of my military service spent in barracks where I played at being a soldier, and the difficulties we encountered when we tried to get our writings published. We decided to begin a review. It came out. I remember that Jean Pellerin gave me the proofs in the gaol of the Second Regiment of the Artillery where I was

confined for some minor offense and where I was not so badly off.

"I went to see him," the mysterious Eve Arrighi said in the *Divan,*—Jean knew her well—"and I went every day as long as he was in gaol. He had plenty of visitors and if the prisoner's parlor of the Second Artillery was not a very comfortable drawing-room there were lots of friends and geniality to compensate. There one met, bringing books and cigarettes, the poet Maurice Morel, the beautiful Madame Paule L., Jean Pellerin, a lady well provided with charms called Lily and many others absolutely devoted to him. The young man looked well in his prison uniform. He was gay, he recited verses. I never found him discouraged, not once did he regret his escapades or complain. They were pleasant talks but, alas, cut short by the authorities. Carco was sent to Briançon in disgrace when he got out of prison."

To come back to our review, *Les Petites Feuilles,* it had one number only and it is very rare today.

Later on, when Jean Pellerin came to live in Paris, he stayed first in the Rue Réaumur before he lived in an apartment near Montmartre. It was furnished at first only with a bed, a table, three chairs, a rocking chair and innumerable cases of books. In Paris, he remained the same Jean Pellerin, he wrote light verses in which he showed himself as he was, not seeking vain successes, but ready to mock at himself and dance graciously for his own pleasure to the tune of a melodious fantasy.

Je ne me suis pas fait la tête de Musset,

he used to declare.

Je tartine des vers, je prépare un essai,
J'ai le quart d'un roman, a sécher, dans l'armoire . . .
Mais que sont vos baisers, ô filles de Mémoire!
Vous entendre dicter des mots après des mots!
Triste jeu . . .

His irony was soon to take a less joyous tone. Out in the world he faced the necessity of earning his daily bread like the others. The poet

learnt quickly that to write beautiful verses is not enough. Jean Pellerin knew how to adapt himself to circumstances. Then his pen did not find in the inkwell the impertinent rhymes which it generally found there, but endless words and words which always finished by being the lines of a newspaper paragraph or an article, and were paid for. Till the war he signed in several papers, "Parisian evenings," tales, notes, interviews. It took all of his time but I knew that after midnight, the brilliant chronicler gave up his newspaper work to deliver himself to his temptation.

What better thing could he have done? Jean Pellerin was above all a poet and lived for poetry alone. How many times have I seen him reading Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Guérin, Apollinaire, Jean-Marc Bernard, Toulet, Allard, Tristan Derème! He sent his verses to small reviews, never talked about them and secretly nursed the idea of gathering in a volume those exquisite and sad stanzas of which I was not the only admirer.

Alas! Jean Pellerin never saw the book he had thought so much about. *La Romance du Retour* contains only one poem, beautiful and stirring. The others, after appearing in modest publications, had to be collected. After his death it was necessary in order to fulfil at last Jean Pellerin's ambition that I should offer to the public the work he had left us. May it keep for a long time its varied colours, its aroma, and its proud and sensitive form. It is not a festive bouquet, gathered in some middle-class garden, but one of those which comrades buy at the gates of the graveyard to lay upon the tomb beside which they uncover themselves. Humble flowers, although brilliant and carefully chosen, Jean Pellerin's verses are not the sort one forgets after reading them. They have the tone of youth, of his youth wounded by many losses, of his youth still alive, even though it weeps as it counts what is left of love and betrayal, after many years.

It was not I who wrote this:

Aujourd'hui je reviens et tel
Qu'hier. La cloche sonne.
La même cloche au même hôtel.
Je ne revois personne.

But if he could come back, how touched he would be to find that so many admirers know his name.



XIII

IF Montmartre and the Quarter had each their own cafés, the literary ones were more numerous on the Boulevard Saint-Michel than on the Boulevard Clichy. They have remained celebrated because, in place of a Bruant who is still, when all is said and done, a real personality, Verlaine and his genius, Rimbaud, Moréas, Paul Fort, Apollinaire have left there enduring memories. The Quarter only needs painters comparable with Lautrec, Degas, Picasso and Utrillo to equal Montmartre, but Matisse still lives on the Quai Saint-Michel, Dunoyer de Segonzac and Derain in the same house in the Rue Bonaparte and Marquet as well, who noted upon his canvases the leadlike water and the sky of the small dead backwater of the Seine, the smoke and the tugs, is an artist of some quality. Shall we try to compare them? It is not necessary. However, if Montmartre

excels on account of its picturesqueness, the Quarter can claim a much more distinct character, although it does not appear on the surface.

I began frequenting the Vachette just in time to know Moréas and to hear him whistle without answering when some stupid person would talk to him about the Academy. In spite of his dyed moustache he looked wonderful and his speech, however insolent, was full of exceedingly good sense. To the young men who were around him, in the packed room of the Vachette, he would declare:

"Rely on principles."

Then, stroking his moustache and fixing his monocle solidly in his eye, he would add:

"They'll end by giving way!"

We feared him like the plague on account of his conversation, for at certain times he would pour out in no uncertain terms his hatreds and disappointments.

Whatever time it was, Jean Moréas always carried himself exceedingly well, though sometimes drunk, and was followed by the young

men of the Quarter. He loved youth and women, and addressed charming compliments to them in verses which he improvised, like those he wrote for Marie Laurencin:

Qu'elle rie,
Et, Marie
Laurencin,
L'or enceint
Dans ses belles
Prunelles.

Great Moréas! after him we deserted the Vachette which became a bank where much later I cashed my first cheque, and went up the famous Boul'Mich, to the *Closerie des Lilas* where we assembled beside Paul Fort on Tuesdays, in an indescribable uproar mixed with the shouts of the poets. It was a magnificent period. We drank. There were arguments. One added one's saucers to one's neighbours without any shame whatsoever and jumped at once into the discussion, taking sides. . . .

Paul Fort's long hair, his sombrero, his black tie, his small coat buttoned right to the top, his

simplicity, stood in contrast to the ornaments which women of all races, Swedes, Russians, Spaniards flaunted here and there under our eyes. Escorted by the giant Diriks and the poet Napoléon Roinard, Paul Fort would tell stories. He laughed, he sang, he emptied his glass and, as spontaneously as a child, kissed all his friends in turn. It was a pleasure to find him always in a good humour, welcoming everybody with open arms and making them feel happy. Time after time, bucolic, idyllic, familiar, gallic, inventive, spirited and imaginative, Paul Fort enchanted us with his small tremulous voice. His eyes, which pierced one's soul and inflamed one with the fire which lived in them, invested all his words with a charming enchantment.

One must have heard the Prince of Poets improvising about midnight, in his kingdom in the *Closerie des Lilas,* ballads which he did not write down, unlike most poetasters who are afraid of losing anything, to know what riches he possessed and distributed without counting. He was not only a man and a "very extraordi-

nary one," he was inspired and gave ample opportunity for even the meanest heart to marvel at. In the street, under a gas lamp or the moon:

Comme un œuf dansant sur un jet d'eau,

he never stopped pouring out his songs, and then he would push us suddenly into dark small cafés which he brightened by his presence.

The collaborators in the review *Vers et Prose* which he directed gave him his cues. Salmon with his angular profile, Guillaume Apollinaire, Guy Charles-Cros, Louis Mandin, Alexandre Mercereau, Fuss-Amoré, who was amused at everything, his friend Tancrède de Visan, Bersaucourt, Max Jacob, Gazanion and painters, boxers, critics and beggars who, like the wild animals in the legend, followed Orpheus and drank with him.

I remember that at the birth of his third child, the poet and essayist Tancrède de Visan came to tell me the happy news and we drank for two days till Tuesday, when delirious, we met Paul Fort on the Boulevard Montparnasse. Visan

wanted to go home, but he was imprudent enough to show the few louis he still had in his pocket and Paul Fort seized them.

"We are going to drink them," said the Prince joyfully . . . "all of them . . . all . . ."

It was late. A *bistrot*—there are always some open even at the most unusual hours—welcomed us and the festivities continued. This *bistrot,* a long passage filled with mirrors, benches and marble tables, which was called, I think, *A la Ville de Dreux,* was hardly big enough for us three, we were so overwrought. It did not matter! The libations went on and a terrible tumult of very eloquent voices rose, while to add to the noise, the drunkest in our crowd were breaking glasses and standing on chairs.

What happened then? I do not know, but I must have been amongst the noisy drunks, because I seem to remember, when my drunkenness had passed all limits, creating a scandal because some one had spoken ill of Rimbaud. I would allow no one to say anything against that poet. Also there was a splendid fight, at the end of

which a boxer belonging to the Prince's following literally stunned me and threw me out.

What an adventure! Lying on the pavement with blackened eyes, my right ankle dislocated, I came back slowly to my senses to shout again:

"Long live Rimbaud!" and to see Paul Fort, with his hands laid in a brotherly fashion upon my forehead, laughing and lamenting:

"Rimbaud?"

"Yes, long live Rimbaud!"

Hereupon a policeman, not understanding my enthusiasm, asked me to have the kindness to move on.

"Move on and be quick about it."

And as I was not obeying his orders quickly enough, he called another policeman and they dragged me, howling, to the police station. From the station, still howling, they took me to a hospital where an interne had to look after me, and the next day I found myself, my shoes in my hand, in a cab.

And every thirty yards I'd shout to the driver: "Stop! Is there not a bar around that way?"

The man jumped out of his seat, got two pernods, which we drank at the window peacefully, till the next bar. One can guess in what state we soon were for the coachman took Rimbaud's part since he was having free drinks and I was delighted to have convinced him without having my other leg broken. This man was surely well-born. Stopping his horse at my door, he refused to accept anything for the drive and hoisting me on his shoulders he carried me up to my room, to the amusement of the onlookers.

At that time, nine out of ten of our literary feasts ended that way. We were thus expressing our admiration for the poets who in their time had done far better; the next day it brought us to the attention of everybody in the Quarter and it increased our prestige enormously. But on that occasion it took me a month to recover and to put my foot to the ground.

I see myself again in a taxi with Rachilde, the one who had given me up as a poet, very much upset about my state. She paid the chauffeur to take me home.

As soon as she had left, I said to the man: "Take me to the Pascal." But there my manners must have been wanting in dignity, since, very disgusted, the boss put me to sleep in a small room and sent two bell-boys to accompany me home in the morning. I slept two days and two nights like a brute and waking at last my ear was so sore that I felt it at once and I found inside a small piece of paper folded in four, buried deep in the drum. On it was written:

"Francis, you were dead to the world, so I took the money you had, fourteen francs in all. You can come and get it at the d'Harcourt." It was signed Gisèle and there was a P.S.

"I took that money because the other women would have kept it for themselves."

. . .

You will excuse me if I do not dwell longer on such scenes. Extravagances of that kind were not in very good taste, but what am I to do? I told the last episode to show the motherly solicitude of the young ladies of the Left Bank for

poets, even when they were dead drunk. With them we were safe. They had founded a league for the defense of French comrades against the foreigners and helped us in crises. Indeed, having found a job as secretary, a rather well-paid job with Louis Vauxcelles, I was so proud that one evening when drunk I stupidly started a fight with a very robust gentleman who got the better of me. All the ladies came to my rescue and helped me to avenge my honour. We all went to the police station and the next day Vauxcelles was very astonished by my appearance, and asked me how many days a week I could be serious.

"Every second day," I replied.

"All right," he said. "One day's feasting and one day's work!"

And as he was the kindest man in the world, he paid me a month in advance and said:

"I'll see you the day after tomorrow."

Who has pretended that God's goodness stops at literature? He is certainly not a poet and he lies.

An American reporter recently asked me: "What is the thing that has astonished you most?"

"I don't know."

"But yet . . ."

The man embarrassed me. He watched me and waited, his note-book in his hand.

"Please," he said, "think . . ."

"The thing which has astonished me most? Well," I said, "I think my being able to earn my living by telling stories which my parents would not have tolerated at table."

What other answer could I have given him? At twenty, one is convinced that a novel must be concerned with exceptional facts, and that is why we all have in our desks very ridiculous works that remain unpublished. Poor young men! We did not know much about life and we did not dare lay claim to it, while life is the only thing a writer has any claim to. Otherwise what reason would he have for writing? Young men can believe me. If they spend their youth learning from teachers, instead of learning by

committing a thousand follies, they will grow old too quickly and they will not have later to brighten their old age any of the experiences one does not find in books. One must live first of all, even if one has to leave behind, as Dorgelès confessed in the *Boutique de Socrate,* "spoiled days, sterile efforts, missed loves, no other family than dishonest café keepers, no other roof than a damp house," because, he added, "when we smile today, it is about our troubles of yesterday."

Guillaume Apollinaire knew this, when at the marriage of his friend Salmon he got up and read:

Nous nous sommes rencontrés dans un caveau maudit
Au temps de notre jeunesse
Fumant tous deux et mal vêtus attendant l'aube
Epris, épris des mêmes paroles dont il faudra changer le sens
Trompés, trompés, pauvres petits et ne sachant pas encore rire.

And indeed, one learns to laugh only by being

alive and struggling, at the price of the hardest privations, perhaps in poverty and abandonment. Do you remember the hero of the Road to Mandalay who sang while in irons, and so many others, including François Villon! That unfortunate one laughed, "weeping," and he did not hide the fact. Can we despise experience? It is thanks to what he had gone through that we went cheerfully through the narrow streets of the Quarter. All the time, even in that "caveau maudit," which was to be the one where Guillaume met Salmon, we never despaired about anything.

That dive, in the Rue Grégoire-de-Tours, was not wanting in picturesqueness. It centered in a kind of bar where girls answering to the names of Yolande, Isabeau, Guillemette, Denise were waiting for patrons in a whitewashed, heavily rounded vault. The floor of beaten earth, coffers, heavy rings sealed in the stone-walls and big hearts pierced with arrows, gave a very suitable appearance to that hell. We drank goblets of wine, smoked rank tobacco and gentlemen

hiding behind the pillars were dressed as authentic companions of the *Coquille* with dirty and tattered raiment and leather coats.

I have often recited in their company the verses of the poor *escholier* Villon and thought I could see him, standing amongst the tables, ragged, his clothes stained with earth, like a dead man who has come out of a tomb, with black hands and sunken eyes.

Car ou soies porteur de bulles,
Pipeur ou hasardeur de dez
Tailleur de faulx coings, tu te brusles,
Comme ceulx qui sont eschaudéz
Traistres parjurs, de foy vuydez;
Soies larron, ravis ou pilles:
Où en va l'acquest, que cuidez?
Tout aux tavernes et aux filles.

He was with us, singing his "Ballade de bonne doctrine à ceux de mauvaise vie" and those who did not see him still heard his voice resounding deeply in their sleeping conscious minds. We loved you so much, François Villon! We felt you so near to us, at the same table,

your elbow against ours, or outside in the streets walking beside us till the moment when the day paled; straying dogs stopped and sniffed at us fearfully, silently, and then, frightened, ran away. Yes, it was you . . . and you disappeared always without saying good-by, so that a sudden strange feeling would make us count ourselves and look back saying:

"Well! . . . Where on earth is he?"



XIV

THE bad days were over. Thanks to Jean de Pierrefeu and to Maxence Legrand, my godfathers at Baptiste's, I was given credit at the pension Laveur and I ate twice a day. What a pension that was! In spite of the smell of cats on the stairs and the simplicity Baptiste did things well. His regular patrons, who at once made a little elbow room for me, became my friends. Giraudoux, Clouard, Le Cardonnel, Tardieu, Ramond, Blanc . . . I forget some of them . . . They were all delighted with the house, very much at their ease and very comfortable. And under a sleepy appearance Baptiste hid great finesse. He not only offered food to his clients, but coffee, alcohol, cigars and choice wines. That was his pride! Renewing the traditions of the places where Gambetta, Vallès and Courbet, to name only three, had

WARNOD MARCHAND



SUZANNE VALADON, CARCO BRAGUE DERAIN
(*Mère D'Utrillo*)

SOME OF THE LAST BOHEMIANS

found the table always laid, he laid ours and always treated us well.

From there we went to the *Cluny* where, from the most obscure corner in the café, M. Albalat saw us arriving, without any pleasure. We sat beside him, listened to him and studied him.

They talked only about literature at his table and I must confess that I did not understand a word they said and André Billy, René Gillouin put me to shame, for they were very much in the know, being newspaper critics of literature. They tried their articles on us, while Jean Giraudoux talked pleasantly behind his glasses and René Dalize and Jacques Dyssord who had had no sleep, yawned.

The last named was the *enfant terrible* of the group. He was overbearingly proud of his unmentionable acquaintances. He was ceaselessly praising the merits of his pal Hubert and a certain Betty to whose place he took me to drink with women.

Never has a man showed more naturalness and gaiety in leading a fast life than Dyssord.

He appeared to have been born to shock respectable people and he had made his own, this verse by François de Maynard, which he recited with enthusiasm:

Entre au bordel en plein midi!

and he let me recite to him these verses of the same poet, bitter and disillusioned:

L'excès de chagrin a vaincu
Celui qui jamais n'a vécu
Que parmi les filles de joie,

and he laughed and answered: "Who knows?"

Compared to him I was an amateur or, if you like, a second-rater, for the extraordinary acquaintances of my good friend Jacques were varied and numerous. In the gambling-saloons of the Quarter Saint-Georges he taught me how to eat for nothing and, not at all ashamed, he put into my pocket sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs which he had stolen from the buffet. Why should we have restrained ourselves? Jacques was living of his own free will a picaresque novel and when I saw him dressed in a coat much

too large, a green waistcoat and black trousers, he sighed and confided to me:

"You did not know me in my splendiferous days. It's a pity, old man . . . I had a diamond as big as that,"—he pointed to a hard-boiled egg,—"shoes made-to-order, silk underwear and suits! Five suits! I swear . . ."

"Well, and then?"

"Well, then . . . I sold everything to live . . . everything . . . the diamond, the clothes."

Then, seized with sadness, he muttered:

Cet hiver fut des plus froids.
Nous n'aurons pas tiré les rois.
—Qui serait roi, qui serait reine
De ma peine?

"It is better not to write it, no one would believe me."

Every evening, as MacOrlan has told when speaking of his youth, the drama of the key was enacted by a hard-hearted proprietor and my friend Jacques the poet. "The key was hanging from a nail under a number, on a board . . ." "And," added MacOrlan, "it was lucky for me

as well as others that that board was not able to register human voices."

Yes, lucky, but after all, what does it matter! The next day Jacques had forgotten all about it and had gone back to his wicked life. He rested by teaching a very well brought up girl who waited for him at the Métro Saint-Germain. Jacques would walk with her arm in arm, would take her where well brought up girls are not usually taken and, vain of the progress of his pupil, admired himself in her and would tell me of her exploits.

"There is in the life of many artists, writers and ex-pimps converted to a regular life," MacOrlan also said, "a period which the most cynical of them consider with indulgence and the others with a bitterness that the smiles of fortune—when fortune deigns to smile—cannot dissipate."

Well, we all know it, and it is better so, since, brought up to lead that dissolute existence, we are able today to show it as it really was and be forgiven. What harm was there in it? We

never thought of its wickedness. We were busy being alive, and in spite of the darkest circumstances we never gave way. Think of it! To live was not so easy then, when we wrote only verse. We had to use all means, whatever they were, and very often we had to be content with such ridiculous sums that when we had to pay for something we were not very proud of ourselves.

Je ne vaux pas plus qu'un autre,

sang Jacques Dyssord,

Et ce n'est pas beaucoup dire;
Mais le mieux ou bien le pire,
C'est cet air de bon apôtre.

And Jacques Dyssord is the author of the *Dernier Chant de l'Intermezzo* and I would give many celebrated volumes in exchange for that one, for I am sure that many more famous works cannot equal it.

Another poet of whom they made a saint, and who was one in his way, because he was struggling against some strange streak in himself, and

who has left the most beautiful and the most harrowing poem about the war—Jean-Marc Bernard, frequented the peaceful café of Cluny about the same time. He did not sit at the critics' table, but outside at a small table around which Clouard, Eon, Le Cardonnel, Marcel Drouet gathered to welcome Marc to Paris. Jean-Marc Bernard, Dauphinois, lived in Saint-Rambert-d'Albon. I had met him at Orange, in front of the Great Wall, and then I had gone, one day, to his secluded house in Saint-Rambert where he lived with his mother. A very sincere affection sprang up between us. Dear, unfortunate Jean-Marc! That day, which began in Saint-Rambert, ended in Valence, where the poet had a liaison with a curious creature. She was the owner of a café near the cavalry barracks, not unattractive, and as clever in dispensing her alcohols as her love. Jean-Marc introduced me. He wrote verses for her, which he dated from the Brasserie de la Cigale, where I see both of us, amongst outrageously made up creatures, drinking and talking.

J'aime tes tristes yeux . . .

Jean-Marc murmured and further, dedicating to Berthe this poem in which he reveals himself, he moaned:

Tais-toi! Pourquoi mentir encore?
Je ne demande rien: je vois.
Sous la honte qui me dévore,
Je cache mon front dans mes doigts.

In Paris, seeking a refuge from that awful liaison unworthy of an artist such as he, he tried to make up with another woman who would not change her life for him. Then Jean-Marc went from one café to another, from the Halles to the Quarter, and full of bitter disappointment, spent his nights reciting verses without paying attention to any one. The high boots he wore gave him the air of a gentleman farmer: his frank way of speaking, his enthusiasms, his feverish eyes, sometimes got him into trouble, but Jean-Marc would not avoid it and, shivering in the early morning which found us outdoors, he would sigh:

Que l'aube est froide après une nuit d'insomnie!

Tristan Derème, whom Claudien and I had left to finish his studies at the Lycée in Agen, and Jean-Marc as well sent me from the provinces poems they had just written and they were, in the poisoned atmosphere of the literary powwows of the time, like a breath of comforting fresh air. I was not mistaken. Those poems of Jean-Marc and Tristan Derème are today on every lip and I had then the merit—if it is one—of being the first to recognize them and to make them known in my group.

I am proud of it and rightly so, as I am proud of having foreseen about 1913 that Pierre Benoît would be the novelist he has become. Who could have foreseen it, at that time, when Pierre Benoît was a facetious civil servant in the Ministry of Beaux-Arts? Charles Perrot had brought us together,—and Derennes, who played interminable poker games with Pierre in a dusty brasserie in the Rue Médicis. Near a gold fish bowl under the sleepy eyes of the Madame, *threes of a kind, full houses, flushes* were every-

thing. Derennes was losing, Pierre winning and afterwards, the astonishing young man would see us home and recite from memory a whole act of *Polyeucte* or, without forgetting one stanza, the whole of the *Légende des siècles.*

He was sending perfect parodies . . . in verse to newspapers, unsigned, and also editing the *Grande Anthologie* in which every one got their deserts and he had the time of his life playing with difficulties. *Le Double Bouquet* which he edited for a hard-to-please, mean and cosmopolitan owner, enabled us to get some money, thanks to him. But that money was soon spent in the shadow of the goldfish of the Brasserie and we had often to wait several months before getting any more.

Pierre Benoît was then as he is today, bounding about, always in a good humour. He did not like the grave M. Souday very much, whose name he would write in the following manner for his own amusement.

$$\frac{\text{DAY}}{\text{PAUL}}$$

—Paul *sous* Day—even then wanting to mystify him.

He was very fond of a certain kind of bitters, which Derennes also loved, and he held forth at the refreshment room of the Gare d'Orsay where we all met. Those Milon bitters had their story. They were used as stakes for our bets and Derennes was seized with such a passion for them, that he discovered ways to keep on drinking them, even though the aperitive hour was long over everywhere in Paris.

With a metro ticket, we would go to the nearest station and, each on a platform, we would wait for a train. The first one whose train came in had won, and at once we went back to the Quai d'Orsay to drink, the winner free of charge, a general round of those bitters which made us sick, till the next day at least.

The only one who was very dignified all through the proceedings was Pierre Benoît. He was never drunk. However, after the fifth or sixth goblet of the bitter mixture, he would suddenly talk so loudly that our neighbours would

have vertigo. He was always on time at his office, which he reached through narrow passages crammed with archives and fallen plaster. He made me think—as Colette so well described him—of an amiable and cunning rat, who, knowing better than any one the corners and recesses of the ministry, would tread lightly, bobbing up and disappearing. To catch him they would have needed a whole pack of ushers . . . and more! The ushers helped him to escape every time, and then ashamed of their clumsiness would reply when reproached: "What can we do with M. Benoît? We believe he is in one place and he is already in another."

And the other was the *Buvette* of the Chamber where as secretary to several deputies, Pierre was telling stories; it was also the warm and perfumed boudoir of Maurice Rostand, the brasserie of the Rue de Médicis, the refreshment-room of the Gare d'Orsay or, how am I to know? the apartment occupied at the Hotel Brighton, by the owner of the *Double Bouquet* when he was in Paris.

He would appear everywhere he was least expected, amuse the audience with his prompt repartees and then quickly disappear. None of his intimates could have said how he spent his time outside the café and the ministry, or with whom he associated. He paid mysterious visits to Suarès, whom he admired, to Barrès, to some pretty women, and never calculating the part he brought to a friendship, lost whole days meeting people who pleased him. Whatever one may say, it was not the need of intrigue that decided his tastes. In spite of sacrificing part of his time to it and in spite of his love for practical jokes, it was only necessary to quote to Pierre a verse of Baudelaire or Racine to make him, neglecting at once the greatest enterprises, go on with the quotation and recite by heart the *Fleurs du Mal* or any tragedy one wished.

His remarkable memory never failed him. He exercised it constantly and then would go back to his combinations and complete them with the greatest care.

He very quickly found out that one of his

good friends who liked to drink immoderately had left Paris during the war without giving any forwarding address. With the help of directories and the *Bottin* Pierre got busy. He wrote to his friend's old address and told him to go and see a certain M. X., chairman of the Anti-Alcoholic League of a town which he named, adding that with a certain amount of tact, he would get some Pernod out of him as the man was very fond of it. Absinthe was absolutely forbidden. It still is. The friend believed Pierre. He went to the chairman of the Anti-Alcoholic League and after bewildering him for a long time with his incoherent talk was shamefully sent away, because, at last, unable to endure it any longer, he had familiarly struck the man on the paunch, and said convincingly:

"Come on, don't be nasty now . . . Hand over the green poison . . . I swear I won't tell any one about it."

Anything was good enough to amuse Pierre. He had just written *Koenigsmark,* and, very much embarrassed, wondered where he could

market it. With it under his arm, he tried several times to approach our elders who, repulsed by his handwriting, took good care not to read a line of that mass of paper, till the day when discouraged he handed me his manuscript. I remember it well, it was in the Rue de Buci, at Boileau's at the *Trois Portes* where Dumur lunched with us. I spent the night making out Pierre's hieroglyphics, but the next day my opinion was formed and Dumur, to whom I gave *Koenigsmark,* published it in the *Mercure de France.* We had won the first hand. Pierre, thanks to his talent, did the rest, and my pleasure as well as that of his readers was perfect.

• • •

How little is necessary in life to decide a man's fate! I had discovered that with my first book, *Jésus-la-Caille,* and I still see myself mounting the stairs of the *Mercure de France* when a colleague who shall remain unnamed stopped me and asked:

"Are you going to see Valette?"

"Yes," I corrected him, "Monsieur Valette."

"Why? For a book?"

"I am going to submit this one to him," I said shyly.

"Well," said the other, "he won't read it. My dear friend, I just left my third upon his table. Give up all hope! . . ."

A few days later, Paul Fort was marrying his daughter to the painter Severini, there were great rejoicings at the Café Voltaire and I was invited. When Paul Fort is the organizer of festivities they at once assume immense proportions. And, indeed, when I arrived, the Prince of Poets was standing upon the piano and singing. The guests were drinking and congratulating each other and Marinetti whose magnificent white automobile showed off beautifully on the grey pavement of the Place de l'Odéon was abandoning himself to futuristic joys. He was breaking the china. It was splendid. Everybody was shouting himself hoarse celebrating this charming union. Parisian grace and the ultra-modern Italian art! Then Paul Fort

rapped for silence and asked me to "sing" a song. I agreed willingly. Apollinaire was watching me with his small eyes. I sang. It was a street song I had learnt in the popular dance-halls and it pleased them to such an extent that I had to come out with all my repertoire, to the great joy of a lady whom I did not know and who asked me my name.

It was Rachilde, wife of M. Valette, editor of the *Mercure de France.*

"Well, the boss knows my name."

"What, the boss?"

"He'll explain," I went on, flattered by Rachilde's insistence. "I took a novel to him . . ."

"No, really?"

"Yes!"

"You bandit," Apollinaire said to me, when he saw me risking my chances thus. "Now you are in for it. You also, my little brother, will soon be one of the clan. That was a well-played hand."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Rachilde will keep after Valette till she gets your manuscript . . . And she'll read it without waiting long, be sure of that. You can't have a better ally in the place than Rachilde . . . wait . . . and you'll see . . ."

Guillaume Apollinaire had prophesied correctly. *Jésus-la-Caille* pleased the author of *Monsieur Vénus,* she made the *Mercure* take it and it was published within three months.

That is the way things came to pass. Without Rachilde, to whom I owe everything and who has not ceased to wish me well, I might still be playing one of "the young literati" in brasseries where fame is as bitter as gall or the dregs of an empty glass of beer.

La gloire éclôt, jaunit, se fripe
Et se fane de l'aube au soir,
Et j'aime mieux fumer ma pipe
Que renifler son encensoir . . .

Derème wrote to me from his province . . . I understood what he meant and knew he was right. As a real romantic poet, because the school of that name deserves it, I would rather

have my pipe, my quiet life and especially my friends than the vain noise of celebrity.

My friends never changed: La Vaissière, Tristan Derème, Jean Pellerin, Edouard Gazanion, MacOrlan, Warnod, Dorgelès, Mario Meunier, Pierre Benoît. I saw them often. I went to Montmartre to see some of them. I stayed in the Quarter to see the others and nothing in the world would have tempted me, except the prospect of seeing them. Getting up late and not daring, sometimes, to worry Baptiste, who had regular hours, I used to go to a *bistrot* in the Rue des Saint-Pères where I knew I would find Apollinaire still sitting at table and waiting for me. What a man he was! He would welcome me joyously, order soup and, although he was at the coffee stage, begin all over again to keep me company, and then go back to his pigeon-hole.

His extreme stoutness, though it made him puff at the slightest effort, gave him an air of great authority. A gourmand in the best sense of the world, enormous, appetizing to look at, he

broke between his teeth the bones served to him, sucked them, covered himself with grease and, then, telling some story about a painter, made his chair groan under his weight without worrying about its fate. What did he have to fear? He looked like some big laughing god, so steady upon his base that, even if the chair broke, he had his big hassock to soften the shock. The more he ate, the gayer he became, with a physical gaiety which shone all over him. It was devastating. It had no limit and no set back. The most astonishing thing was that although heavy with meats, bread, wine and soup and the rest, which he had eaten twice over, Apollinaire was still able to work until evening in his apartment on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, where his secretaries were waiting for him.

Under his roof, in a big room encumbered with books, small statues, cubistic paintings and Negro art, these gentlemen were ready, waiting for orders. Guillaume loved to be a tyrannical buffoon. He came in, looking very severe, took off his collar and his coat, then, filling a very

light earthenware pipe, sat down. Then began what he called the "poisonous work," because he did for several publishers very odd work and the best that could be said of it was that it was composed of clippings stuck on banking slips or pieces of paper, scribbled on by him or by others and painfully assembled. As the different chapters of the book began to fatten many covers, Guillaume became himself again. He would burst out sometimes into a heavy satisfied laugh and continue his work with scissors.

His laugh was his strength, his wealth, his fecund and powerful means of expression. No one who has not heard it, its thunderous quality, can have a real idea of Guillaume Apollinaire's work. It is the foundation stone for a building made up of rare materials, fables, gossip, new and sublime ideas, poetry, ordinary sayings, the whole worked into a mortar which only that marvellous man knew how to prepare, sweating over it for long hours.

He inspired real veneration and he deserved

it, because of the original turn of his imagination.

Louis de Gonzague-Frick knows this. At that time, with a top-hat, a monocle in his eye, and new gloves, the admiration—I mean the cult—he had for Apollinaire made him go every morning to see him. Gonzague-Frick rang. Guillaume opened the door and saw his assiduous admirer, who bowed and asked:

"Monsieur Apollinaire?"

"That's I," the poet would answer.

Louis de Gonzague-Frick then presented an apple to Guillaume, which he would hold out as the purest of symbols. Guillaume would take the apple and crunch it with pleasure.

Only to the author of *Alcools* could such an adventure happen, because, whatever has been said about him—even though he was a man and a very fat one at that, his appearance also indicated that he was one of those genii of the old German ballads, who, seeking a body to lodge in, had found his suitable . . . Wasn't it like him to amuse himself by terrifying his first col-

laborator by making him copy whole pages of the dictionary which he then read with delight. He loved the comical and all kinds of jokes and at times he carried them very far. One whole winter he wrote to a woman dealer in odds and ends in the Rue du Vieux-Colombier whose sly humour showed itself in the poems she put up outside her shop. Guillaume would read one of these poems, go back home, write an answer, post it and eagerly wait for the sequel. We went together in the evenings to see the new efforts of the woman and Guillaume, convulsed with laughter, would recite loudly the extraordinary verses.

Voyez ce bon gros militaire
Glorieux de sa fourragère!

the lady had written one day. Guillaume read the piece till the end—it was far from being complimentary—bowed and took me at once to a café.

"What a——" he said.

And I believe he was really annoyed.

That is all for the poet. The art critic was another matter because the profit one gets from the society of painters is more valuable than the criticism one makes. Picasso had taught Guillaume that and had convinced him. "It is the time for masters," wrote the author of *Calligrammes* in his *Méditations esthétiques,* and, further along in the same work, he added: "One can paint with what one wants, pipes, stamps, postcards, playing cards, candelabras, pieces of oilcloth, collars, painted papers or newspapers." We must not offend any one. But since it was a question of painting, why did Guillaume neglect colour on principle?

"The day the cubists use colour," he confided seriously to me, "they will be done for!"

One can see the paradox. Guillaume cultivated it carefully. He loved it. He owed to it his successes as a critic, when on the terrace of the charming Café de Flore, the painters sat around him and tried to make use of his teaching.

Guillaume also used to say:

"It is by the quantity of work furnished by an artist that one measures the value of a work of art."

And he wrote on paper the most contradictory theories without worrying about the results.

These beautiful discourses, mixed with laughter, bear their fruit today, but Guillaume is not here any more, alas, to help maintain through his life and his imagination the scaffolding of humour and truth which he worked up while serenely smoking his pipe. Salmon, who is very clever, took care not to add to his account such a heavy and badly balanced inheritance. He "passed his hand" and perhaps is quite amused to see Jean Cocteau making use of the legacy.

How good it is to live and to wonder at "the way of the world" and to see that, at bottom, the stupidity of certain sets is enough to amuse them. Without Jean Cocteau, who would have believed that Cubism would delight the snobs! He "got them" however, and that poet, born of Rostand with the *Prince Frivole* passes today as the *couturier* of the arts, as a

precursor, as a—I don't know what! As a perfumed rhetorician, as a man cleverer than most, the inventor of enigmas and rebuses, he is the beloved of all the old ladies and the very young men and his reputation—which is not negligible—rests in great part on the good jolly jokes of our dear Apollinaire, and for the rest, on Negro jazz and the mortuary setting of the fashionable *Bœuf sur le Toit* and the still more fashionable *Grand Ecart.*

That would have amused Guillaume a great deal and would not have troubled him much, he who carried upon his shoulders without weakening the sphere which bends Atlas and half smothers him. Maybe it is not the same sphere or this one is emptier and easier to manage, like those celluloid balls that children play with. Why not? Seeds in the inside make them sound like clown's bells and, according to the wind, they roll for the amusement of the onlookers, and the small athlete with his mad agility laughs under his faked burden, makes faces and trembles at the thought of being found

out. Look at him. It is a miracle every time and when the sphere falls on the ground instead of saying, as did his good master Guillaume:

A la fin les mensonges ne me font plus peur,

he stamps his feet, grows angry and pours out floods of tears, as empty as the ball he plays with.

I would rather have Apollinaire, his lies and his errors, than all the shameless mistakes with which his pupil, too clever for us, astonishes himself and which he expects will not grow old. Apollinaire, at least, was a real poet, a writer worthy of the name, and had moreover an inquiring and surprising mind. He lost himself in his love of art, and did not profit by it. I see him still at the end of the war, working hard at painful and mercenary jobs that barely fed him. Poor Guillaume Apollinaire! He remained on the breach, struggling till the last moment, exhausting himself, tearing himself apart. Just like Moréas, who declared on his death bed: "Classicists and romanticists, it is all a joke!" he has earned by his life, spent always in doing

better and better, the right to be listened to and respected. If some have betrayed his memory and have methodically exploited him, thinking to belittle him, they are free to do so! Let them judge themselves! Apollinaire opened other vistas: a good many of us still know it, and that is why, far from going to seek what still remains alive of him in the bars beloved by Jean Cocteau, it is in Montparnasse that we shall find him.

. . .

Montparnasse owes its birth to Apollinaire, who was the first to take us to Baty and found himself joyfully welcomed everywhere. His presence in those places where the mixture of races brings an uneasy movement, created a sacred union of the arts, fixed it, crystallized it. As soon as he spoke, Guillaume gave voice to the crowd of poets and painters who, as they listened to him, thought they were listening to themselves and bound their fate to his words. Before it could be noticed, as he sat beside his

cousin Paul Fort, whose domain included the long "Boul'Mich," Bullier, the Luxembourg and the *Closerie des Lilas,* he traced the limits of his own which, from the *café des Deux-Magots* where Jarry had once conferred upon him the order of the *Gidouille,* spread through the Rue de Rennes and the Boulevard Raspail to the intersection of that Boulevard with the Boulevard Montparnasse. Had he not already sent his scouts towards Plaisance, where the Custom Officer Rousseau lived, and made the charming Rue de la Gaieté his headquarters? Moréas recognized him, Moréas the sovereign of the Halles and of the Vachette, who understood nothing else of this new spirit. But he had to admit it. Guillaume had a finger in everything. Painting and poetry decorated with two very noble jewels his cardboard crown and, as he drank mightily, very little was necessary to make his gang and the "poisses" all around shout at any time of the year: "The King drinks! The King drinks!" raising their glasses to join in a toast with him.

The *Iles-Marquises* was not an ordinary drinking-place. It was close to the headquarters of the police-inspector, where the poet Raynaud looked after his colleagues and his usual "society," composed of painters, girls, models and pimps, was full of respect at the sight of Guillaume and listened to him with open mouths.

It is because the dear fat man was never afraid of what he said and always celebrated the genius of the Custom Officer, that he astonished those gentlemen and ladies with his bright conversation. In the Rue de la Gaieté a raffle of some of the works of the Custom Officer had not created a stir, it had even passed unheralded, until Guillaume, mounting his favourite hobby-horse, appeared and changed everything.

During Apollinaire's time, the painting market was not what it has since become, but trading was already visible under the honeyed words, and the idiots were taken in by it. However there were still some people who were sincere. Guillaume did not lie. He was the first to suffer

on account of his tastes and he was very much embarrassed when Dunoyer de Segonzac, for example, was sitting at his table and the aimless talk went on:

"Well!" said Dunoyer, who had been at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and who frequented Apollinaire's crowd, "I exchanged my one-eyed horse for a blind one."

He was not very much mistaken.

And indeed, I recall how little authority real artists like Dunoyer de Segonzac, Luc-Albert Moreau, Modigliani, had at the talks on Tuesdays at the Café de Flore. The two first mentioned have arrived since. As for Modigliani he is dead and has reached since his death the first rank he should have occupied during his life.



XV

HOW painful it is for me to speak of the great poverty the unfortunate Modi had to struggle with till the end of his life. He lived first in Montmartre, then one saw him at the Rotonde, drawing without ceasing in a notebook the pages of which he crushed and tore. A dealer had believed in him, had tried to impose him upon the public, had grown tired of him and finally had not renewed his contract. May God forgive him! Modi wandered in a hostile Paris, without money or hope, a red handkerchief around his neck in the winter instead of an overcoat, laughing at heaven and earth, like a cursed child. He struggled. He agreed to be imprisoned by another dealer who made a studio of his cellar, paid him some francs every evening and quarrelled with him very often. There seemed to be a curse on this very noble man. He was good-looking, but alcohol and misfortune

pulled him down; he was intelligent, but brutes managed him; proud and easy-going, he loved his art and served it passionately, but life humiliated him and in every way, as if with a sadistic pleasure, made him pay for having the incredible audacity to pretend that he was born to a great destiny.

"You must feed the artists," he said, in the Rue Campagne-Première to an Italian peasant woman who kept a very humble restaurant where he went.

"And why should I feed them?"

"Because," Modigliani answered, "an artist can't earn his own living. He paints . . . As for the rest? Pffft! . . . How can you tell? Look."

And, doing an astonishing fresco on the wall, he would ask in a gale of laughter:

"You like that? . . . Really . . ."

"All right, sit here and eat," the good woman would finally say.

The customers of the place, who were masons

and day labourers with white smocks, would silently make room for the painter beside them on the benches and agree with him.

For several years, always hungry but always drinking, because people offer a drink much more easily than food, Modigliani led the most foolish existence. Women, struck by his good looks, were dying for love of him, foreigners, humble girls, but Modi always left them before they could tie him down. His drunkenness broke everything as soon as he could feel the chain and then he would miserably go from one bar to another, where I met him, often, his pencil in his hand. He was a dark man who had kept, perhaps from his Italian origin, a very decided taste for endless discussions, politics, art and vermouth. His corduroy clothes, his wide brimmed hat, his kerchief, his very quick repartee, almost lightning-like, and his laugh, which made him cough all the time, drew attention to him. But Modigliani did not care! He had no pride nor a trace of self-sufficiency and when,

moved by his great poverty, we tried with misgivings to help him a little, he refused to take his poverty seriously.

An exhibition at Mademoiselle Weill's to whom the painters, when they take her their pictures, sing to the same tune as *Mad'moisell' Rose,* this innocent verse:

Ah! Mad'moisell' Weill-le,
J'ai un p'tit tableau, un p'tit tableau à vous offrir . . .
C'est pas un' merveil-le
Mais payez-le nous et j'vous jur' qu'ça nous f'ra plaisir,
Mad'moisell' Weill . . .

An exhibition, I was saying, of Modi brought her her first success. But what an uproar in the street! The nudes of the painter could be seen from the outside and attracted the curious at once. Small errand boys, messenger boys, clerks, milliners' apprentices were jammed in front of the shop, literally crushing each other, and the police commissioner, astonished by the crowd, went also to the window and declared it was a

scandal. It was an epic. By order of the police official, Mademoiselle Weill had to go to the police station, where she tried in vain to defend Modigliani. Nothing could be done about it. Traffic was suspended by the crowds and the admirable canvases had to be taken down from the walls, and not one was sold, even at the lowest price.*

At that time through a sudden kindness of Heaven, tired without doubt of worrying such a great artist, Modigliani discovered at the Dôme a friend who shared his black and despondent poverty, ran around Paris and swore to make him celebrated. That friend never doubted Modigliani's genius for one second. To help him to live, he would have sold his clothes, his watch, his shoes, slept outdoors in the midst of winter and would have borrowed money from anybody at any rate. His name was Zborowski. He was not yet a dealer, but a poet, and he lived in the Rue Joseph-Bara in a tiny flat where

* One of them, a reclining nude, was sold for 22,000 francs in 1925 at the salle Drouot.

Modigliani often slept and aroused the neighbours. What love Zborowski had for his painter! What a great and understanding admiration! He deprived himself of everything for him, of tobacco, food and coal. And little by little he was able to give Modigliani canvases, colours, a humble studio and a few hundred francs a month which at least enabled him to eat, even if poorly.

When one went to see Zborowski, he would run down to buy a candle and, setting it in the neck of a bottle, he would take you into a narrow room without furniture, bare, desolate, in a corner of which the painter's canvases were heaped. Lighted by the candle, Zborowski showed his treasures, stroking them passionately with his hands and devouring them with his eyes, then, fascinated, he would spit with disgust, talk agitatedly and curse the fate which crushed Modigliani. The more agitated he was the more naturally would the words come to his mouth to express his strange and splendid feeling before those nudes, those figures, those portraits painted

without any care for schools, but in which the painter's pure and blinding art were manifested.

"Such poetry!" Zborowski would say ecstatically.

He would stop, walk around again and then suddenly:

"Do you know," he'd say, "I took about fifteen canvases the other morning to a dealer, I wanted a little money—a very little, to give to Modigliani—and the dealer did not want to buy . . . He said to me: 'Take them away . . . I am not buying . . .' Why? I would have given him the fifteen canvases for nothing, if only he had shown some appreciation for the paintings. No . . . And they don't want them . . . How stupid they are . . . They are not yet accustomed . . . but you shall see . . . later . . . not even later,—soon . . . they'll pay high prices for those canvases they don't want now . . . they'll all want Modiglianis . . . and meanwhile, he has no money, he is unhappy, he fills one with pity."

"Well," I said to him, "sell me that nude, will you?"

"You love it?"

"It is very beautiful."

Zborowski uttered a shout of joy and then bringing the candle nearer to the canvas:

"Look, how beautiful the painting is," he exclaimed, "and how . . . Watch! It is admirable . . . Yes, admirable, isn't it?"

I could see that.

"Yes, Zborowski, admirable. I agree with you. It is a masterpiece."

He turned towards me and, showing me the picture he had laid aside:

"To you," he decided, "I won't sell . . . I shall give it. Here, . . . I give it to you . . . because you love it."

"And the money for Modigliani?"

"No . . . Take it, I am so pleased you love it . . . Forget the money question . . . Don't bother about that . . . Tomorrow a man is coming to buy some clothes . . . He'll give twenty francs. That will be enough . . ."

And he came with me to my house, carrying that magnificent picture and refusing even at the last minute to accept a very small sum which, not being rich, I tried to force upon him.

It was my first picture, but the concierge who cleaned my room, in the Quai aux Fleurs, almost fell dead the next day when she discovered that nude above my bed.

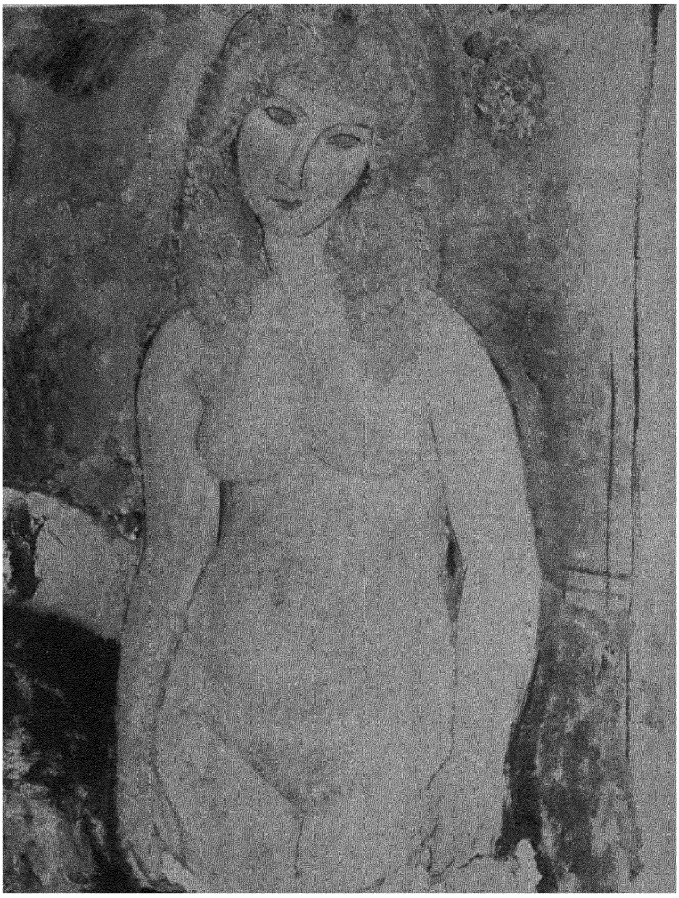
. . .

Unhappy Modi! Almost five years were necessary before, one after the other, the finest amateurs and the most enlightened decided to have him in their collections. Meanwhile they would not listen to Zborowski, they laughed in his face, or else they did not receive him, offended that any one should try to mock them in that way. Zborowski did not mind. He would leave the painting, come back, and talk and talk, until the day when, following my own taste, I wrote in a Swiss review called the *Eventail* an article which brought to Zborowski two or three Swiss collectors who, thanks to the exchange,

bought some nudes of Modigliani for almost nothing.

The one I had in my room filled me with delight and yet not one of my friends admired it. They all called me mad, an idiot, an imbecile . . . I let them joke as much as they liked and without asking their advice I began to save some notes from my slender resources for which Zborowski sold me other paintings by Modi and shouted it to the housetops.

What delight I felt in the mornings, in the Quai aux Fleurs, when I woke, amongst those nudes with milky and orange flesh, under their blinking eyes and their magnificent forms! Two windows in a corner offered through their light the clean fresh landscape of the Seine. The shrill cries of tugs, the smoke, the panting of the motors upon the river surrounded me like a dream. In the summer, especially, when the open windows let a warm sun come in with the smell of the big trees, golden and rustling, from the point of the Ile Saint-Louis, a light drunkenness would seize me. With half-closed eyes, I



BLONDE NUDE BY MODIGLIANI

saw the blue sky, the mirroring waters which threw to the ceiling a thousand circles within circles and sometimes—the moving flight of pigeons—a warm and soft caress, folding and unfolding wings whose shadows hardly appeared. Everything was delightful to me. Everything kept me late in bed in a serene immobility when the beautiful burning day's youthfulness and my own faced each other and thought of nothing. What could I have wished more charming and more agreeable! I had these nudes in my home like a lover, they were women I loved and I felt alive beside them. And they were alive: their presence excited me, as the sun rising high in the sky filled my room with wonderful fire.

If I tasted the full measure of that happy tide, which is to real love what music is to poetry, I owe it to Modigliani; because at the same time, I imagined his dreadful life, his passion to paint, and I closed my eyes. He was standing there, looking at me and asking me as he did one winter's night, when half drunk:

"You? . . . You love my painting . . . Hey? And why? Do you understand it? . . . You love it? . . . As you love women? . . . So! So! So! . . . Yes . . . That's it . . ."

Every morning the same delight was awaiting me, or else, when I had bought something new, I would wake ten times during the night to light my lamp and grow absorbed in inexpressible contemplation. It was like an enchantment, but such a singular one, so subtle, so voluptuous that, in remembering it, I almost regret those days when I owned nothing and I was the richest man alive amongst my paintings and the scattered pages of my first novels.

. . .

Once upon a time Max Jacob lived in the house where chance had sent me two years before the war, and the concierge remembered him very well. What an extraordinary woman that concierge was! She commented on everything and when frequently she would find me in bed in the greatest disorder, she'd say to me:

"It is wrong, sir, to change all the time. Certainly . . . and do you want to know what I think? The lady you had yesterday was much better than the one you had today."

"Please mind your own business."

"All right, sir . . . And, as for those paintings, what an idea!"

"That's enough . . ."

"No."

And the delightful creature would compare my Modiglianis to the landscapes the gentleman on the fourth floor had in his apartment . . . landscapes where one could at least recognize something, while those horrible women . . .

"Those beauties!" she would exclaim. "Ah! la! la! They look like . . ."

"What?"

"Yes, sir!"

I had to get up and chase her away and she, very dignified, would open the door and call for help.

"Go to the devil!" I would shout, "and leave me alone!"

"All right, all right!"

"You heard me?"

"And your mail, who will bring it up?"

"All right, bring up the mail," I answered, "but don't let me see you any more. Put it under the door."

"Righto!" the old woman would answer.

So, punctually, when I was trying to work, Madame Delescalier climbed my stairs softly, pushed a paper under my door as I had told her to do, and I picked up this paper and grew furious, for on it was written in big letters:

First mail: NOTHING!

Sometimes I would laugh at her, for my concierge's zeal for my welfare went so far that she would write on the pages of my manuscripts very motherly recommendations:

They would read: "Sir, take some orange flower tea as an infusion, very hot. Orange flower makes one sleep."

No one would believe it, but it is true, that woman, under the pretext of doing my room,

would come in without warning and, seeing me at my desk, would mutter, as if seized with great admiration:

"What, you are working? Let me look at you, sir, I won't disturb you . . . Please let me . . . It is so unusual . . ."

And no matter how angry I grew, she did not leave the place. So, full of rage, I would dress and go out, while during my absence she would invite into my room the other tenants of the house and with them laugh to her heart's content about my "scandalous" pictures.

The stories she told about me defy the most inventive imagination. I was a monster, I did not pay her for her work and I made love to her. What else? She never stopped painting me in such a flattering and striking manner that my neighbours would always run away when they saw me on the landing. Not one would answer my greeting. I was pointed out, and if I came in at the break of day and in a good humour, Madame Delescalier announced my arrival by incredible yells and, to humiliate me, shut her-

self up in her narrow den, imitated the walk of a drunkard and shook her fist at me.

And yet she was a good woman and kindly as soon as she stopped being odious, because she took such good care of me that she would come up in the morning to tell me if it had been freezing:

"Put on your heavy overcoat, sir, it is terribly cold . . ."

And if by any chance I were coughing, she went to the chemist and came back with a big bowl of tea, plasters, camphorated oil, aspirin tablets, potions and twenty drugs for which I had to pay afterwards.



XVI

THERE are thirteen letters in "Quai aux Fleurs" and as I lived at number thirteen, Max Jacob told me it was lucky and that I ought to believe in it . . . Yes, maybe, very lucky . . . But I became superstitious very quickly. On the right, on the Quai, Heloïse and Abélard's house not only sheltered a police station, but also Jean Dorsenne the poet, and the engraver Louis Jou, who lived there, and I often waited to see Jou at his balcony before deciding what I was going to do with my day. If he did not show himself, I had to be content to look at four wild ducks which from the pale winter sky let themselves fall on the water like drops of ink . . . or again, I would count the barges which were drawn in the wake of small, panting, and squat tugs . . . Four barges, four ducks and Louis Jou . . . I could attempt anything . . . If those were not forthcoming I would replace the

ducks by the cops, or by the buttons missing on my clothes and I would go out happy.

Alas! How many avatars, how many polite refusals from editors, I had to endure in spite of all my calculations, and what stubbornness I needed to keep from getting tired of it. I never gave up. I went to the newspapers to offer them my tales for which, when they accepted them, they paid five francs. I wrote poems. I was happy to be alive. What a pleasure! In spite of being sent away from almost every place where I went to work, what did it matter? I accepted my fate and, far from being discouraged, I would gaily say to myself:

"Un jour viendra!"

and dismissed my troubles.

If it had not been for the rent which, when due, generally found me high and dry and obliged me to borrow money from Hubert or from my acquaintances in the Rue de Buci, it would have been too much luck. But what? The rent! I was accustomed to it and, moreover,

the debts one contracted at Hubert's were paid for in songs. Why should I worry about them now? It would be rather late in the day. And in any case we were all in the same fix at the same time and never once did we blame Fate for not smiling at us, because we believed in her.

Do you remember, Mario, that night of Christmas Eve festivities when we stayed for three hours at the Terrasse of the *Deux-Magots* in front of a cold *bock* as cold as death, wet and shivering? It was raining. Such a beautiful night! And how it remains engraved in my memory. You slept at Rodin's house, at Meudon, as you were his secretary, amongst marbles which frightened you when you awoke in the night. Rodin had given you a holiday and all the money we had was a franc between us. Yes, in spite of that it was a beautiful night! So sad with the lanterns of the taxis and cabs, so bitter and so wet! A fresh smell impregnated it! The smell of the dripping horse-chestnut trees and also the smell of the victuals in pork-butchers'

shops. We walked by without stopping, our hands in our pockets; we were young. We talked about our books, our friends, we recited poems to each other. And the wind heavy with water, the lights, the dark streets of the Quarter inspired us to such talk that, instead of feeling very poor, we felt the contrary, for eternal hope lived within us.

Remember . . . but what is the use! We spent so many nights that way, that one more or less, what did it matter. It was life, as one of us said and he was quite right. With Claudien, who followed his demon, if we had to count the lost hours we would never stop. And yet I have forgotten none of our enthusiasms, our curiosities, the sincere friendship which bound us together and still does, our frankness, our generous flights. What did the rain, the north wind, the daily disappointments matter? They had no hold over us. They did not discourage us. Derain one evening confided to me:

"When things do not go well, I take my bike

and I go away to Marseilles for a month, for a change of air."

"To Marseilles?"

"Or Cassis."

We did not go so far away, because we had no bikes and instead of having a change of air we were obliged to breathe always the same air in the Rue de Buci and still managed to thrive on it.

It was at that time that a very extraordinary young man joined our group and I took to him at once on account of his mocking ways. He signed short articles in small reviews with the mysterious Christian name of Zavié, which the typesetters persisted in printing Zavie. As a joke, "Za la vie, Za la mort!" became the rally cry of our crowd. Bernouard had uttered it instinctively as a boy of the streets and that cry suited our new friend so well that he answered to it gracefully, but to revenge himself he called in a sinister tone "Francis Carcere Duro!" and played tricks on me.

That was his weakness; he played them on everybody and laughed afterwards only if they succeeded. The lock which fell on his forehead, his cold assurance, gave Emile Zavié a curious resemblance to Napoleon when he was young. He had the quick look, the reserve and the shyness of the young artillery lieutenant and when he let himself go, he would quickly regain his composure. What did one know about him? Nothing or almost nothing. He worked at Bernouard's in the afternoon, correcting proofs, spoke very little, left us about six o'clock, and was invisible till the next day, when he came back to the press and smoked cigars. If sometimes he wrote verses in secret, he never showed them to any one. Verses? He pretended to be able only to dictate letters and to give a more correct turn to certain sentences submitted to his final judgment, or to answer, when Bernouard published a small book: *Les Regrets de Futile:*

"Is silence not preferable?"

Bernouard annoyed him with his affected and untidy methods, bewildered him and I must say that the difference in the characters of those two astonishing gentlemen was so marked that it afforded us plenty of amusement.

So, proud of having learnt by heart a quatrain about Bernouard, Zavié recited it:

Le soir ou Bernouard, dédaigneux et futile,
Dit à son secrétaire, effroyable nervi:
"Soignez mon orthographe et corrigez mon style,"
Fut le plus beau jour de Zavie.

The man in question asked coldly: "Is that yours? You know yourself perfectly."

"How is that?"

"Yes . . . a *nervi*. . . . A real one! . . ."

And the resemblance to Napoleon disappeared instantaneously, because, unluckily, that day Emile Zavié wore a purple tie, a blue shirt, a beige waistcoat which proved that the boss was right.

But after all, a *nervi*—after Napoleon—was much more on my own level and it made me

fonder of Zavié. He did not protest. I even thought that he was going to tell me an awful secret but he regained his self-possession and taking me off with him, demanded:

"You also prefer the *nervi* to Buonaparte?"

"Maybe!"

"Well, that's all right . . . although Buonaparte . . . Ah! Buonaparte! . . . Napoleon!"

"Don't worry!"

"Yes, yes . . . I must . . ." he said.

"But why? On account of what?"

"On account of Stendhal," he answered, blushing with shame. "You know there is no other writer like him in the world. He is the greatest. He came from Grenoble like . . . like your friend Pellerin . . . and so, you see, to have dreamed only about that, to have loved only that, and then have that crack-brained Bernouard to allow himself . . ."

He spoke and he gesticulated to such a degree, he who was generally so calm, so reserved, that I could not repress my laughter. Zavié

looked at me, shook his head, and as I urged him to take things gaily:

"Come and have a drink," he grumbled.

And he pulled me by the sleeve into a cheap restaurant as I was looking for a small café.

In that small restaurant it was almost totally dark. Wooden tables without tablecloths, shiny benches, a counter full of plates and half-pitchers of light red wine, a pigeon-hole for the napkins, filled up a big room which looked like the refectory of some seminary. There was sawdust on the floor. Upon the walls, the pale reflection of a gloomy day which filtered through the windows into the room and filled one with stupor and distrust.

"Monsieur Zavié," said a sleepy voice, "here already!"

"I have not come to eat, it is too early," answered my companion. "Light the gas, please, and give us some wine . . ."

The gas was lit.

"It is amusing," I said to hide the painful impression which held me by the throat. "It is

rather clean . . . I did not know this place."

"I know it only too well," said Zavié bitterly.

He sighed and added: "I have been eating here for five years. One must have a good digestion."

"Of course!"

"Five years!"

He leaned towards me and continued, lowering his voice:

"I don't call it eating. I call it feeding oneself, and afterwards, I go regularly to the Havas Agency to earn during the night enough to pay for my room, my laundry and my rations. Could you do it?"

"It is too depressing."

"And it is damp and above all it is sordid. The people who come here are almost all unemployed, poor derelicts who drink this sickening wine. To your health!"

"Yes," I said, after having emptied my glass. "As a wine . . ."

"The eats also," replied Zavié, looking at me sadly and proudly: "There you are, you see . . .

in the morning, I write for myself; in the afternoon I scribble at Bernouard's and up till two or three in the morning I slave away at the Agency . . ."

"How do you manage it?"

"I have to do it."

I was thunderstruck and, suddenly understanding what price my friend had to pay daily for the right to live outside of realities, he appeared to me so different from all the others, that I did not dare laugh any more and I only shook him sympathetically by the hand.

It was no laughing matter indeed! A sickening smell as of dirty military quarters prevented my mirth, and I told myself that Zavié was mistaken, that he was wrong not to risk everything rather than to live that mediocre existence which wore him out. At his age one plunges into the water, one does not think about a cutlet. Cutlets come of themselves or they do not come at all, that's the way it is, at least one's life does not depend on a cutlet, and the chances are great in

any case. Why not take a chance on the cutlets? It is no use giving up before one has to.

"Do you really think so?" he snickered.

"I am sure of it."

"Yes, you are," said Zavié bitterly.

"Try first!"

"No."

"No? Listen," I went on, "I have cried with hunger like you and hunger does not frighten me. You see . . . one does not die of hunger."

"It may be!" he answered.

And beckoning to the servant, he paid for the half-measure of wine, then as it was time, or almost time, for him to sit down to his meal he ordered:

"One boiled beef, one cabbage, one coffee."

Heavens! This discovery taught me to understand Emile Zavié perfectly. His attitudes, his airs, his romantic ways of avoiding all explanations, I understood them and his secret was not comforting or exciting. The more I preached to my friend, the more he evaded me,

and when one evening, in the square Saint-Germain, he found one franc near a bench and put it in his pocket, the gesture he made revolted me:

"Twenty sous!" exclaimed a beggar woman who had seen Zavié pick up the small coin.

"Yes," said Zavié . . . "Why? Is it so astonishing?"

"Sometimes I have the luck of finding two sous if I search well . . ."

"That's not bad."

"I should say not!"

And as I was waiting to find in that strange young man an impulse I could approve, he took out the franc from his pocket, assured himself it was a good coin and, very sure of himself, said:

"It is always twenty sous I find; I would not take the trouble to bend down for less."

Then thinking I was not watching him, he threw the small coin on the ground at the feet of the poor woman and turned on his heels in a very Stendhalian way.

That's how we were. We imitated either Stendhal or Villon and would rather have killed ourselves than give up those affectations to which we adapted ourselves so easily. Whatever the hour of the night or the day, our affectations came first and I do not know that we should blush for it or if—regretting that time—we have not the right to a kind of legitimate pride in telling ourselves that those were the happy times and in laughing about them.

Why should we lie? Without that love, life would have offered us a long and sad series of difficulties of all kinds, privations, and discrepancies, and more than once courage would have failed us. Courage? The reason for our existing and with it the bitter conviction that the career of letters needs good brains far less than an ostrich stomach and a hard hide.

Frédé taught us that by writing upon the shutters of the *Lapin* this inscription full of good common sense:

"The first duty of a gallant man is to have a good stomach."

It is true that that was in Montmartre but we remembered the lesson and it was very useful to us later on in life.

If it had not been for that, when one evening Roland Dorgelès, knowing that I was without any resources in Paris, brought me to the *Homme Libre,* Clémenceau's paper, and had me appointed its art critic, would I have accepted that work for fifty francs a month? The Tiger paid badly. Nevertheless, I was assured of at least fifty francs and I rejoiced. André Billy worked on the same paper. He probably was earning more than I was and behind his horn-rimmed spectacles he was already the man that nothing disturbs. His elegance floored me. His cold manner, his polite ways, his kindliness, which he tried to dissimulate, and the walks we sometimes took, following the Boulevards to the Left Bank, enlightened me about him. But how was I to exchange my nature for his! I could not do it. But wisely, gently, Billy warned me about life and taught me how to hus-

band my resources and not waste my time and strength.

What work we had on the *Homme Libre!* Jean Pellerin also worked there. He edited a literary letter, on the second page, near mine, in which he wrote about painters, and with the help of our friendship, those fifty francs a month Clémenceau paid us for a daily article appeared magnificent, because to earn them Jean Pellerin and I met once a day in the offices of the paper.

Dorgelès, Billy Pellerin . . . To the number of my friends I soon added Adrien Bertrand who "did" the Chamber for the paper and, as an artist, wrote for himself poems which he published in obscure reviews with very few subscribers and no readers. Adrien Bertrand was somebody and the most loyal comrade I have ever met in that circle where, with the exception of Gombault, secretary to the editors, no one could stand me. First of all, we were poets, we had recognized each other, and we accomplished the work that was imposed upon us without seeing in it anything more than drudgery, whilst

the others, trained in journalism, thought more about its advantages and did not believe in pure literature.

I had then luckily published in the *Mercure, Jésus-la-Caille* and that led me, even in the eyes of the chief, to be considered less a reporter than a writer and still less an amateur. But my novel was not thought a very good one in the house and Adrien Bertrand, who had written an article about it, could not get it printed. He had to become angry and to assure the editor-in-chief that if the *Homme Libre* refused his copy he would leave the staff to assert his rights, and my reputation grew on account of that incident. Indeed, from column writer I became one of the copy writers. I was sent to the suburbs to describe in attractive terms crimes, accidents and suicides. I was sent to see big pearl merchants who were in the limelight, politicians, concierges, burglars, to graveyards, what else? I interviewed strikers who would not say anything; generals who sent me about my business and when the anniversary of the theft of the

Joconde made it a topic of the day, I interviewed Monsieur Bonnat himself, the director of the Louvre, who would not let me open my mouth and relentlessly drove me away.

What a lovely profession journalism is! All my running about came to naught, my reporting had no life in it and "I got it" every time, because, instead of relating things to the readers as they wanted to hear them, I gave them my impressions, which were very interesting but which did not give them any tangible facts and were not what they wanted.

It happened one evening that, after a long campaign led by the President about flags on half-mast in Athens, I don't know what good Catholic admiral having ordered that they be lowered on Good Friday, it was discovered that the order authorizing that manifestation had appeared in the paper *La Croix*. What a windfall for the house! The boss was in the seventh heaven. Mandel, an elongated shadow of a squat Clémenceau, was rubbing his hands with glee and five or six ministers present back stage

were getting ready to strike a big blow. The whole press, electrified by articles of extraordinary violence, were all busy with the hare the boss had uncovered. It was talked about everywhere and I was probably the only one who, amid all that agitation, was serenely ignorant of what the thing was about.

"Carco," somebody shouted, "put on your hat and coat and hurry to the *Croix.*"

"All right," I said. . . . "I am going . . ."

"And bring back the number which had the order in it."

I looked at François-Albert, who was in charge of us all in spite of his sickly appearance and his boyish manners, and I asked very innocently:

"What order?"

I created a nice scandal. I was insulted and humiliated. A journalist who does not read the papers? That was a little bit too much.

"You'll have to read them," said François-Albert.

"Of course . . . certainly."

"You'll have to begin with the *Homme Libre*. I suppose you never even peep at it?"

"Never."

"It does not interest you?"

"That is to say," I tried to explain politely, "it does interest me . . . yes . . . but what would you have me do? To swallow the boss's sermon every morning is really too much for me. He is never pleased with anything. He grumbles all the time. In the morning, when I get up, I am generally in a very good humour, I don't want to spoil it with the boss's grumbling."

"Just as you like!" said Mandel in a honeyed voice as he came into the room unperceived by me. "You'll read Clémenceau, my friend . . . otherwise . . ."

What could I say? I was obliged to submit, but at the end of the week, disgusted with myself and the others, I went to François-Albert, who had asked me every evening what was in the boss's articles, and told him sadly:

"It is impossible . . . I swear to you I did my best . . . but to go on under those conditions, thank you . . . I had rather throw the whole thing up."

And I left.

Of the two I was the free man as I discovered when the next day I saw from my window the Seine running between its quays, shaded by its trees, shining with a thousand silver spangles under a luminous sky. I was free, I was not tied down any more! In the morning, I climbed the narrow stairs of my friend Daragnès, who was humbly engraving his wood-cuts in front of the blue waters of the river while a file of boats went by one by one.

What a deliverance! Beautiful books, work accomplished with joy and calm, far from politics and stupid jobs . . . I understood, I had found my way and Daragnès, who was preparing a series of drawings for *Jésus-la-Caille,* gave me copies of his first works. I have them still, they are rare. They are very rare, since the edition

was not published and it is as a friend, not as a bibliophile, that I wish to say how much I owe to him who helped me to stabilize my life and I will always remember everything he has done for me with great affection.



XVII

AND there I was! I had to live on "papers" about painters, on paragraphs and accounts of exhibitions that Vauxcelles accepted for *Gil Blas*. At the *Mercure,* Valette advanced me my first royalties. I was in heaven when July ended in stupor and consternation.

War, the awful war, was declared. Suddenly everything seemed to have been swept away, brushed away. At the *Gil Blas,* with Pellerin and André du Fresnois, a kind of exaltation took hold of us, threw us into the street like everybody else and made us join with ardour all the other young men who were going, without knowing it, singing, to their death. Women felt it already, everywhere around them. They were grave and on the Boulevards formed immense processions, carrying banners and flags, following each other and shouting to the heavens.

Preceding these parades, pastry-cook errand boys, boys on their bicycles, old gentlemen prey to a tragic delirium were dashing madly to and fro and the enormous human waves driven by their fate went forward, breaking against closed shops, cafés black with people, and roared at the top of their voices in a rhythmical three beat measure:

"To Berlin! To Berlin!"

The day was coming to an end as those black gesticulating masses made up of salesmen, employees, workmen, bourgeois, closely bound to each other by an inexpressible enthusiasm, passed under our eyes. In the grey light they raised a great cloud of dust and others appeared from everywhere and fell into step. "Jewish volunteers" one could read upon a huge wooden board amongst the banners of athletic societies. People saluted them as they passed.

"Long live the Jews!" shouted the onlookers, without any distinction of class or party.

Jean Pellerin and I looked at each other.

"Yes, long live the Jews!"

"And long live France!" shouted André du Fresnois, standing on a chair.

He had taken off his hat and almost deathly pale, so strong was his emotion, he followed with his near-sighted eyes, this parade of men of all ranks who, answering the general approval with a great clamour as they approached the Place de l'Opéra, started to sing with a thousand virile and hoarse voices:

La Victoire, en chantant, nous ouvre la barrière,
La Liberté gui-i-de nos pas.

"André!" Jean called . . .

Du Fresnois did not hear him. Still standing upon his chair, his whole being one with that mob, he, who ordinarily was so disdainful of crowds and who was ruled by the mind only, communed with the mob and consented to his own sacrifice. Then Jean Pellerin took hold of my arm, tightened his grip and pointed to our friend.

"Look at him," he said in a low tone . . . "Look . . . He won't come back!"

"Oh, yes, he will!"

"No, no," said Jean, whose presentiment filled him with great distress . . .

And he climbed up beside André du Fresnois on the same seat, drew him towards him and for more than an hour held him in a brotherly embrace and du Fresnois may have understood for he stopped shouting.

Beside me, deaf to the applause, which came from the terrace of the Napolitain, like the continual fire of machine guns, du Fresnois's sweetheart was standing mute and motionless. Did she also have in that awful moment the presentiment that André would soon be killed? I did not dare speak to her, but when my two comrades stepped down from their chair and approached us, my impression was confirmed and we went our ways.

I must not be accused of having written these lines after du Fresnois's disappearance. He was already no longer amongst us! The look I saw behind his misty glasses impressed me so that it still haunts me and recalls to me the time when I first felt it.

Night was coming. Through the Avenue de l'Opéra I went back to the Left Bank in a tumult still greater and more chaotic. The buses swayed heavily under their burden of people, the taxis were lined up as if they were frightened by the human avalanche, and from the tall lamps, the light, spluttering and crackling on incandescent carbons, illuminated a Paris which was upside down. Then, little by little, the streets became calmer. They were almost deserted when I arrived home, at nine o'clock, in the Quai aux Fleurs, where I took from a drawer my draft papers, my military book and about twenty francs which, with the small change I had in my pocket, were all my riches at the time.

How awful it was to breathe the air of that hot summer night with the clear sky above. I was like the others, that is to say, I had no control over my actions. I was prey to a kind of folly and pushed on heedlessly through the streets which again became animated and were filled with thick, black waves of sacred fury. At

the Brasserie Cyrano in the Place Blanche some friends were waiting for me. We drank with the women, with their men, paying our turn after others, excited, throbbing. Those gentlemen were more serious than we were. They stared, their eyes blinked at the passers-by and with hands in their pockets, they answered none of our questions. Afterwards we went down the Rue Blanche and we saw, but too late to intervene, the quick attack made by three thieves on young men from whom they stole their money. Suspicious individuals surrounded us for a moment and then ran away. They went up to men and women at street corners, robbed them quickly, and, running away as fast as their legs could carry them, made another attempt a little further away. In the Place de la Trinité parades were formed. We accompanied them, between a double rank of onlookers who waved their hats and their handkerchiefs and escorted us shouting. Everywhere in the mob pockets were picked shamelessly, there were battles and slowly the enthusiasm diminished.

I remember very distinctly of what the howling crowd around me was composed. There were very young men, hatless women, salesmen, men with caps and corduroy trousers, mothers with their sons and a band of gangsters, happy to be able to shout at the top of their lungs. At times, when they were tired of singing the *Marseillaise* or the *Chant du Départ,* undeveloped voices began another tune, and all, electrified, howled it. Very often our advance would be retarded, we stamped our feet where we were. Songs that were in vogue rose from the streets ceaselessly in a fantastic heaving in which, holding each other feverishly by the arm, we walked and leapt and danced about.

On till midnight, drifting hither and thither along the Boulevards to the Madeleine, the Place de la Concorde, we never stopped until I broke away from the rank in which I was held prisoner and by way of the Boulevard Saint-Germain reached the Quarter. But it was the same everywhere, the same crush. Students with velvet tam-o'-shanters bore at the head

of the processions flags, lanterns, inscriptions, and mannikins with pointed helmets, and they shouted like madmen:

"To Berlin! To Berlin!"

An echo of a thousand voices answered them. One heard only that enormous, incessant shout, and in the bars as the steps of all these men resounded on the sonorous roadway and hammered at one's heart, women with fantastic headgear came to the windows and applauded vigorously. In front of the d'Harcourt, in front of the Brasserie du Panthéon and of the café opposite, the crowd completely jammed the Boulevard. The flags that waved overhead stood still higher in wide living folds, billowing with a hellish palpitation. They spread, sometimes when the light of the peaceful gas lamps came through a tree like a sieve, like an immense shroud and swayed mockingly. I think I see them still at the top of their poles unrolling their sinister and capricious caresses. They floated gracefully, twisted suddenly. Under their folds, moving like a scythe amongst the ripe corn, one would

have said that already many young foreheads bent down brushed by an invisible hand.

But they soon stood up again, those smooth foreheads which death had marked before their time. They stood in front of him with a ferocious confidence that made me weak and hopeless. I saw flags no longer, but a horrible shroud with a long train red with blood. Why did not a voice come from that human flock to denounce the abominable and useless massacre which tomorrow was going to take place on the fields where the smell of earth and fruits is the only one permissible? One voice only would have been enough perhaps to change all that or, at least, to give to the immense gift of all those lives in their flower a more poignant and deeper significance . . .

And there was no one, there was no one . . . Only shouts, songs, more shouts, unheard clamourings . . . Preceding me, a man about twenty-five, his shoes hanging by their laces around his neck, was dancing as if in a delirium. He stamped his feet, seized with a mad ardour,

and the two women who held out their arms to him laughed as they led him away.

Following them I went through the crowd, keeping close, as if henceforth they would lead me through life and save me from my awful thoughts. That man was right. He was ready to live one more night, not in tears and despair but in the pleasures he would lose before he had had enough of them. Yes, he was right. And I went down, no longer wondering, the very narrow stairs of the Bar du Pantheon, entered, sat down and ordered a drink.

It was a strange setting. I did not recognize it at once, as the tables pushed back into corners left a much bigger space than usual for dancing. An orchestra played a tango and the men, pressing their partners to them in silent ecstasy, tried to dance it properly. They were all young and they all carried their knapsacks of brown leather, they looked without seeing, fixedly, in front of them, while I, caught by that enervating tune drawn out by the violins, was humming:

"C'est le dernier tango!"

There was a comical incident; a customer of the bar who was watching for her friend, cried out when she saw him coming:

"Ah, there he is, my Belgian boy!"

At that word the music stopped as if by enchantment and everybody shouted in unison:

"Long live Belgium! Bravo! Bravo!"

The Belgian's face was worth seeing. He appeared very much moved, bowed and thanked people. An old gentleman, very fat and very blond, offered champagne and the rejoicings went on.

But I went out of the bar and into the blue night. The heavy foliage of the trees of the Boulevards and of the Jardin du Luxembourg spread over the crowd that sensuous and strong odour of humus and greenery which fills the hearts of the town-dwellers with a heavy dissatisfaction. Higher than the tumult, one felt something pressing down upon us its inexpressible weight. Tragic night of a harrowing sweetness, it was no compensation for all the men and the women whom the war was cruelly pulling

apart. As the night drew to an end, a strange feeling was taking hold of all those human beings. A stupor, vague at first, but little by little stronger than they, stunned them. The shouting stopped. The last groups broke away and while the market trucks went down the roadway towards the Halles the dawn appeared and, without our noticing it, impregnated everything with the pale and surprising presence of day. Suddenly coming back to reality, counting the hours, the most courageous looked their fate face to face and I remembered that a month before an old woman who told fortunes by palmistry, on the terrace of the *Closerie des Lilas,* had stood, without saying anything, so frightened was she on discovering what she alone could see.

"Well, little mother? What is the matter?" but our questioning had been in vain.

The old woman, with her arms raised to heaven, had begun to weep.

What had she read in all those hands that announced death? What was the mysterious sign which she could not mistake? I would have

liked to find that woman again to ask her . . . no. In spite of myself, stupidly tightening my fists so that I would not be tempted to learn what no man perhaps must know, I put them in my pockets and went away quickly.

It was then that, thinking of my parents, who lived far from Paris, and who must have spent the night in getting my brother ready and in writing to me, an awful distress seized me. I was alone, terribly alone, in the streets, abandoned by every one and struggling with fatigue. I felt absolutely done in. I had no more courage and when I went into a small café I saw myself in a mirror, as pale as death, with reddened eyes.

"Have some coffee, my boy, with a dash of rum to get rid of that. Will you?" said the beer-seller to me.

"Yes, with some rum."

The place was full. Leaning against the counter, a man who had been drinking a small glass of *schnick* kept drying his lips and, looking at him darkly and silently, a poor pale

woman was waiting beside him. The man, whose hand trembled, went on ceaselessly drying his mouth and the woman not to rob him of his energy kept still. Suddenly he seized her in his arms, kissed her savagely, and she kissed him in return, folded him in her arms, till, disengaging himself, the man went to the door, opened it and disappeared.

"Oh, God!" moaned the poor woman.

Her neighbours went to her help, but she was huddled on the floor, dead, one more victim of the awful God who willed everything, exacted everything and remained indifferent.

Outside in the light, which was becoming brighter, military doctors, dressed in elegant uniforms, were walking down the boulevard; they were hurrying to the Gare de l'Est, on foot, because there were no taxis and no tramways. Almost children, all of them, or very young men, proud to show themselves in brown leggings, new caps, velvet collars, proud to go, on that golden morning, to the great war, a suitcase in their hands. What sadness we felt, all

of us in that bar, in seeing them pass that way, near that woman lying dead on the floor, while a policeman came running up. How discouraging! And the paraders, who were going home in small groups of five or six, trailing their flags, dirtied by the filth of the streets, filed slowly by. They were drunk for the most part. They walked unsteadily and some of them, with their raucous voices and with the piteous stubbornness of drunken men, insisted upon shouting when they saw us looking at them:

"To Berlin . . . ! Yes . . . yes . . . To Berlin! Yes, by Jove! To Berlin! To Berlin!"

. . .

All that day, I spent my time with my comrades, saying good-by to them. One of them, the poet Edouard Gazanion, never left me. He bought me a flask and, filling it up with pernod, lent me some money and prowled around with me till nighttime.

Paris seemed like a different city. One met an

incredible number of men all of whom were going away, running towards the stations, and, although overburdened with parcels, still looking exalted. Hither and thither, horse patrols went around the streets. Companies, trucks full of arms, munitions, mounted batteries, squadrons, made way for themselves through the crowd, and the crowd applauded them. On the Boulevard du Palais, a spy was arrested as I stood by to see an artillery regiment, which, with its interminable processions of Seventy-fives, the gunners seated on the gun carriages, crossed the water and disappeared. Horsemen whose mounts carried flowers in their harnesses showed grave faces. They did not answer the cries that rose as they passed. The wheels creaked. Cannons jumped in the ruts of the road like mysterious playthings, the number of which was astonishing . . . And there were more . . . and still more. These young men whose muskets reached the top of their caps above the coats rolled around their necks, pained me, as I followed them with my eyes, for the expression

on their beardless faces was older than they, and hardened their features.

Alas! when night came the first news of the war added to the disorder. People fought over *La Patrie,* the events commented upon, and the announcement in Paris of the pillage of German houses, excited the old men, who, speaking about their own time, saw this as a revenge—their revenge—and made long speeches. The thing that touched them least of all was the assassination of Jaurès. Jaurès? It could not be helped . . . They had no time to mourn at such a critical moment, but, haranguing an audience who listened to them without understanding them, those speechifiers said, in the sacred name of statistics, that three times a man's weight in bullets was necessary to kill a man.

"So," said an old beau, talking to a fat man, who standing in front of him, was willing to listen to him, "you, for example . . . you will cost the Germans a ton of munitions, at least! . . . They won't be able to economize where you are concerned!"

"Ah! yes . . ."

And as the fat man thought about something else:

"Go on," said the old Beau Brummell. "Have some spunk! Have some spunk! . . . Dying is nothing when one knows what one is dying for . . . nothing, my friend. Believe me, upon my word, because, if I were the age . . ."

Those extraordinary individuals had crowds around them and, an unbelievable fact to-day, they went on talking ceaselessly and no one stopped them. In the cafés, in the buses, in the streets, near the stations, they excited people to go and be killed as if there were nothing unusual in it. Had they any idea of what a war can release in the way of horrors and degradations when they spoke that way? They did not know. They believed, as every one did, that this time the end would come quickly, since the Belgians and the English were with us against the "pointed helmets" and that, afterwards, Victory crowning our sacrifices, an era of joy and prosperity would be offered to the surviving ones.

God forgive me, that era so long announced we have now, and even if it corresponded in all points to the picture painted by the zealous orators of the first days of the mobilization, no one would have wanted it, if they had known the price we have had to pay for it.



XVIII

INDEED, after du Fresnois, after Marcel Drouet, Charles Perrot, Louis Pergaud, Jean-Marc Bernard, on the eve of the armistice Guillaume Apollinaire succumbed and, later, Jean Pellerin, from the consequences of that horrible war from which my brother Charles, major of his year at the Ecole Polytechnique also did not come back. When I think of it, and picture him again, the best of our family, that child whose remains I had to gather at Blercourt, near Verdun, his death is still vivid to me and tears me to pieces. The graves of the cemetery smelled like sinks. *Sidis* had opened them, and were working hard with picks, like damned souls, to break the coffins that were floating in water. But the covers gave way, and in their muddy uniforms, our poor dead appeared in the warm day of the living. Spread under heavy regulation coats, they had to be taken piece by

piece out of the holes, and their remains were laid down, while all swallowed their tears, in new coffins, on mattresses of sawdust on which the black water which dripped from the sheets ran anew. An abominable and yet a very noble and necessary ordeal. No one shrank from it. Those grey masses, petrified by the water in which they had lain so long, gave back to the bodies a semblance of human appearance, but in our hands they were so heavy that our hearts failed us. To the end, nevertheless, each one bringing to the task a kind of mad exaltation, we went through the most painful formalities and I saw that the shell which had reached my brother had made only a very small hole, very neat, without breaking anything in his exposed cranium.

In spite of summer, of the tender light of day, everything around seemed imbued with a great sadness, from the woods crowning the heights, whence I knew that on the night of the twenty-first of June 1916, the one I was mourning had been sent to Blercourt, no noise came. One

heard only the silence of those green hills, or that valley halfway up where the cemetery stands and which, peaceful and not deep, offered in every direction well-balanced perspectives. The poplars bordering the road, the low plain, soft, fresh as spring water, composed a happy landscape which, little by little, acted upon our tortured nerves and calmed them. And I thought of my brother Charles whose intelligence was the wonder of all his friends and professors at the Ecole Polytechnique, and I said to myself that he was no more and that, great as his mind was, my twenty-two-year-old brother had been struck by God in the head.

Who would not have felt as I did, while, one after another, the heavy trucks, loaded with coffins, drove down amongst the bushes? They rolled on, leaving behind them a long ribbon of blue smoke which, as they went, disappeared, volatilized. Then the trucks themselves could not be seen any longer and the impression that life and death also will disappear was almost sweet to me, because, within myself, memories

of which the witness was no longer there to stir the ashes, were also dissolved without any hope of renewal. Everything was escaping me, as if purposely to impress upon me the moving lesson which I had had and which, already, linking itself with other facts, was sinking further and further into my memory and pushing slowly towards that abyss which we all have in our subconsciousness.

. . .

Memories? Yes . . . Nothing more. Gay or sad, as light as the smoke I had seen mixed with the atmosphere, from the height of the small Blercourt cemetery, they have no other power than to evoke for the friends of my youth years which never will be given back to us. May those friends understand me well and in far and distant time may they so confound themselves with the innocent portraits I have drawn here, that they add to the resemblance. As for those who have disappeared, lock, stock and barrel, it is between them and my conscience. I

have tried to show them much as they were at the time when I knew them. Not all despised their contemporaries with the great aloofness of the unlucky Léon Deubel who, before he committed suicide, wrote:

Et le poète qui s'éveille,
Fiévreux d'entendre ses chansons
Se prolonger par les buissons
Sur le point d'orgue d'une abeille,

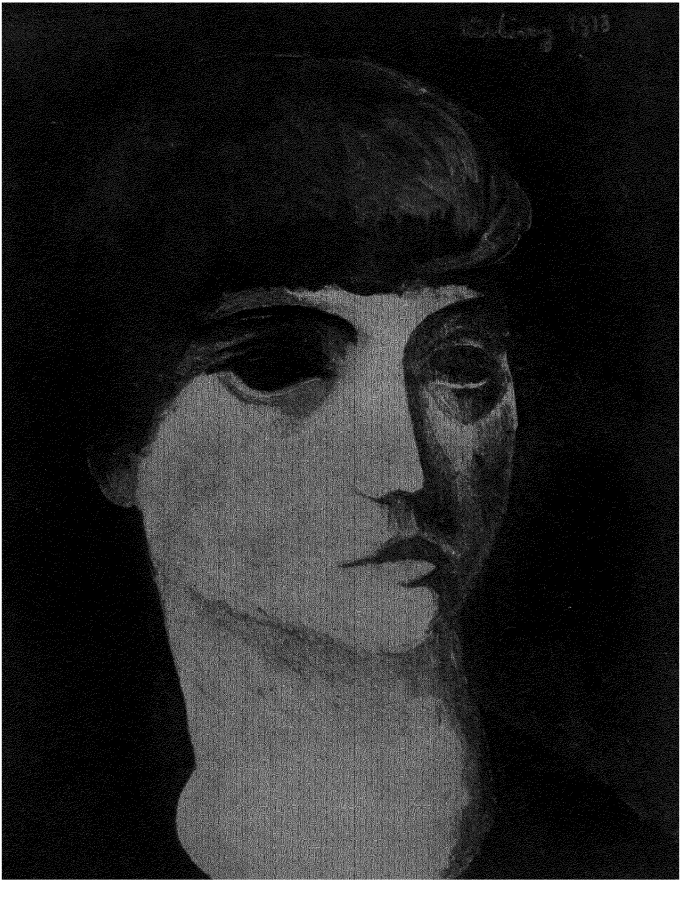
Comme un vainqueur de sa victoire,
Comme un héros de sa cité,
Fait de la chose transitoire
Une sonore éternité.

Far from it! Neither Pellerin, nor Jean-Marc, nor Guillaume . . . What did they care about the future? They were alive. They loved life. And Modigliani himself, who is certainly the one whose name had but to wait for death to reach

Aux époques lointaines,

he thought of it only to laugh.

However, we were to lose him in his turn, in



HEAD OF A GIRL BY KISLING

that winter of 1920, and he died in hospital sighing: "Cara Italia!" Although he was not French, his art had found with us its flowering, its grace, its rhythm, its clearness, its measure. The year before his death Zborowski had sent him to Nice for his health, and Nice is not a place for artists and still less for sick people and there, although Zborowski was paying, this incomparable painter worked. He lived, in the Rue de France, in an hotel for prostitutes where these "ladies," knowing him to be tubercular and too poor to afford a model, posed in his room after their friends were gone. What an existence! Zborowski told me about it afterwards. One of those women who asked nothing from the painter for posing was caught once by the man who kept her and he asked for money. What could Modigliani do? He had only canvases that nobody wanted and it was the same with Zborowski. Sell them! To whom? Several well-known writers refused to give a sou. Others, better advised, bargained. For twenty francs they bought a picture or even two and

told Zborowski, who begged them to help him to save Modigliani:

"Well, it is only customary. A painter does not need to lead a wild life, if he is poor. Let him worry! Why does he not live in Paris?"

"But he is very ill," Zborowski would say to them. "He spits blood."

He was thrown out. He was sent to some amateurs of the town who are crueller there than any other place and they kicked Zborowski out without being moved in the least by his plea. He found the same welcome everywhere, cold and insolent. One could have sworn that till the end stupidity and vanity would go against the man who believed in his painter and that he would become disgusted. But Zborowski had seen much worse; when living at Soutine, in a studio in the Cité Falguière, Modigliani had had to sprinkle the floor with insecticide to escape from bedbugs, roaches and vermin which were plentiful in the studio, and Modigliani, who was to become the hero of the novel of Georges-Michel: *Les Montparnos,* slept on the

ground beside his comrade. They lived so for many long months, stoics, putting up with all their ills and drinking to forget them. Then Zborowski rented a garret in the Rue Racine for him at the Hôtel des Etrangers and Modigliani arrived very early at his friend the poet's to paint, meanwhile his friend, to give him the indispensable necessities, ran about Paris from dawn till night and came back exhausted.

"Well, how goes it?" Modigliani would ask. "Did you sell anything?"

No, he had sold nothing, but to hide from the painter the hopeless result of his quest, he had borrowed forty sous in the quarter and bought some bacon and red beans which he cooked and shared with Modi. All one winter they fed on red beans only, and the painter did not even have a canvas, so he painted figures on the wall, upon a door—they still exist—and, annoyed at not being able to do better, he sat in a corner of the room and waited for the poet's return.

In Nice he found no one worthy enough to be interested but he never stopped encouraging

Modi, inspiring him and keeping him up to the mark every day, even if he had to get rid of everything he owned, his trunk, his old coat and his shirts. He went almost naked to Marseilles where he sold for five hundred francs fifteen canvases which Modi had given him and sent him the whole of the money, keeping only the cost of the trip. He went back, he searched for a studio, and finally found in the Rue de la Grande Chaumière one where the painter was able to settle afterwards. Zborowski needed a great deal of tenacity and faith to struggle and work as he did for Modigliani! Did the painter realize it? I don't know. As it is, in that studio which was not even furnished, the painter thought himself free from care for a while. Little by little his pictures were being sold. I have spoken of Swiss collectors; there were some in Paris but they did not pay big prices and Modigliani, who had had a baby girl by his mistress, struggled and starved as before. Whatever he did, however he tried to ward off his fate, the latter still had bitter days in store for

him and ill-luck pursued him relentlessly.

It was then about November 1919, that, undermined by the illness which was to carry him away, Modigliani felt his strength leaving him. He worked only by an overwhelming effort and, as he drank more and more, the liquor helped to weaken his constitution and that effort broke him. Zborowski asked him more than twenty times to go and rest either in the South or in a sanatorium, where a doctor who was his friend would look after Modigliani for nothing. But he refused. He wanted only to walk about the streets and thus augment his weakness, which kept increasing daily. He coughed dreadfully and when people insisted that he should leave his studio:

"No . . . No . . ." he would reply, "leave me alone."

December arrived quickly. Modi, who did not know he was so ill, talked of packing his brushes and of going to Italy in the spring with his young sweetheart and their child.

"There," he would say, "I have my mother."

Against all advice, he worked in the studio without a fire, brought his pictures to Zborowski, asked him to sell them and then torn by a cough which racked him for hours at a time, ran away and avoided people. In January, Zborowski found him in bed, with a high fever. He shivered upon his uncomfortable divan and tossed about restlessly. He did not want to see a doctor, who, when called by Zborowski, came nevertheless and ordered him to be taken at once to a hospital.

"Italia! Cara, cara Italia!" the painter kept repeating as he was being taken away.

He fainted on the way. But in the Rue Jacob, in one of the rooms of the Hôpital de la Charité, he regained consciousness and, his fever increasing, fought wildly and babbled verses all night in his delirium. The next night he was dead.

I put it to those who have known, loved and admired him, if, as soon as Modigliani was dead, we did not know at once that his reign was be-

ginning. It does not require any explanation. In a moment the news was all over Paris. Kisling came to tell me. He told me how the painter's mistress, pregnant for the second time, with the courage of her despair, had thrown herself upon her lover's body, and had refused to be separated from him. She had to be taken away by force and returned to her parents in the Rue Amiot. We begged them to take her back and to watch over her for several days for the gentle creature was so much in need of their care. Kisling was greatly upset. He asked me for my mite for the funeral, noted it down upon a sheet of paper where already a dozen names were inscribed and accompanied me to the hospital. Watched by his friends, Modigliani's corpse was covered with flowers and, under the flowers, a thick fair curl rested on the dead man's breast.

"It is hers," I was told, in an awed whisper. "His mistress, she cut a curl from her hair when they forced her to go."

From everywhere came comrades, dealers,

humble people, owners of dives and models. They were all thunderstruck. With Modi, the last Bohemian of his generation—which had not been coddled by life—Bohemia in the best sense of the word was disappearing. We felt it. We were very sorrowful, and the next day, when, still bewildered by what had happened during the night, Zborowski and Kisling told us that Modigliani's mistress had thrown herself out of one of the windows of her parents' home and that the latter had refused to take in the corpse, an indescribable horror overcame us.

Behind the hearse which, through a supreme irony, was covered with very expensive flowers and wreaths, an astonishing crowd followed. There were many painters, women, writers, the whole of Montmartre, the whole of Montparnasse, all united in a supreme homage to the memory of the departed friend who, during all his life of hazards and poverty, had been deprived of more things than any one else. Anecdotes were told. People talked about the work he left behind and following the procession, I

saw in the ranks the friends of the unlucky Modi. They had all succeeded since the old days. They had all grown older and fatter. Some of them were celebrated, others were going to be: Picasso, Salmon, Max Jacob, Blaise Cendrars . . . All were there. They denied nothing in the past. On the contrary. With Modi they were burying their youth, and the policemen who, on the way, clicked heels and saluted, perhaps were the same who, so many times, had taken Modi to the police station and who now certainly had no idea that their salute appeared in our eyes a rather belated but public reparation.

It was Picasso, who, as always, drew from that spectacle the lesson it had for all of us, because, turning to me, and pointing first to the hearse where Modigliani rested under mountains of flowers, and then to the policemen at attention, he said softly:

"You see, he gets his revenge!"

THE END