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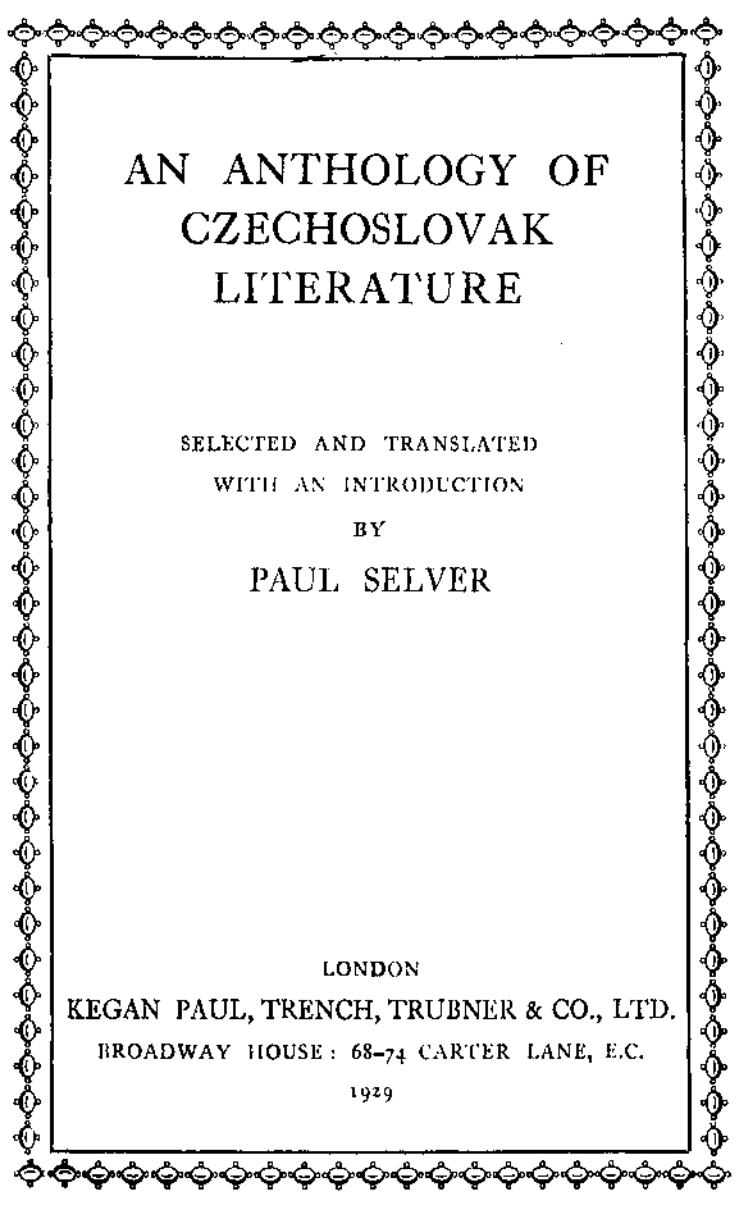
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ANTHOLOGY OF MODERN SLAVONIC LITERATURE

MODERN RUSSIAN POETRY

MODERN CZECH POETRY

OTAKAR BRÉZINA. A STUDY IN CZECH LITERATURE



AN ANTHOLOGY OF CZECHOSLOVAK LITERATURE

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

PAUL SELVER

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PREFACE

THE present volume contains English renderings from the works of Czech and Slovak authors in prose and verse, mostly modern and many of them contemporary. It does not claim to be exhaustive. The translator has selected his material mostly for its artistic qualities, but occasionally because of its documentary interest. His choice, however, has sometimes been restricted by the difficulty of producing translations which will do adequate justice to their originals, and this accounts for the absence of certain names (e.g. Sládek, Zeyer, Hlaváček) or the scanty representation of others (Neruda, Čech, Dyk). But these are deficiencies which can be remedied later.

All the extracts, with the exception of one or two of the earliest prose specimens, are complete in themselves.

As regards the verse translations, an attempt has been made to follow D. G. Rossetti's principle : " The life-blood of rhymed translation is this—that a good poem shall not be turned into a bad one." In all cases the form and contents of the originals have been reproduced as closely as possible.

P. S.

LONDON

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THE PRONUNCIATION OF CZECH NAMES

- a is pronounced as English *u* in *but*.
 A is a long a as the English *ah*.
 ě is the English *ye* in *yes*.
 ě is the English *ee* as in *week*.
 u is the short English *oo* as in *foot*.
 ej as English *ey* in *they*.
 c as English *ts* in *hats*.
 č as English *oh* in *church*.
 ch as *o** in Scottish *loch*.
 ř fat beginning or in middle of words) as *r* followed by the English *s* in *measure* ; (at the end of words) as *r* followed by *sh*.
 š as English *sh*.
 z as English *z*.
 ž as English *s* in *measure*.

The main accent is on the first syllable of words.
 Examples :

Chelčický	—	Khel-chitski.
Havliček	—	Huv-leechek.
Vrchlický	—	Verkh-litski*
Klásterský	—	Klah-shterski
Bezruč	—	Bez-rooch
Šrámek	—	Shrah-mek
Čapek	—	Chup-ek.

* In Czech the consonants *l* and *r* can sometimes form a syllable with a preceding consonant, even though there is no intervening vowel indicated. The *e*, which has been inserted to show the pronunciation, is, however, rapidly slurred over.

Anthology of Czechoslovak Literature

INTRODUCTION

1

MODERN Czech literature, like the present Czechoslovak Republic, is not an entirely new product, but constitutes a restoration of what was interrupted by the vicissitudes of history. The earliest writings in the Czech language (for the use of Slovak as a separate literary medium is of comparatively recent origin) consist of glosses which date back to the eleventh century. The first specimen of Czech composition consists of a hymn, known from its opening words as

Hospodine, pomiluj ny " (" Lord, have mercy upon us "). Its age and authorship are uncertain, but at an early date it had become a kind of Czech national anthem which was sung in the churches, at the coronations of kings, and also in battle.

By the fourteenth century Czech literature had made considerable progress. There were numerous versified legends of saints, there were allegories and fables. One of the chief authors during this period was Smil Flaška of Pardubice who in 1394 wrote *The New Council*, an animal allegory. The first collection of Czech proverbs

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is also attributed to him. Another important monument of early Czech literature is the rhymed chronicle of Dalimil, which gives an account of Czech history from the tower of Babylon to the accession of Jan of Luxemburg in 1310. Here belongs, too, the first great Czech moralist, Tomas of Stitne, who was born about 1335 and died towards the close of the century. In many respects he may be regarded as a forerunner of Jan Hus (1369-1415), who quite apart from his religious martyrdom, had the greatest share in establishing a standard written Czech language based upon the speech current at Prague. Tomas of Stitne and Jan Hus had a worthy successor in Petr Chelčický (about 1390-1460). In his greatest work, *The Net of True Faith*, he anticipated the teachings of Tolstoy, who, on reading translated extracts from it, expressed the opinion that Chelcicky was among the greatest philosophers of the world. His ideas were adopted as the tenets of the sect known as the Czech (or Moravian) brethren.

The sixteenth century is often styled the golden age of Czech literature. Chronicles and descriptions of travel were cultivated with particular zeal. The most noteworthy name with which this period is associated is that of Daniel Adam of Veleslavin (1545-99), who wrote historical works, compiled dictionaries, and organised the printing of books. But in 1621, as a result of the battle of the White Mountain, the Czechs lost their independence. The resulting persecutions drove many from their country, and among these was the great pedagogue and philosopher Jan Amos Komenský (1592-1670), better known in Western Europe as Comenius. The greater part of his life was spent as an exile in Poland, Sweden, Hungary, Germany, Holland, and

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elsewhere. In 1641 he came to London at the invitation of the English Parliament to found an academy of learning, but the outbreak of the Civil War intervened, and the project had to be abandoned. Komenský's attainments as a scholar, which gained him a European reputation, are evident from the numerous learned works which he produced. Perhaps the most considerable of these was a Czech dictionary and grammar comprising material which he had been collecting for more than forty years, but which was destroyed by a fire in 1656. His most important literary achievement is the philosophical allegory *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* which he wrote in 1623.

While Komenský was in exile, the Czech language at home was viewed with disfavour by the new rulers, who did all they could to discourage the use of it. In consequence the number of Czech speakers diminished so rapidly that if the process had continued much longer, the language would have become almost extinct. There was also a systematic destruction of Czech books by the Jesuits in their campaign against heresy, and one of them, Konias, according to tradition, himself burnt more than thirty thousand of the offending volumes. Under these circumstances Czech literature fell into a state of decay which continued until the second half of the eighteenth century.

11

The accession of Josef II in 1780 marked the beginning of an era of reform. The new king aimed at removing all traces of the counter-reformation and at enhancing religious and social freedom. At the same time, however, he introduced measures in the interests of German and

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to the corresponding detriment of Czech. But this policy tended to provoke efforts on behalf of the language, and this tendency constituted one of the factors leading to the Czech revival. There is no doubt, too, that the general wave of European enlightenment which emanated from the French encyclopaedists contributed to hasten the movement.

One of the earliest pioneers in the Czech revival was Josef Dobrovský (1753-1829), who was concerned mainly with the more formal problems of language. So thorough was his work in this direction, that it extends far beyond the limits of purely Czech affairs and establishes him as the practical founder of modern Slavonic philology. It is noteworthy that from the very outset of the revival, the Czechs aimed at closer relations with the other Slavonic races. This is a tendency which, in a form rendered far more elaborate and effective by many years of systematic effort, exists to-day.

At a time when the Slavonic languages were mostly ignored or despised as outlandish and uncouth jargons, Dobrovský, an ex-Jesuit, was devoting his whole attention to them, as is amply demonstrated by his correspondence with Kopitar, the Slovene grammarian. This correspondence, encyclopaedic both in bulk and contents, contains the germs of most modern theories about the structure and development of the Slavonic languages. For years these two scholars, by mutually querying, correcting errors, searching for analogies in points of pronunciation, etymology, and idiom, gathered a vast mass of information which enabled them and their followers to restore their mutilated languages largely according to the sound traditions of popular speech.

Josef Jungmann (1773-1847) supplemented the

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philological labours of Dobrovský by his extensive dictionary, which appeared at the critical period when the newly moulded language was beginning to crystallise. But he did far more than this. He wrote a literary history and a greatly needed treatise on prosody. He translated much—in particular Chateaubriand's *Atala* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Here, again, Jungmann was setting a valuable example, for translation was to play an important part in the subsequent development of the literature. At this particular stage in its progress, Jungmann's translations enriched it by the ideas contained in their subject-matter, while at the same time the language was being strengthened in its resources. Moreover, Jungmann was helping to solve the difficult problem of creating a native reading public.

The learned programme of these two men was enlarged by the efforts of P. J. Safarik (1795-1861), author of the valuable *Slavonic Antiquities*, and F. Palacký (1798-1876), whose name is associated with an erudite and inspired *History of the Czech Nation*.

It has already been pointed out how the linguistic ideas of Dobrovský and Jungmann were derived from two wholesome sources—popular speech as far as it had been preserved, and the languages of the other Slavonic races. Parallel tendencies can be traced in the writings of those authors who, making use of the implement which the scholars had been preparing for them, now began to build up the young literature on an artistic foundation. One of the first of the new Czech poets was Jan Kollár (1793-1852) who wrote the remarkable cycle of sonnets known as *The Daughter of Slava*. Here Kollár expresses his visionary and romantic conceptions of an ideal Slavonic brotherhood. The stately rhetoric

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of the "Prologue" (1824), where Kollár employed the hexameter and pentameter of Greek and Latin verse, has lost little of its emotional appeal, which may be compared with the ode *To Slavdom* written in 1863 by the Croatian poet Petar Preradović. The poem itself consists of a series of over six hundred sonnets, which form a curious medley of history, philology, phantasy, and romance. Kollár's somewhat illusory and unpractical Pan-Slavonic ideas, which among the Southern Slavs gave rise later to the so-called "Illyrian" movement, were also expressed in a prose pamphlet entitled *On the literary reciprocity between the various branches and idioms of the Slavonic nation* (1837).

The interest which was being taken in folk-poetry throughout Europe influenced the progress of the Czech revival very appreciably. It may be recalled that as far back as 1761 James Macpherson had begun to issue those fragments of old Celtic epic which, in spite of the opposition they encountered among certain critics, set Europe astir in a ferment of enthusiasm. In 1765 Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* had revealed fresh treasures, while Herder's *Stimmen der Völker* had followed in 1778. Among the Slavs, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić published his earliest volume of Serbian folk-songs in 1814, and three years later the episode of Hanka and the ancient Czech manuscripts recalled the exploits of Chatterton fifty years earlier. Thus, it is not surprising to find F. L. Celakovský (1799-1852) collecting folk-songs, not only of the Czechs but also of the Russians, in a series of "Echoes" which reproduced the native products without tampering with the primitive qualities of their style. Many of Celakovský's original verses were conceived in the spirit of folk-poetry, so completely

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had he made it his own. In the lyrical *Hundred-leaved Rose*, which is to-day a faded blossom, he displayed, if nothing else, at least a skilful handling of verse-form, But his epigrams are altogether on a higher plane ; they have all the qualities which are associated with the work of the great classical epigrammatists. The influence of folk-song and folk-lore generally can be seen also in the work of K. J. Erben (1811-70). His *Garland* of Czech national ballads appeared in 1853, and he also compiled an extensive collection of Slavonic *Legends and Stories*.

The Czech poetry of the early nineteenth century was, on the whole, not of an intrinsically high order. It can scarcely be regarded as anything more than a series of exercises in versification, based upon such models as the Odes of Anacreon and the Idylls of Gessner. To this category belong the fables of Puchmajer and a poem by M. Z. Polák on the majesty of nature, imitated from Haller and Ewald von Kleist (whence it may be traced back to Thomson's *Seasons*). But the poems of Karel Hynek Mácha do not belong to this class at all. His association with Polish refugees at Prague brought him under the influence of the Byronic spirit as interpreted by Mickiewicz. The ideas thus absorbed, acting on a temperament already overshadowed by a sombre destiny, produced the romantic poem *Maj* which appeared in 1836. The melancholy music of Mácha's verses received scant praise from his contemporaries, but his influence on subsequent poets was considerable.

The lyrical spirit of Mácha had its satirical counterpart in Karel Havlíček (1821-56), the first great Czech publicist. The disillusionments of his personal experience made him a resolute opponent of empty patriotism. As a result

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of his political views he was exiled to Brixen in the Tyrol, where he composed his *Tyrolese Elegies*. In these poems the despotism under which he suffered is attacked with a restraint which renders them all the more effective. The general bent of his sympathies can be judged by the fact that he translated Voltaire and also Gogol's *Dead Souls*.

III

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Czech literary revival had passed far beyond its rudimentary stages. One of the most significant landmarks in its development was the publication of *The Grandmother* by Božena Němcová (1820-62) in 1855. This novel depicts the life of the Czech rural population, and its graphic style and skilful character-drawing have made it a standard work of Czech literature. The literature of this period, both in prose and verse, is rich in purely popular elements. Thus, Vítězslav Hálek (1835-74) wrote such collections of poetry as *Evening Songs* (1859), *In the Midst of Nature* (1872), and *Tales from Our Village* (1874), which are distinguished by the delicacy and simplicity of their diction. The romantic spirit pervading Hálek's verses is also found in the strongly racial poems of Adolf Heyduk (1835--1923). Among his numerous collections of verses, *Gypsy Melodies* (1859) and *Cymbal and Fiddle* (1876), the general character of which is indicated by the titles, deserve special notice. Here a reference should be made to the numerous Czech writers who have followed the tradition of popular and patriotic poetry. In general their verses tend either to idyllic themes, derived from peasant life and treated in the manner of the folk-song, or the national subject-matter

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is dealt with in its social aspect. Among the former may be mentioned J. V. Sládek (1854-1912), also noteworthy on account of his admirable translations from Shakespeare, and Eliska Krasnohorská (1847-1927), who also translated from Pushkin, Mickiewicz and Byron, while Svatopluk Cech (1846-1908) is a typical example of the patriotic poet identifying national sufferings with social injustice. This applies in particular to his eloquent *Songs of a Slave* (1895), one of the most famous volumes of Czech poetry. Svatopluk Cech was also a prominent prose writer, and his travel sketches and short stories are deservedly famous. Among more recent writers, F. S. Procházka (b. 1861) has displayed much vigour in his patriotic verses, and achieved an outstanding success in his *Hradcany Songs* (1904), inspired by his country's bygone splendour.

The greatest personality produced by the Czech literary movement which was gathering strength in the 'fifties of the nineteenth century was Jan Neruda (1834-91), in verse a Czech Heine, and in prose a Czech Dickens. The effectiveness of his *Songs of the Cosmos* (1878), *Simple Themes* (1883), and *Ballads and Romances* (1883) lies in their spontaneous utterance, their plain and powerful sincerity. His most famous prose works are probably the *Old Town Stories* (1878), in which he depicts with pathos and humour the lower middle-class life in Prague, as he had known it in his childhood and youth. He also wrote innumerable newspaper feuilletons, which are distinguished by their sparkling wit and buoyant gaiety.

IV

The progress of the Czech novel may here be briefly indicated. The rustic story in the tradition of Božena

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Němcova's *Grandmother* was cultivated by a large number of regional authors. Thus, Karel V. Rais (1859-1927) is famous for his tales from Northern Bohemia, a district in which Antal Stašek (b. 1843) also laid the scenes of stories dealing with the religious sects still surviving there. Karel Klostermann (1848-1923) describes the lives of the glass and timber workers in the Sumava or Bohemian Forest. Moravia, rich in interesting racial types, found its novelists in the brothers MrStik—Alois (1861-1925) and Vitem (1863-1912). The latter was an advocate of Russian realism, and he translated Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. In collaboration with his brother Alois, he wrote a lengthy peasant novel entitled *A Year in the Village* (1904), which forms a rich and detailed picture of rustic scenes painted in vivid colours. Josef Holeček (b. 1853) has also dealt minutely with the life of the Czech peasant in his work *Our People*, which began to appear in 1898, and which now comprises several large volumes. There is a more idyllic tone in the village stories of Karolina Svetla (1830-99), who is sometimes referred to as the Czech George Sand.

The social novel, generally with humanitarian purposes in view, found a large number of exponents in Czech literature. One of the earliest was Gustav Pflieger Moravský (1833-75), who revealed a characteristic Czech sympathy for the lot of the workers. Similar aims were pursued with decreasingly romantic tendencies by M. Simáček (1860-1913), who showed a special knowledge of the conditions in the sugar factories, and by J. K. Slejhar (1864-1914), whose stories from factory life are despondently realistic. There is less gloom in the provincial sketches by F. Herites (b. 1851), which are written in a vein of humour and light satire, while the

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quaint features of Prague life form the subject of numerous volumes by Ignat Herrmann (b. 1854), who in many respects may be regarded as a successor to Neruda.

The Czech historical novel has also been extensively cultivated. V. Benes Trebizsky (1849-84), a Catholic priest, dealt feelingly and in a popular style with the period of the Hussites and the Thirty Years' War. Zikmund Winter (1846-1912) displayed his profound knowledge of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and a skilful handling of archaic diction in a series of novels, the most noteworthy of which is perhaps *Master Kampanus*, containing a vivid portrayal of the fateful events in 1621. Alois Jirasek (b. 1851) has treated the whole range of Bohemian history, from the earliest times down to the epoch of the national revival, in an impressive array of novels which will favourably bear comparison with analogous works by Henryk Sienkiewicz in Polish.

There are, of course, several novelists who cannot conveniently be classified under a special heading. Thus, Jakub Arbes (1840-1916) was a prolific author with a bent for the grotesque, and a pronounced advocate of progressive ideas. It is interesting to observe that in a story entitled *Newton's Brain*, which appeared in 1877, he anticipated H. G. Wells' idea of a time machine.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Czech novel, very largely owing to French and Russian influences, entered upon a period of realism. The most noteworthy exponent of this tendency was K. Capek-Chod (1860-1927). He did not achieve fame as a novelist until comparatively late in life. The first of his works which calls for special notice is the novel *Kašpar Len, the Avenger*, a study of murder and social injustice,

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published in 1908, and regarded by many as his finest work. In 1916 appeared *The Turbine*, a large-scale panorama of bourgeois decadence, and this was followed less than two years later by *Antonin Vondřejc*, another very long novel, dealing with the gradual downfall of a poet. *Ad Hoc*, a collection of vivid wartime stories, was issued in 1920, and in the same year *Jindra, Father and Son*, a novel containing some admirable but ruthless descriptions of wartime Prague. In 1924 came *Vilém Rozkod*, a lengthy narrative in which Prague artistic circles are drastically portrayed and a number of characters figuring in earlier books are reintroduced. *Rešany*, Capek-Chod's last novel, forms a sequel to *Vilém Rozkod*, transferring the action to a provincial town, the life of which is subjected to the same minute and unsparing scrutiny as that of the capital. Capek-Chod has been compared with Balzac, and also with Dostoyevsky. With the former he shares a comprehensive vision of society in its most varied aspects. By profession he was a journalist, and his experiences in this capacity had supplied him with an intimate knowledge of Prague and its people which forms one of the most striking features of his stories. The parallel with Dostoyevsky is justified by Capek-Chod's profound pity for "the humiliated and afflicted" (this, however, is a common feature of Czech literature), and still more by his faculty for exploring the darker manifestations of the human soul. A great part of his work consists of a brutally ironical commentary on the blind and meaningless workings of fate. Yet even his most uncompromising realism is modified by a romantic twist, and by a humour which, though often sardonic and grotesque, is genuinely spontaneous. His propensity for elaborate detail is

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sometimes detrimental to the composition of his stories, but in many of his descriptive passages Capek-Chod demonstrates his consummate mastery of language. It is, indeed, on account of his exuberant virtuosity and immense verbal resources that he occupies so important a position in the history of Czech prose.

Of the numerous contemporary Czech novelists, Frdňa Srámek (b. 1877) is perhaps the most remarkable. He is also distinguished as a lyric poet, and the qualities of his prose—its subtle cadences, its rich imagery—are mainly lyrical. Both in style and subject-matter his novel, *The Silvery Wind* (1910), recalls Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, and it contains some admirable passages of impressionistic description. His latest novel, *The Body* (1919), a vivid book, abounding in warmth and colour, represents his finest artistic achievement. Srámek excels, too, as a writer of short stories. He shows great skill in presenting emotional conflicts, and in his earlier work particularly there is a strong undercurrent of social satire. Among the Czech prose-writers of the younger generation his influence is manifest.

During the last few years the Czech novel has made a rapid advance. The general tendency has been towards naturalism, accompanied by a fairly obvious endeavour to attain a European outlook. This applies to such writers as Jaroslav Maria (b. 1870) and Emil Vachek (b. 1889), while Vladimir Vařcura has revealed remarkable powers as a creative stylist.

V

The development of Czech literature has been accompanied by a conflict between two main tendencies. On

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the one hand, there is the national school of writers, and on the other the advocates of European models. The former reproached the latter for yielding to foreign influences, but their aim was rather to emancipate themselves from German culture. For this reason they devoted much attention to foreign literature, their main purpose being to produce adequate Czech renderings of the great European poets. A large part of this project was carried out by the industry of one man, Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853-1912), a versatile and prolific author who in many respects is a unique figure in the whole of literary history. His first volume, *From the Depths*, appeared in 1875, and from then onwards he continued to issue lyric, epic, and dramatic poems, short stories, critical studies, and miscellaneous prose in an astonishing abundance. By the musical diction of his original poems, Vrchlický enriched the Czech language, and he also introduced every variety of metrical form into Czech literature. But in addition to over seventy volumes of his original works, which maintain a surprisingly high level of achievement, he produced a vast quantity of translations. They include the whole of Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, together with much from Shelley, Victor Hugo—perhaps his favourite—Camoens, Goethe, especially *Faust*, Whitman, Calderon, Mickiewicz, and numerous other English, French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Scandinavian, and Slavonic authors.

Vrchlický gathered round him a large group of poets who followed him in his leanings towards perfection of form, and also in his activities as a translator. Thus, Antonin Klasterský (b. 1866) completed the standard Czech version of Shakespeare begun by J. V. Sladek, and besides translating widely from other English and

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American authors, published numerous volumes of original poetry. The poems of Jaromir Borecky (b. 1869), another follower of Vrchlický, are distinguished by their exquisite style no less than by the romantic melancholy which pervades them. Borecky is also an accomplished critic and translator who has produced admirable versions from Polish and Oriental literatures. Jaroslav Kvapil (b. 1868) followed Vrchlický's model, more especially in his love-poems, and is also well known as a dramatist. Other poets of this group are František Kvapil (1855-1925), a copious translator from the Polish, and Adolf Cerný (b. 1864), who produced a large number of excellent translations from various Slavonic poets, mainly Polish and Serbian. The translating activity of these writers is emphasised on account of its educative significance, but their original poems are also of high merit.

The rallying-point of Vrchlický and his followers was the *Lumír*, a literary periodical which was founded in the 'seventies. Among its most important contributors was Julius Zeyer (1841-1901), although the general tendencies of his work bear no direct relation to those of the *Lutniř* group as a whole. Zeyer was aloof, isolated, and exclusive. His poetry, chiefly epic in character, was sumptuously decorative in style, and its exotic subject-matter was derived from Scandinavian, Celtic, Spanish, and Oriental legends, from the Charlemagne cycle, and from the early history of his native country. Zeyer travelled widely and the manifold impressions which he thus obtained were not without influence upon his poetry. At home he felt himself neglected or slighted, and, indeed, it was not till after his death that his literary work was adequately appreciated. In *Jan*

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Maria Plojhar (1891), a semi-autobiographical novel, Zeyer has left a striking account of the vicissitudes which moulded his strange personality.

The progress of Czech poetry since the appearance of Vrchlicky is associated in particular with the names of J. S. Machar (b. 1864), Antonin Sova (1864-1928), and Otakar Březina (b. 1868), whose achievements it would be difficult to find excelled by any other trio of modern European poets belonging to the same country. Machar is spiritually akin to Havlíček and Neruda. His early poems are reminiscent of Heine, de Musset, Byron, and Lermontov, but their romanticism was soon laid aside for realism, for social and political satire and, later still, for an epic series on a large scale under the general title of *The Consciousness of the Ages*. This collection of poems, the majority of which are in blank verse, reveals Machar's keen dramatic and psychological faculties for depicting the most diverse characters. His attitude is undisguisedly anti-clerical, and altogether his respect for tradition is of the slightest. The same tendencies are displayed in his prose works, especially in the highly unconventional *The Confession of a Literary Man* (1901), *Rome* (1907), and *The Jail* (1918), the latter being a graphic account of the events connected with Machar's imprisonment by the Austrian Government during the war.

Sova's personality is an almost complete contrast to that of Machar. He is a sensitive dreamer, a lyric poet, the subtlety of whose diction is admirably adapted to the impression and allegory which he handles with such consummate art. Sova has passed through a complex development, and much of his poetry bears witness to the intense emotional stress which produced it. Yet

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in spite of his leanings towards subjective and introspective verse, he possesses the typical Czech social and racial consciousness, by which some of his most effective poems—the scathing diatribe, "To Theodor Mommsen," for example—were prompted. He has also written novels and short stories in which his bent for psychological analysis is very pronounced.

Bfezina, probably the greatest artistic intellect in modern Europe, has written comparatively little, but his five small volumes of poems form a quintessential record of a unique spiritual development, from the melancholy broodings of the *Secret Distances* (1895) to the dithyrambic optimism of *The Hands* (1901). Bfezina's poetry, perplexingly rich in imagery, profound and often transcendental in subject-matter, probes into the mystery of life, not merely in its relation to earth, but to the whole universe. Here again the Czech instinct for freedom and tolerance, which in Machar is expressed by clear-cut irony, in Sova by passionate invective, is found in Bfezina's poems, especially in his last volume, in the form of humanitarian mysticism, which is inspired by a fervid belief in the ultimate perfectibility of mankind, and the advent of worldwide brotherhood. Bfezina's prose essays are as characteristic in style as his poems, whose ideas they elaborate and amplify.

Bfezina's religious thought may be described as non-sectarian in character, although he sometimes derives his metaphors from terms connected with the Catholic liturgy. There exists, however, a whole group of Czech poets whose diction, at least, bears vivid traces of Catholic influences and who in this respect may be compared with Francis Thompson. The principal representatives of this group are Xaver Dvorak

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(b. 1858), Jakub Demi (b. 1878), and Jaroslav Durych (b. 1886).

One other representative of the older generation of poets must here be mentioned. This is Petr Bezruč (b. 1867), the author of a single volume of verses entitled *Silesian Songs* (1909), in which he protests against the social and racial oppression suffered by the Czechs in the Teschen district. By his unstudied but powerful art Bezruč has elevated this localised theme to a plane upon which its appeal becomes universal.

As a contrast to the poems of Bezruč, which are inspired mostly by collective emotions, those of E. Lesehrad (b. 1877) and Karel Toman (b. 1877) are essentially individual in character. Toman's elusive fragments of song are suffused by a bitter-sweet melancholy which have suggested comparisons with Villon and Verlaine. In his later poems Toman has attained a firmer and maturer style, without sacrificing the delicacy of his previous work. The poetry of Otakar Theer (1880-1917) is also, in the main, intensely and poignantly personal. It expresses the conflicts of a tragic personality which vainly sought to reconcile the opposing forces of intellect and passion. Theer was one of the most gifted of the younger Czech poets, and his death cut short his development at what was evidently a critical turning-point. Jan z Wojkowicz (b. 1880) and Otokar Fischer (b. 1883), both of whom were closely associated with Theer, are also lyric poets of distinction. The latter is also a dramatist, a critic of extraordinary erudition and a translator with a consummate mastery of form and language. In particular, his renderings from Shakespeare, Villon, and Goethe are models of their kind.

The European ferment of new ideas embodying a

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revolt against the prevailing artistic and moral standards, the tendencies implied by such terms as decadence and symbolism, made a deep impression upon Czech literature in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Its effects were concentrated, especially in the columns of the *Modern Review*, which was founded in 1894 by Arnošt Procházka (1869-1925), and Jiri Kardsek ze Lvovic (b. 1871). From the very beginning this review disdained popular favour, and its interests are indicated by such names as Verlaine, Przybyszewski, Nietzsche, Wilde, and Huysmans in literature, Beardsley, Munch, and Rops in art. Jiri Karasek ze Lvovic was, at the same time, one of the active exponents of these ideas both in prose and verse. His poems are polished and musical, morbid and perverse, often recalling such English poets as Ernest Dowson and Arthur Symonds. In his novels he cultivates the unnatural and grotesque, somewhat in the manner of Huysmans, whose example he has also followed recently by entering the Catholic Church. Another accomplished contributor to the *Modern Review* was Karel Hlavacek (1874-98), whose verses, astonishing achievements for so young a poet, contain passages of a curiously wistful charm, subtle and intangible as snatches of distant music.

It is here impossible to devote more than a few brief phrases to other adherents of these modern tendencies in literature. Viktor Dyk (b. 1877) has revealed his sceptical, ironical, and turbulent disposition in verse, novels, and plays. Stanislav K. Neumann (b. 1875), in volumes of poems bearing such titles as *I am the Apostle of a New Life* (1896), *Proud and Passionate Harangues* (1896), and *The Glory of Satan in our Midst* (1897), indulged somewhat ostentatiously in tirades against bourgeois society.

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The accents in which he enunciates his iconoclasm are often reminiscent of Whitman, but in spite of these early extravagances Neumann possesses genuine poetical qualities. There is real vigour, for example, in his *Vision of the Despairing Throng* (1903), and his nature poetry, pagan and primitive in tone, contains many admirable passages. In his *Thirty Chants from the Upheaval* (1919) he vividly depicts his impression of military life during the recent war. Another poet of revolt, with strong anti-militarist tendencies, is Frana Sramek who has already been referred to as a novelist. Besides his revolutionary verses, he has written delicate impressionistic poems suggestive of folk-song melodies.

VI

The stage contributed very appreciably towards the progress of the Czech national revival, although the intrinsic value of the plays which were performed during this important period was insignificant. They consisted largely of imitations or adaptations of foreign models, and reveal very few racial qualities. These early dramatic efforts are associated with such names as Vaclav Klicpera (1792-1859), and his disciple J. K. Tyl (1808-56), who is also noteworthy as having written the words of "Where is my home?" the Czech national anthem. After an interval of romanticism, which may be traced to Shakespearean influences, and which is most marked in the plays of J. J. Kolar (1812-90), the Czech stage was conquered by the devotees of realism. French comedy, as represented by Scribe, found its Czech counterpart in the works of Emanuel Bozděch (1841-89). His *Cotillion Time* (1867), *Baron Goertz*

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(1871), and *The Statesman's Ordeal* (1872), in particular, are constructed with admirable skill. Realism of a more national character was cultivated by Ladislav Stroupežnický (1850-92). In *Our Haughty Peasants* (1887) he produced a very effective village drama, in which Czech rustic types are delineated with much insight.

On November 19th, 1883, the Czech drama received an important impetus by the opening of the National Theatre in Prague. The first manager of the National Theatre was F. A. Subert (1849-1915)-, a dramatist whose organising abilities ensured a repertoire of great variety and interest. The influence of Ibsen, together with the realism of the Russian and German stages, led the younger group of playwrights to the modern social drama of a pessimistic type. The more recent developments of the Czech theatre have resulted, on the one hand, in the sentimentally romantic treatment of national and legendary subjects, as in the well-known *Mary ša* (1894), a Slovak village tragedy by the brothers Mrštík, and on the other, in the cultivation of historical drama which seems to have inspired the most striking of the modern products. Thus, Jaroslav Hilbert (b. 1871), who began as a successful pupil of Ibsen, has been influenced by the reaction against realism, and has achieved heroic tragedy of a high order in *Falkenstein* (1901), the action of which is taken from mediaeval Czech history. Jiri Karasek ze Lvovic (b. 1871) has followed similar tendencies in his *Ccesar Borgia* (1908), and the same is true of the *Tristan* (1908) of Jaroslav Maria, also a renegade from the Ibsen tradition. Other names associated with this recent historical drama are Viktor Dyk (b. 1877), J. Mahen (b. 1882), and Arnost Dvorak

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(b. 1880), whose most remarkable play is *Vaclav IV* (1910). Modern plays from contemporary Czech life, and distinguished by their subtlety of presentation, have been written by Frana Sramek.

With the appearance of Karel Capek, a new force in the Czech drama has arisen. Capek was born in 1890 in a small town of Northern Bohemia. His first play, *The Robber*, begun as early as 1911, but not completed until after the war, can be described as an allegorical comedy. The anonymous central character, from whom the title of the play is derived, represents the victorious and energetic spirit of youth, seizing all it covets and opposed to the sober logic of old age. As a play it suffers from a lack of uniformity in its texture, lyrical romanticism alternating with the elements of farce and melodrama. *The Robber* was followed by *R.U.R.* (1921), Capek's masterpiece, which he describes as a "collective drama." Capek imagines a future society in which the menial work is performed by mechanically constructed beings, human in outward appearance, but devoid of real personality. The play shows what happens when these beings begin to acquire a soul. From their resulting discontent is produced a tremendous rebellion which leads to the slaughter of the human race, and inaugurates an entirely new era in the history of the world.

Capek's destructive criticism of human society is more direct and ruthless in his next play, *The Life of the Insects* (1921), written in collaboration with his brother Josef. Here the various types of human beings are depicted in the form of insects with corresponding characteristics. The three chief varieties are those who play, those who rob, and those who work, and each of

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the three acts of the drama deals respectively with the players, the robbers, and the workers. As compared with *R.U.R.*, the interest of the play is more scenic than dramatic, but the last act, 'The Ants/' a powerful satire upon the activities of a modern efficient State, and epitomising the folly and injustice of warfare, is of high literary merit in itself.

In February, 1923, Karel Capek produced *The Macropulos Affair*, which deals with the problem of longevity. Would it be a good thing if human beings were enabled to prolong their lives more or less indefinitely beyond the normal span? This is the question around which the action of the play revolves, and Capek answers it in the negative. It is distinguished by the same adroit stagecraft which forms one of the chief assets of *R.U.R.* Capek's most recent play, *Adam the Creator*, in which he again collaborated with his brother Josef, was produced in April, 1927, at the National Theatre in Prague. The destruction of the world, which in *R.U.R.* is arrested at the last moment is, in this latest play, allowed to occur. Adam, a nihilistic philosopher, who is responsible for it, then makes experiments to see if he can justify his act of destruction by improving on the old world. His attempts to produce something better, resulting in a variety of human types, male and female, prove very unsatisfactory, and the play ends on a note which seems to imply a modified approval of things as they are. Josef Capek, who is part author of this play and also of the *Insect Play*, has written one play of his own, entitled *The Land of Many Names* (1923), which shows that his contribution to the partnership must be a very substantial one.

Another Czech dramatist who has achieved con-

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siderable success since the war is František Langer (b. 1882), especially with his comedy *Through the Eye of a Needle* (1923) and his psychological tragedy *Slums* (1925). Langer has also written some of the best Czech short stories of recent times. He shows an equal mastery of romantic and realistic methods, both being admirably represented in the collection *Dreamers and Murderers* (1921).

VII

During the war a number of Czech authors saw active service on various fronts, and afterwards recorded their experiences, or else utilised them in fiction or poetry. Thus, S. K. Neumann vividly reproduced his impressions of the Albanian campaign in his prose-work *Elbasan* (1920), while his *Thirty Chants from the Upheaval* (1919) treat the same subject-matter in verse. Petr Kricka (b. 1884) wrote some striking war poems from the Galician front. Richard Weiner (b. 1884), also a poet of singular subtlety, derived material for penetrative psychological sketches from the Serbian front, which are contained in a collection entitled *The Furies* (1917). Then the Czech legionaries, who served in Siberia and elsewhere, are represented by the work of such writers as Rudolf Medek (b. 1890), Josef Kopta (b. 1894) and František Kubka (b. 1894). Medek described the vicissitudes of the legionaries in a series of novels—*The Fiery Dragon* (1921), *Great Days* (1924), and *The Island in the Storm* (1925)—which possess great documentary value. An account of his personal experiences and wanderings as a legionary is given in a volume entitled *To the Fairest Land in the World* (1922) containing many suggestive comments on the Russians and the Czechs

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themselves. He also wrote some vigorous war poetry,* especially that contained in the volume *Lionheart* (1919), which forms a striking contrast to the aestheticism of his pre-war verses. Kopta's best war novel is *The Third Company* (1925), which deals with the Siberian adventures of the legionaries. Kubka was greatly influenced by his stay in Manchuria and the Far East, in which he laid the scene of several excellent short stories. He has also written a drama, *The Whirlwind* (1927), dealing very effectively with the conflict between the European and Asiatic elements in the Russian character. His volume of poems, too, *The Star of the Kings* (1924), is a product of the same set of experiences. František Langer, who has already been referred to in connection with Czech drama, also took part in the Siberian campaign, which forms the theme of his *Iron Wolf* (1920), a volume of short stories. Here some reference should be made to the work of those Czech authors who experienced the war-time persecution of the Czechs at home. *The Jail* (1918), by J. S. Machar, has already been mentioned. Another book of a similar character is *The Quiet House* (1922), by Viktor Dyk. It might have been expected that these two fellow-countrymen, being satirical poets with a fairly close resemblance in their artistic tendencies, would react to their prison surroundings in a similar manner. But while Machar shared a cell with a continually changing company of prisoners, representing all grades of society, all types of transgressor, and half a dozen different nationalities, Dyk spent his time in solitary confinement, with only precarious opportunities for conversation. As a result, Machar's book is rich in incident, while Pyk's *Quiet Home* harmonizes with its title, and is

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largely elegiac and contemplative in character. What is common to both books is the stoicism with which their authors endured not only the hunger, cold, and general discomforts of prison life, but also the uncertainty of the fate which was in store for them. In both books there is a striking lack of rancour, either against individuals or the country of which they were the representatives. Dyk also wrote poems dealing with his prison experiences, and collected in the volume *The Window* (1921).

Finally, no account of Czech war literature would be complete without at least a reference to *Svejk, the Good Soldier*, by Jaroslav Hašek. The literary merits of *Svejk* are, of course, not in proportion to the wide popularity of the book, for Hašek was an uneven writer. But he was also a genuine and spontaneous humorist, and there are pages in *Svejk* which are of a high satirical quality.

The ethical and social problems which were brought into prominence as a result of the war, also produced a great effect on Czech literature. In particular, much of the poetry which made its appearance immediately after the war expresses, somewhat chaotically but none the less sincerely, a craving for the brotherhood and equality of man. Among the poets associated with these tendencies may be mentioned Josef Hora (b. 1891), Jaroslav Seifert (b. 1901), Jindřich Hofeří (b. 1889), Milos Jirko (b. 1900), A. M. Pisa (b. 1902), and, above all, Jiri Wolker (1900-24) who died before his talent had fully developed, but who had already shown great skill in the use of the ballad-form as a medium for humanitarian poetry.

This early post-war phase in Czech poetry now appears to be largely superseded by the cult of an abstract

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versification which has been copied from contemporary French models. Konstantin Biebl (b. 1898) and Vitezslav Nezval (b. 1900) are the leading exponents of this mode which, though often empty and pretentious, at least produces occasional evidence of verbal dexterity. But, like the tendency which it replaced, it is probably a symptom of transition.

Here, too, a few words may be added on the subject of Czech criticism. The greatest of contemporary Czech critics is F. X. Salda (b. 1867), also prominent as a poet, dramatist, and author of short stories. In his volume of essays, *The Struggle for the Morrow* (1906), he formulates a number of fundamental artistic principles, and his *Spirit and Work* (1913) contains a series of critical portraits, mainly of Czech authors. Salda's critical principles have been followed by F. V. Krejčí (b. 1867) who has written numerous monographs on individual Czech authors. Another authoritative critic is Arne Novdk (b. 1880) who, like Salda, is both a scholar and a stylist. In addition to an encyclopaedic history of Czech literature, he has published several volumes of critical essays, such as *Men and Destinies* (1914) and *Ideas and Authors* (1914). Jindrich Vodak (b. 1867), a follower of Taine, is noted as an uncompromising and discerning critic of literature and drama. Jiri Karisek ze Lvovic, whose position as a lyric poet and dramatist has already been indicated, is hardly less distinguished as a critic of literature and art. He has written several volumes of essays, such as *Impressionists and Ironists* (1903) and *Art as a Criticism of Life* (1906), which are markedly aesthetic in tendency.

Of the younger critics, the most noteworthy is Otokar Fischer (b. 1883), previously mentioned. The wide

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range of his interests is seen by such volumes as his critical studies of Nietzsche (1913) and Heine (1922), as well as his *Problems of Literary Psychology* (1917) and *On Drama* (1919). His activities as a poet and translator have already been mentioned. Another critic, who also has a reputation as a poet, is Miroslav Rutte (b. 1889). The chief volumes of his literary essays are *The New World* (1919) and *The Hidden Countenance* (1925).

VIII

It has already been pointed out that Slovak literature is of comparatively recent origin. Jan Kollar and P. J. Safarik, who were so closely associated with the Czech revival, were both Slovaks, but they wrote only in Czech. The first step towards establishing a Slovak literary language, distinct from Czech, was taken by Antonin Bernolak (1762-1813), a Catholic priest, who devoted much attention to Slavonic matters. He first presented his views on the need for a written Slovak language in his Latin treatise, *Dissertatio philologico critica de litteris Slavorum* (1787). He was also the author of a work entitled *Grammatica slavica*, which was published at Bratislava in 1790 and contains suggestions for the teaching of Slovak in schools. His greatest achievement, however, was a Slovak-Czech-Latin-German-Magyar dictionary which appeared in six volumes, posthumously between 1825 and 1827. There were several reasons for Bernoldk's efforts to establish a separate written language for the Slovaks, but he was probably actuated, above all, by the desire to emphasise the distinction between the Slovak Catholics and Evangelicals, the **latter of whom kept** in touch with written Czech through

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their knowledge of the famous Kralice Bible. But the separatist movement spread to the Slovak Evangelicals also, when in 1843 Ludovit Stúr started an agitation in company with J. M. Hurban and M. M. Hodža (1811-70) to replace Czech by Slovak as a written language. The only difference was that, whereas Bernolak had chosen western Slovak as his medium, Stúr advocated central Slovak, as being less exposed to foreign influences, and he also aimed at uniting the Slovak Catholics and Evangelicals in a common cause against the racial encroachments of the Magyars. Among those associated with Stúr were the poets Samo Chalupka (1812-83), Janko Kral (1822-76), Jan Botto (1829-81), and notably Ondrej Sladkovic (1820-72), while Janko Kalincak (1822-71), the author of historical novels, was the most important prose-writer of this group.

In order to promote their cultural efforts the Slovaks founded the "Matica slovenskd," a literary society, in 1863, but in 1875 the Magyar authorities, in their efforts towards racial unification, suppressed it, and it was not restored until 1918. Under the tyrannical Magyar régime, which became particularly ruthless from 1867 onwards, Slovak culture fared very badly. Yet it was precisely the harsh measures adopted by the Magyars to extirpate the Slovak language and all other manifestations of Slovak nationality, which, while causing the weaker to succumb, had just the opposite effect upon the more resolute among the Slovak nationalists. In 1879 appeared a memorable volume of poems, *Tatra and Ocean*, by Svetozar Hurban-Vajansky (1847-1916), the son of J. M. Hurban. He was destined to become one of the most influential Slovak authors of his period, both in prose and verse. In Slovak matters he followed

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the principles advocated by Stiir, i.e. he fanatically insisted upon the racial separateness of the Slovaks, and deliberately opposed Czech influences. His romantic mentality led him to regard Russia as the future liberator of the Slovaks, and this belief was coupled with a conservative attitude in politics. In addition to several volumes of poems, Vajansky also wrote vivid travel sketches and novels in which he copied Russian models, especially Turgenev, in his descriptions of Slovak life, but his treatment tends to follow conventional lines.

The greatest poet and intellectual leader of the Slovaks was Vajansky's contemporary, Pavol Orszagh (1849-1921), better known under his pseudonym of Hviezdoslav. His earliest verses were written in Magyar which was, however, soon abandoned in favour of his native language. In Slovak literature he occupied a position analogous to that of Jaroslav Vrchlický among the Czechs. Like Vrchlický, he translated extensively from foreign literatures, and he produced Slovak versions of Shakespeare (*Hamlet* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*), Goethe (ballads and the prologue to *Faust*), besides various renderings from the Russian (Pushkin and Lermontov), Polish (Mickiewicz and Slowacki), and Magyar (Petöfi, Arany, and Madach). His original verses are marked by a spirit of idealism, which is exhibited notably in his *Hymn of Resurrection* (1919), an eloquent poem which symbolically celebrates the restoration of Slovak liberty. During the war he produced his *Sonnets Written in Blood* (1914), which, without any racial bias, express his craving for human brotherhood and the end of all injustice among mankind.

While these two writers represent the romantic and idealistic tendencies in Slovak literature, Martin Kukučín

INTRODUCTION

(pseudonym for Matej Benair, 1860-1928) was the chief Slovak realist. He was a doctor by profession and much of his life was spent outside Slovakia, first, from 1894 in Dalmatia and subsequently, from 1907 onwards, in South America. After an absence of several years he returned home again in 1922. As a novelist and author of short stories he followed the great Russian realists, principally Gogol. His subject-matter is derived from the life of the peasants and small farmers in his native Slovakia, as well as in Dalmatia, which became his second home.

The history of Slovak literature from the later part of the nineteenth century onwards, continued to be a record of the struggle against the increasingly drastic anti-Slovak measures adopted by the Magyar Government. Some of the younger Slovak intellectuals established literary centres beyond the jurisdiction of the Magyars, notably in Prague. Important results were attained also by periodicals, such as the *Hlas* (Voice) which was issued monthly from 1898 to 1905, and the *Slovenský týždenník* (Slovak Weekly), founded in 1903 by Dr. Milan Hodža. In 1909 the literary review *Prúdy* (Tendencies) was started, and after being suspended by the authorities at the outbreak of the war was renewed in 1922. The new *Slovenske pohl'ady* (Slovak Review), which was originally founded in 1846 and has survived several stoppages, now under the editorship of the poet Stepan Krčmery (b. 1892), also serves the interests of the modern literary movement in Slovakia. The work of the generation of authors whose literary beginnings date from the first decade of the present century, shows to what extent these activities had raised the standard of Slovak culture.

INTRODUCTION

The chief poet representing this new movement is Ivan Krasko (b. 1876), who was strongly influenced by Czech literature. In subtlety of diction his work marks a definite improvement on the language of the older poets. The same applies to the verses of Ivan Gall (b. 1885) and Vladmir Roy (b. 1885), both of them, like Krasko, lyric poets with strong leanings towards melancholy introspection. Martin Rázus (b. 1888), on the other hand, is concerned more with the destinies of the Slovak people as a whole, and his poems circulated during the war are credited with having done much to promote the national cause. The war-poems of Janko Jesenský (b. 1874), which he wrote while a prisoner of war in Russia and Siberia (his earliest volume appeared as far back as 1905), are also of value as a record of changing moods during a period of chaotic experiences.

Of the youngest generation of poets, E. B. Lukac (b. 1900) and Jan Smrek (b. 1898) are the most promising. Both of them are still preoccupied with personal emotions, and the unrest of the years immediately following the end of the war has left its traces upon their work. But amid the ferment of these verses there is often a rich and sensitive verbal imagery which augurs well for the future.

PAUL SELVER.

JAN HUS

1370-1415

Letter from Constance

10 June, 1415.

"**M**ASTER JAN HUS, a servant of God in hope, unto all faithful Czechs who love and will love the Lord God, he uttereth his desire that the Lord God may vouchsafe it unto them to prevail in His Grace until their end, and to prevail in heavenly joy for ever and ever. Amen. Ye faithful and ye in God's grace, rich and poor, I entreat and admonish you to hearken unto the Lord God, to extol His word, and gladly to hear and fulfil it. I entreat you, as touching the truth of God, the which I did write from the law of God, and did preach and write from the utterances of the saints, that ye cleave fast to it. I likewise entreat any whosoever heard from me in my preaching or privily, aught against the truth of God, or if I did anywhere write any such thing—the which, in God's name, I trust is not—that he keep not to it. I likewise entreat any who beheld in me wanton usage in talking or in deeds, that he keep not to them, but that for my sake he ask God to vouchsafe me forgiveness. I entreat you to beware of the crafty, concerning whom the Saviour saith that they are in sheep's clothing, but within are ravening wolves. I entreat the lords to show mercy unto the poor, and to be righteous towards them. I entreat citizens to conduct their trade righteously. I entreat artizans

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to perform their labour and enjoy it righteously. I entreat servants to serve their masters and mistresses faithfully. I entreat teachers that, leading godly lives, they may instruct their pupils faithfully: foremost in order that they may love God, that they may study for His praise and for the weal of the community and for their own salvation: but not for covetousness or for worldly glorification. I entreat students and other pupils to hearken unto their masters and to follow them in what is good, and to learn diligently for God's praise and for the salvation of themselves and others. I entreat all in common to render thanks unto these lords: Lord Vdclav of Dubd, also of Lestina, Lord Jan of Chlum, Lord Jindfich of Plumlov, Lord Vitem Zajic, Lord Myšek, and other lords of Bohemia and Moravia, and the faithful lords of the Polish kingdom, and to be grateful to their endeavour, that they many a time stood out against the whole council, both testifying and replying for my liberation, and especially regarding Lord Vaclav of Duba and Lord Jan of Chlum, that ye believe what they shall declare: for they were in the council when I gave answer, for several days; they know which of the Czechs and in what manner bore much and unmeet witness against me, in what manner I gave answer, what they asked of me. I likewise entreat you to pray the Lord God on behalf of his Royal Grace, King of Rome and Bohemia, and on behalf of his Queen, and on behalf of the lords, that the merciful Lord God may continue with them and with you in His mercy, now and hereafter in eternal joy. Amen.

" I have written this letter to you in prison in chains, awaiting on the morrow to be condemned to death, having full hope in God, that I may not swerve from the

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truth of God, and that I may not disavow what the false witnesses have witnessed against me as errors. In what gracious manner the Lord God acteth unto me, and is with me amid sore temptations, ye shall know when we meet in God's presence in joy with His good help. Concerning Master Jerome, my beloved comrade, I do hear naught save that he is in heavy duress, awaiting death even as I, and this for his faith, the which he staunchly displayed unto the Czechs. And the Czechs, those who were our most cruel enemies, delivered us unto other enemies, unto their power and duress. I entreat you to pray God for them. Likewise do I entreat you, more especially the men of Prague, to show your favour unto Bethlehem, as long as the Lord God may vouchsafe them to preach the word of God therein. I hope in the Lord God that He keep this place after His will, and accomplish therein greater profit through others than he did accomplish through me with my shortcomings. I likewise entreat you to love one another, to suffer not the good to be oppressed by violence, and to grant truth unto all.

" Written at night on the Monday before St. Vitus' day."

PETR CHELČICKÝ

1390-1460

Concerning War and Cities

"**T**HEREUPON the Saviour manifesteth the reason wherefore this great gift shall be on earth, and saith that it is for the mingling of the sound of the sea and the billows thereof. By the unquiet sea is signified sometimes a multitude of evil men. and sometimes a

PETR CHELCICKY

particular single one, even as saith the Lord God: 'Unkind as the restless sea, which cannot be quieted.' This sound of the cruel sea and of the billows thereof our Czech land hath suffered much ; for wellnigh all the lands round about rose up against it from dissension in faith, so that the sound of those waves could be heard almost throughout the world. Also the raging of this sea can be, and oftentimes is wont to be, over earthly things; for them doth the one party ever wage war against the other, desiring to exalt themselves above the others and to be their betters, and therefore do they wrangle and seize upon each other's possessions, upon men and honour, and therefore do they buffet one the other, burn one another, shed blood. Likewise also other sinful folk, like the sea unquiet and unquelled in evil, who are stirred by devils to unrest, that ever evil may go against evil, as waves of the sea against other waves, quarrel against quarrel, pride against pride, hardship against hardship—in one place they have slain one another, in another place robbed one another, in another place challenged one another, as desiring to slay or rob one another. And thus is the most mournful sound of this sea to be heard. And amid all the storms of this sea is temptation uttered unto the servants of Christ. Even as spake the Lord, saying: *When ye shall hear of wars and quarrels, fear not, for this sea shall not overwhelm you with its waves, neither shall a hair of you head perish ; if ye abide in me, my peace shall abide in you, and the storm of the sea shall pass by you.* And all these things, the which Christ here sayeth, do constrain us to hold ourselves in readiness, that we may be worthy of His coming."

From the " Postilla " (1434)

JAN AMOS KOMENSKY

JAN AMOS KOMENSKÝ (COMENIUS)

1592-1670

From the "Bequest of the Dying Mother of the Unity of Brethren"

"T^HE^E, Czech and Moravian nation, beloved country, I cannot forget now that my parting from thee is over, but foremost in returning to thee, I make thee successor and foremost heir of my treasures, which the Lord entrusted unto me, after the example of sundry rich Roman citizens and neighbouring kings who, when dying, appointed the community of Rome, which held sway over a great span of the earth, as inheritor of their possessions. I, too, believe before God that after the passing of the storms of wrath, brought down upon our heads by our sins, the rule over thine own possessions shall return to thee again, O Czech people ! And for this hope do I make thee inheritor of everything not only all that I have inherited from my forefathers, and have preserved notwithstanding the troublous and grievous times, but also whatever increase I have received in any good work through the labour of my sons and the blessing of God, this all do I wholly bequeath and deliver to thee, and more especially :

" In the first place, love for the pure truth of God, the which to us before other nations the Lord first began to manifest by the service of our master, Jan Hus, and the which he with his fellow-worker and many other faithful Czechs sealed with his blood, and from which the Antichrist by his guile at the Council of Basel led thee away for that time and thereafter by warlike

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and cruel power, yet have I with my sons, who desired to follow the light, hitherto striven to cleave fast to it. Thine is this heritage, bestowed upon thee before other nations, O beloved country. Take possession of thine own rights again, as thine own, when the Lord showeth mercy unto thee, and the Lord, thy Saviour, restoreth a pathway unto his truth.

" Secondly, I command unto thee a zealous desire for an ever fuller and clearer understanding of this same truth of God, that, knowing the Lord, thou endeavour *to* recognise Him more abundantly. And whereas the Lord enjoined that the Holy Scriptures should be searched, I bequeath unto thee as a heritage the Book of God, the Holy Bible, which my sons did render from the original tongues (in which God ordained it to be written) into Czech with great diligence (sundry learned men spending unto fifteen years upon this labour), and the Lord God so blessed it, that few there are of nations yet which have heard the prophets and apostles speaking so faithfully, aptly and clearly in their own tongue. Take possession of this therefore as thine own jewel, beloved country, and employ this for the glory of God and thyself in good upbringing. And although copies of this Book of God were burnt by enemies, wherever they could lay hands on them, yet by the mercy of the same God, who ordered the Books of Jeremiah, torn up and burnt by the ungodly Jehoiakim, to be written anew, and the law of God, torn up and burnt by Antiochus the tyrant, soon afterwards, arousing the godly Ptolemy, caused to be rendered in the Greek tongue and conveyed to the knowledge of other nations, so unto thee shall this Book of God be preserved, be sure and doubt not.

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" Thirdly, I do commend especially also love for the ordinances of the Church and this beloved doctrine (which should and must be among the children of God), that thereafter ye may count Christ not only as a prophet in the pulpit, not only as a priest and bishop by the altar, but also as a King with throne and sceptre to pass judgment upon the disobedient. Now, what the Lord revealed unto me in His grace, that have I not hidden ; it hath been brought unto the light. Do thou use this also, beloved country, for thine own good, either as has been done by me, or as may be discovered from the Holy Scriptures to be the most edifying way and after the example of the early apostolic Church ! for to build upon old foundations, whenever the Temple of God is renewed, this is the safest.

" Fourthly, I do impart zeal in serving the Lord God and in serving Him with single endeavour. What I have yearned for from my beginnings, that the memorials of my forefathers and the history written by Jan Lasicius concerning my affairs, do testify. This indeed could I myself not fully use, save that in the year 1575 I joined in common with my nation of both confessions, and in the year 1610 with the common consistory ; but may God grant in His mercy (the which desire I will seal either with my life or my death, even as the Lord may command) that the third union may be the most perfect, a union of all the remainders of my children with all other remainders whatsoever of faithful Czechs, that the branch of Judah and the branch of Ephraim may be one branch in the hand of God, when our scattered bones are gathered together again, and are endued with flesh and skin and filled with the spirit of life by the Almighty Lord, unto whom nothing is impossible.

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" Fifthly, I do impart also unto thee and thy sons eagerness in the polishing, cleansing and fostering of our dear and beloved native language ; wherein the devotion of my sons was known in bygone times, when by the more understanding persons it hath been said that there was no better Czech than that in use among the Brethren and in their books. But some there are now, who have applied themselves thereunto even more diligently, also those driven forth from their country, that by the preparing of useful books and such as are written with a more cultivated pen than was previously the wont, they might help thy sons the more easily to attain all manner of noble comeliness in their deeds and speech, in wisdom and eloquence, a happy recompense for the desolation now ensuing, until the Lord may bring about times of amendment. Whatsoever then of this may be found, of old books or new, this receiving from my sons, take as thine own for such as shall seem best to thee.

" Sixthly, I bequeath to thee a better, more diligent and successful upbringing of youth than heretofore. This have I overlooked, entrusting myself to foreigners, who rendered my sons wanton and corrupt. If it had pleased God to restore me to more placid times, I would seek to make amends for this ; but losing hope for myself, I entreat thee, beloved country, most importunately, that thou amend it. Divers of my sons have laboured likewise in this matter, and have prepared a method for the better upbringing of youth, the which other nations, without regard to religion, have begun to take in hand. But unto thee foremost it appertaineth, and when the time cometh, neglect not thine heritage, the which they are removing from thee. In short, all my remains,, as ashes after my burning, unto

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thee, beloved country, do I commend, that thou therefrom may prepare lye for the cleansing of thy children from their stains; even as the Lord made me in my beginnings, by raising me and my children out of the ashes of Hus.

" But what more is there to say ? The time is coming for me to cease and to bid you farewell, beloved country ! But what then ? Even as the patriarch Jacob, upon his death-bed bidding his sons farewell, gave unto them his blessing; even as Moses, departing from his people : from whose lips I am taking the words, unto thee, O Czech nation, bidding thee farewell, utter a blessing from the Lord thy God, that thou above all be and remain a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall. Notwithstanding that they have filled thee with bitterness and have shot arrows at thee, the archers holding thee in secret hatred, yet may thy bow abide in strength, and may the arms of thy hands be strengthened from the hands of the Mighty Jacob, from the powerful God, whom thy fathers served, who helpeth thee, and from the Almighty, who blesseth thee with the heavenly blessing from above, with the blessing of the deep-lying abyss, with the blessing of the breast and body. May my blessing be stronger with thee than the blessing of my forefathers, even unto the regions of the eternal hills.

" Be of good cheer, O nation consecrated unto God; perish not. May thy men be without number. Bless, O Lord, their exploits, and may the toil of their hands be well pleasing unto Thee ! Shatter the loins of their enemies, and of those who hate them, that they rise no more ! May thy time come, that the nations may say : ' Blessed art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O

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people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thy help and the sword of thine excellency? Assuredly shall thine enemies be abased, that thou shalt tread upon their high places.

" 'Thine, O Lord, is the salvation, and upon the people be thy blessing, Selah.' "

JAN KOLLÁR

1793-1852

Prologue to "The Daughter of Slava"

HERE lies the country, alas, before my tear-laden glances,

Once 'twas the cradle, but now—now 'tis the tomb of my race;

Check thou thy steps, for the places are sacred, wherever thou turnest.

Son of the Tatra arise, cast to the heavens thy gaze,
Or to the mighty old oak, that stands there yonder,
incline thee,

Holding its own against treacherous time, till to-day.
Ah, but more evil than time, is the man, who a sceptre
of iron,

Slavia, on thy neck, here in these lands has imposed;
Worse than savage encounters and fiercer than fire and
than thunder—

He who in frenzy blind covers his kindred with shame.
O ye years of the past that as night are lying around me,

O my country, thou art image of glory and shame;
From the treacherous Elbe o'er the plain to the Vistula
faithless,

From the Danube until Baltic's insatiate foam.

JAN KOLLÁR

Where the mellifluous tongue of the sturdy Slavs once resounded.

Now it, atlas ! is still, silenced by onslaughts of hate.
Who has committed this theft that cries for vengeance to heaven ?

Who has upon one race outraged the whole of mankind ?

Blush thou for shame, O envious Teuton, the neighbour of Slava,

Many such sins have thine hands often committed of old.

Ne'er has an enemy yet shed blood—or ink—so profusely,
As by the German was shed, compassing Slava's decay;
Worthy of freedom is only he who values all freedom,
He who puts captives in bonds—he is a captive himself.

.

Far to the right I gaze, to the left I searchingly turn me,
But 'tis in vain that my eye Slava in Slavia seeks.

Tell me, thou tree, their temple of nature, under whose shadow

They to primeval gods offerings formerly burnt,
Where are these nations, and where are their princes and where are their cities,

They who the first in the North called into being this life ?

They taught the use of sails and oars to indigent Europe,
Taught how to sail o'er the sea, passing to bountiful shores.

Out of the ore-laden depths they dug the metals concealed there,

More from respect for the gods rather than profit to men ;

JAN KOLLAR

They taught the farmer to till the bosom of Earth with
the plough-share,
So that the lands that were bare yielded the golden-
hued corn.
They by the peaceful paths, the lime-tree sacred to Sláva,
Planted and scattered around fragrance and shadowy
rest.

.

Where in marble arose the halls of the thunderer Perun,
Now from the ruins distress shelter for cattle has
made;
Where to the heavens uprose the old-famed towers of
Arkona,
Yonder the stranger's foot tramples the fragments to
dust.
There they bewail the ruins of Retra's *temples*, the
famous,
Where they arose now dig lizard and serpent their nest.
Son of Sliva who comes from this land to visit his
brother,
Is to his brother unknown, presses not warmly his
hand;
Strange is his language that comes from lips and from
countenance Slavic,
Countenance seemingly Slav sadly the hearing deceives.
For on her sons right deeply has Slava imprinted her
tokens,
Nor can the place or the time ever their traces erase ;
Just as two rivers whose waters a single bed has united,
Still for long on the way parted their colours remain ;
So by violent strife are these nations confusedly mingled,
Yet does their nature till now visibly sundered remain.

JAN KOLLAR

But have degenerate sons heaped often upon their own
mother
Curses, and yet in their guilt cringed to the step-
mother's lash;
They in their nature are neither Slavic or Teuton, but
bat-like,
Half of the nature of one, half of the other possess.

.

Forest, stream, town and village unwilling their titles
Slavonic
Altered; the form but remains. Spirit of Slava is gone.
O who will come, these graves from a living dream to
awaken?
Who will the rightful heir back to his country restore?
Who will tell us the place where Miliduch bled for his
nation?
Who will a monument raise, keeping his memory fresh?

.

Now there are none remaining; the boorish country-
man's ploughshare,
Crashing destructively on, breaks up the warriors'
bones;
Wroth at the worthlessness of two generations, their
shadows
Haunt the dim mist of decay, uttering cries of lament.
Uttering cries of lament that Fortune relentless continues,
Letting their grandsons' blood either decay or be
changed;
Coldly in sooth would beat the heart of a man for his
nation,
If he would shed no tears here, even as o'er his love's
bones.

JAN KOLLAR

Ah, but be silent, O grief, serenely beholding the future,
Scatter with eye like the sun thoughts that arose in a
cloud.

Greatest of evils it is, in misfortune to wrangle with
evil,

He who assuages by deeds anger of heaven does best.
Not from a troubled eye springs hope, but from hands
that are active,

Thus, and thus only, can now evil be turned into good.
Only the man, but not mankind can stray on the journey,

Oft the confusion of some favours the rest as a whole.
Time changes all, and by time is truth to victory guided,
What in their error the years planned in a day is
o'erthrown.

(1824)

K. J. ERBEN

1811-1870

The Willow

IN the morn he sat at meat;
Thus his youthful spouse did greet:

¹¹ Mistress mine, thou mistress dear,
Thou in all things wert sincere.

" Thou in all things wert sincere,—
One thing ne'er thou let'st me hear,

" We have now two years been wed,
Only one thing brings me dread.

" Mistress mine, O mistress blest,
With what slumber dost thou rest ?

K. J. ERBEN

" In the evening fresh and bright,
Like a corpse thou art at night.

" Naught has sounded, naught has stirred
Nor is trace of breathing heard.

" Filled with coldness is thy frame,
E'en as if to dust it came.

" Nor doth rouse thee from thy sleeping
Our young child, with bitter weeping.

" Mistress mine, thou wife of gold,
Doth some sickness thee enfold ?

" If by sickness thou'rt dismayed,
Let wise counsel be thine aid.

" Many herbs are in the field,
Thou perchance by one art healed.

" But if herbs can naught avail,
A potent spell can never fail.

" Clouds to a potent spell will yield,
That ships in the raging storm can shield.

" A potent spell o'er fire holds sway,
Rocks can shelter, dragons slay.

" A gleaming star from heaven can rend
A potent spell thy weal can send."

" O husband mine, so dear to me,
Let no vain word trouble thee.

K. J. ERBEN

" What was fated at my birth,
To no balm will yield on earth.

" What has been decreed by fate,
At man's word will not abate.

" Tho' lifeless on my bed I lie,
Ever 'neath God's might am I.

" I am ever 'neath God's might,
Who protects me night by night.

" Tho' I sleep as dead, at morn
My spirit back to me is borne.

¹¹ I rise at morn from weakness freed
For 'twas thus by God decreed."

" Wife, these works of thine are naught,
For thy husband guards his thought."

At a fire an aged soul
Water pours from bowl to bowl.

Cauldrons twelve stand in a row,—
The husband for her aid doth go.

" Mother, hear ! thy skill is great,
Know'st what each has to await.

" Know'st how plague comes into being,
Where the Maid of Death is fleeing.

" Tell me, now, with clearness, this :
What is with my bride amiss ?

K. J. ERBEN

" In the evening fresh and bright,
Like a corpse she lies at night.

" Naught has sounded, naught has stirred,
Ne'er a trace of breathing heard.

" Filled with coldness is her frame,
E'en as if to dust it came."

" How can she be aught but dead,
Since her life but half is led ?

" She dwells by day at home with thee,
At night her soul dwells in a tree.

" Go to the stream beyond the park,
Thou find'st a willow with shining bark.

" A yellow bough the tree doth bear,
The spirit of thy bride is there/'

" I have not espoused my bride,
That with a willow she might abide.

" Near to me my bride shall stay,
The willow in the earth decay."

In his arm the axe he held,
From the root the willow felled.

In the stream amain 'twas cast,
From the depths a murmur passed.

There came murmur, there came a sigh,
As of a mother whose end is nigh.

K. J. ERBEN

O, 'twas a tiny babe I slew,
Mother mine.
O, 'twas a tiny babe I slew.
Twas my own poor suckling, too,
With pangs of sorrow I could die.

And what is thy purpose now,
Daughter mine ?
And what is thy purpose now ?
How for the guilt atone, and how
Canst thou the wrath of God appease!

I shall go that flower to seek,
Mother mine.
I shall go that flower to seek,
Which can quell much guilt, and eke -
Throes of heated blood can ease.

And where wilt thou this flower discover,
Daughter mine ?
And where wilt thou this flower discover ?
Where, O where the wide world over,
In what garden does it grow ?

Beyond that gate above the mound,
Mother mine.
Beyond that gate above the mound,
Where a pole with a nail is found,
And a hempen gallows-rope below.

And what is thy message to the swain,
Daughter mine ?

K. J. ERBEN

And what is thy message to the swain,
Who sought our dwelling oft and again,
And did take his joy with thee ?

Blessing unto him I send,
Mother mine,
Blessing unto him I send,—
A worm in his soul until his end,
For basely thus betraying me.

And what to thy mother wilt thou render,
Daughter mine ?
And what to thy mother wilt thou render,
She whose love for you was tender,
And who dearly cherished thee ?

A curse to thee is my bequest,
Mother mine.
A curse to thee is my bequest,
That in the grave thou find no rest,
For the wayward will thou gavest me.

The Garland (1853)

KAREL HAVLIČEK BOROVSKÝ

1821-1856

*Letter to František Palacký describing
his Arrest*

BRIXEN,
December 23rd, 1851.

HIGHLY ESTEEMED SIR,

I do not know whether you have already heard
from elsewhere about my latest destiny, but I have

KAREL HAVLÍČEK BOROVSKÝ

been exiled from Bohemia to Tyrol. Yesterday I was conveyed by the police to this quiet Alpine valley.

As you yourself may doubtless imagine, I, on my part, have not given the slightest pretext or reason for such treatment of me. From the time when I ceased to issue the *Slovan* my political behaviour has been entirely quiet, and at Nemecký Brod I had the intention of spending this winter in all tranquillity among my books, and after such disturbed years I was genuinely looking forward to a period of quiet study. But it was written otherwise in the books of fate, or rather of Viennese despotism. In the early hours of the morning between December 15th and 16th I was aroused, at my bed stood Pan Dederá, the Chief Commissary of Police from Prague, with Baron Voith, the district governor, and a gendarme with a rifle. My unhappy wife was quite terrified. I was told to dress myself immediately and to leave, as at the orders of the Ministry I was to be conveyed to some place where, in accordance with the order, I should be compelled to live. The place was not to be made known to me until beyond the Czech frontiers. Amid the weeping of my family,—my mother, my sister, my wife, and so on (for they did not believe the words of this secret order, but feared some worse thing), I left my paternal home, myself feeling more regret than anger. In front of the house there were more gendarmes and it was to their barracks that our way led. There, in front of the building, a post-waggon stood already harnessed, and, after a courier had been despatched to Kolin with a telegraph message that the arrest had been successful, we immediately started on the high road for Vienna. A mounted gendarme accompanied the carriage, in which the commissary in charge sat by my side, together with

KAREL HAVLICEK BOROVSKY

a plain-clothes policeman from Prague. We went by way of Jihlava, Batalov to Jindrichuv Hradec, where we had to spend the night because our vehicle was damaged ; for the roads were of the worst. From there we proceeded by way of Budejovice, Linz, Salzburg, Innsbruck to this Austrian nook. The journey lasted until the 22nd, for we did not reach here until yesterday morning although we had quite a light vehicle and usually three horses, sometimes even four. In the Alps there is much snow everywhere and the roads are exceedingly bad.

I must admit that Commissary Dederá treated me very courteously on the journey and must have had instructions to this effect. Never shall I forget the consideration which the Government showed for me on this journey. Everywhere the telegraph was at work in full swing, everywhere arrangements had been made in advance for our accommodation at the inns where we arrived, and like guardian angels the police officials (always in plain clothes, however) were waiting for us so that decorum and incognito might be preserved.

A kind of bitter irony always filled me at the joyful bugle note of the postillion with which we drove into each place. Here, too, I was received with exceptional courtesy. I am lodging in an inn at the expense of the Government and I was told that I should order whatever I took a fancy to and should not let myself go short of anything. The Government will pay for everything. Oh, what exceptional progress is being made by our Government in the niceties of civilisation !

I will not describe the incidents which befell me on the journey, although they were remarkable enough. Amongst other things, it happened in the Alps that our

KAREL HAVLICEK BOROVSKY

horses took fright so that the rest of the people jumped **out** of the carriage and I alone, without even a coachman, stayed in the carriage and drove off four-in-hand at a gallop to my place of deportation, until I had the good fortune to get hold of the reins and stop the horses. I propose in good time to describe all this in a humorous manner, for you may have observed that not even here have I lost my good spirits and, above all, my old way of thinking.

I am leading a very curious life here and probably there is no hope that I shall be liberated from this Tyrolese prison before the events in France reach a decisive issue. It is to them only that I can ascribe my present fate, in any case, I do not know of any other reasonable causes, nor can I think of any. I do not know either who is the instigator of my deportation (which they call "*Confinirung* "). The order came from Bach and here they told me incidentally at the headquarters of the district government that it was confirmed by the Emperor. The commissary had full powers from Clam, dated December 12th, for requisitioning troops should they be needed, from which I assume that my fate was probably decided by the higher Government, which is above the Ministry.

So much for the events. What is to happen now I do not know ; my intention is to say nothing, to submit and to suffer. I do not intend to ask for mercy or to complain, neither will I protest or appeal; it would be a vain task, a task which would go against the grain. My own thoughts are: They know not what they do.

Kindly let my acquaintances know the contents of this letter, and, if possible, cause me pleasure in this vale of tears by writing yourself or getting somebody else to

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write. Please remember me to your wife and give my best regards to your family and to all who are of the same mind as ourselves. It already appears that I am destined to act as a scapegoat for the rest. My wife will doubtless come to Prague and will stay with the Jaros family ; at least that is what I advise her to do so that she may have a more agreeable life. Please think of me with affection and rest assured of my cordial and sincere devotion.

H.B.

This letter was posted this evening. To-day the post-waggon leaves here in the evening.

JÁN BOTTO

1829-1.881 (Slovak)

At the Tomb of J. Kollar

WHO weeps here ?—Tis said, He has passed away !
Nay, believe not,—they spake not aright.
Tis true, the bell tolled at the end of the day,
But lo, the dawn o'er the height!

Who weeps here ?—The prophet's word, 'tis said
Is mute—his dwelling lone.
Brothers, believe not,—gaze ye ahead :
That word unto flesh has grown !

Who weeps here ?—who saith, no more He lives,
The world and us to ensnare ?
Gaze but around you : Slavdom lives—
And amid us His spirit there !

1859)

JAN NERUDA

JAN NERUDA

1834-1891

To My Mother

K NOW'ST thou, dear mother, of the golden sun,
And of his mother—legend passing fair,
Who, night by night upon her withered breast
To slumber lulls her son far spent with care ?

Yea, the poor wight must rove enough, enough,
Yea, all the day he thro' the world must go,
Enough grey mists and tempests, gloomy clouds,
Almost as much as man bears here below.

A grey-beard he lies down, a youth he rises,
With new-gained strength afresh o'er heaven runs,—
O mother, mother, yea, thou righteous angel,—
My need is e'en as grievous as the sun's.

Book of Verses (1867)

ADOLF HEYDUK.

1835-1923

To-day a Wondrous Girdle

TO-DAY a wondrous girdle
My sweetheart gave to me :
Erst with gold this girdle
Was woven fair to see.

Whilom was this girdle
The Queen of Hungary's gear,
The Queen of Hungary's gear,
And now I am her peer.

ADOLF HEYDUK

Once 'twas the Queen's,—'tis now the
Gypsy-girl's array.
At holy feasts she wore it ;
I wear it every day.

Gypsy Melodies (1859)

Hostess, Give Me Wine, I Pray

HOSTESS, give me wine, I pray,
From Debreczin I took my way ;
By hidden path-ways I did fare,
Lo, these shackles that I bear.

'Twas my masters gave me these ;
They pinioned fast my hands and knees,
That when gleamed the star of morn
I to the gallows might be borne.

Weakly were the shackles blended,
By my sinews they were rended.
Wherefore are such gyves my plight,
For scanty bread and scanty right ?

The gypsy from these gyves shall make
A sharp-edged axe ; the day shall break
When we ourselves with spurs shall clank
Like the man of lofty rank.

New Gypsy Melodies (1897)

ADOLF HEYDUK

Three Fields

FIELD of oats, field of rye, corn-field,—these the
three:
Well they yielded, well they throve, the seed-plots tilled
by me.

Field of oats, sombre field, with clover down below,
For my horse, my raven horse, 'neath God's blessing
grow.

Field of rye, tawny field, poppy and corn-flower there,
Rye for bread, a bunch of flowers, my child, shall be your
share.

Field of wheat, golden field, stalks that bow their crest;
Sparrows ate the half of it, the gentry will eat the rest.

In The Fields (1900)

SVATOPLUK ČECH

1846-1908

Our Native Tongue

POWER and fame and wealth—of all these things
what doth to us remain ?

Our native tongue.
What with a single shield did guard us in the wearisome
campaign ?

Our native tongue.

Let with a heavenly music sound, o'er half the world its
mastery wield,

A foreign tongue.

SVATOPLUK ČECH

Queen of them all is in our eyes, and unto none the palm
shall yield,

Our native tongue.

And tho' it were a beggar-girl, and nothing but a maiden
spurned—

Our native tongue.

It is our will that it may to a glorious princess be turned—

Our native tongue.

Be thou the apple of our eye, be thou to us more dear
than all—

Our native tongue.

And never thro' our failing care, upon it shall a shadow
fall—

Our native tongue.

There has no compact e'er been made, that can impose
a price to pay

On our native tongue.

Rather would we all surrender, than a jot should go
astray,

From our native tongue.

Nay, ne'er shall be with our consent surrendered to an
overlord,

Our native tongue.

This sacred tongue's eternal rights shall ne'er by aught
except the sword

From us be wrung.

Ne'er shall it retreat, but ever farther onwards must it

go—

Our native tongue.

SVATOPLUK ČECH

Ever higher must ascend, and ever more serenely glow—
Our native tongue !

New Songs (1888)

SVETOZÁR HURBAN-VAJANSKÝ

1847-1916 (Slovak)

The Spy

KNOW, my hearers : Demons likewise are diverse
Down in hell's dominions; one with rage will curse,
While 'mid stench another prays in demon style,
Direr is the second, more unclean and vile.
Wearied of destroying, once this imp began
Aping the Almighty, fashioning a man.
Seized into his talons clay from hellish soil,
Slavered foully on it, three whole days of toil.
Mingled with it evil, folly, brawl, disgrace,
All that's vain and dastard, foul and mean and base.
Breathed and filled the clod then with a traitor's soul,—
" Father, I am ready," squeaked the puny troll.
" Son, what wouldst thou be now ? King, as fables
tell?"
" Nay, a spy, my father, where the Slovaks dwell."

PAVOL ORSZÁGH (HVIEZDOSLAV)

1849-1921 (Slovak)

And When This Hell . . .

AND when this hell has raged itself away,
Will there in sooth be peace, heaven-sent repose ?
Will hatred have mastery over its own throes ?
Will calm be born where terror has held sway ?

PAVOL ORSZAGH (HVIEZDOSLAV)

Will age-old truth within our midst abide ?
Will all men's right be right ? Will there be bread
In plenty for all ? Will gyves vanish ? Weapons be
shed ?
And will the toil of man be his honoured pride ?

Will in the end this blood-bath purify ?
Will worshippers of self bow themselves low
Before the image of mercy ? The meek outvie
The haughty ? And love as three-fold exemplar glow ?
Or will woe, woe to the conquered be the cry,
And, in the name of revenge, to the conquerors woe ?

Sonnets Written in Blood (1914)

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKÝ

1853-1912

Adagio

OVER the marble with its great drab shell,
Where faded leaves in place of water lie,
The boughs of birches and of maples fell:
All slumbers, save the scudding clouds on high.
Fain would I linger here in wistful poring,
And gaze at evening drawing nigh this way ;
And at the hawk's gloom-covered, clamorous soaring,
How o'er the wood he watches for his prey ;
Fain would I be this statue wrought in stone,
On loneliness in forest-depths to brood,
Speaking with winds and echo all alone,
Upon whose brow the night by day is wooed.

A Year in the South (1878)

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKÝ

Landscape

ON the bare fields the trees in straggling rows
Earthward their leafless branches have outspread:
The roofs are darkened by a flock of crows,
Dusk from their wings upon the world is shed.

The sky-line's fringe in sudden redness blazed,—
It gleams with orange hues that slowly die :
Haply, an angel's golden robe ; he raised
Day in his arms, and bore it back on high.

A Year in the South (1878)

The Satyr's Song

O'ER the country I peer by the stream from the
rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

O'er the green slope, o'er forests, gardens, meads around
My eyes feast on the azure, and the dreamy sound
Of music-making waves is mine.

I warm me in the sun, and glide amid the reeds,
Straightway the thicket sprinkles dew o'er me in beads,
—O would that they were drops of wine.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

Let at Diana's hunting quiver woods and brakes,
I hearken in the shadow, how that the thristle makes
The stillness bright with pearly notes.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

How the cicada on the elm at noon-tide sings,
And how the dragon-fly with topaz-tinted wings
 Around the lotus-blossom floats.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

I heed not notes, that from the dulcet reed-pipe sweep,
Whereon Pan makes his music when the valleys sleep,
 When in the waves the sun has flown :
The snail delights me more, that in the grass I see,
How that he moves his horns, moving on sluggishly,
 And wasps 'mid apricots adrone.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

Only 'mid sweltering heat within a hollow grot,
I hide me, and I bask on moistened grassy plot,
 That wanton breezes scarce can wave :
And ponder, solaced by the wavelets' mystic lay
On many a Dryad, who before me fled away.
 O deep and fragrance-laden cave !

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

At eve amid the reeds in ambush I, unseen,
Behold the Erymanthine maids with timid mien
 Lay in the bath their garb aside.
How in the flood they leap, when in their midst I dash,
Until the waters splash, and 'mid the rushes flash,
 Like diamonds in a gleaming tide.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

I tarry ; days depart, the clouds float on ; the din,
Music and mirth of waves lure me to bathe therein ;
I plunge amid them, headlong-wise.
A coil of ocean-grass among my locks has strayed,
And pearls upon my beard, that, splendidly arrayed,
Like to Poseidon is my guise.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

And nigh is now the time, when that the fruit is shed,
And o'er the unclad poles like topaz-trinkets spread,
O Helios' sacred son, thou vine !
I crush it in the goblet with the self-same zest,
As if, O Maenad, my rough hands thy naked breast,
Unveiled, untrammelled might entwine.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

Joy comes upon the world : make ready bowers for her—
The Maenads in the woods with thyrses are astir,
My eyes with mighty dawn are bright.
Uncouth am I, I know ; yea, vile,—'tis naught to me,
I bow the heads of lovers nearer 'neath some tree,
I am the cup's deep-hid delight.

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

I am the heave of breasts, lips secretly aquiver,
That yearn for kisses ; things in being I deliver,
Not e'en the gods my spell can break.
When Jove, to seize Europa, guised him as a steer,
I took him by the horns and whispered in his ear :
" Behold, the satyr in thee spake ! "

O'er the country I peer by the stream from the rushes,
And I tarry content till the grape ripely flushes.

Spirit and World (1878)

Eclogue I

SEE'ST thou how o'er the mountains morning is
ablaze :
Hear'st thou beneath the hedge-row how the grass-
midge sings ?
O come to me : Theocritus has filled my heart with lays,
My soul is as a mead in rainbow colourings.
What is it nigh my head doth sound ?
As though were flung a cymbal on the grassy ground.

Come, to the forest's marge, amid the shade we fare,
The world shall see its image mirrored in thine eyes,
O come and feast thy gaze upon the wine-gold air,
And on the dew that clad the buds in pearly guise.
If, love, thou enviest the dower,
More than thou know'st, the fern upon thy locks will
shower.

Or wouldst thou vale-wards go, and see the tints of red,
Decking the moss and leaves, and every ripening haw ?

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

Or art thou timid lest, ere thither we have sped,
Chance haply will avail, my lips to thine to draw ?

Doth crimson on thy cheeks appear ?
A truce to berries, for thy lips are sweeter cheer !

Or shall we haply go together to the lake,
That 'neath the dusky leaves of water-flowers is hid ?
Alder and willow-shades above the water shake,
The dragon-fly dips wings of amethyst amid
A fabled castle's crystal dome.
Thou too, the Naiads' sister, findest there thy home !

Or lov'st thou more the corn-field with its billowy grain,
Where echoing melodies of flies and crickets dart.
Thou rovest with thy musings o'er the grassy plain.

Or wouldst thou in the clover-field,
Seek hours of joy, whose light is in thine eyes revealed ?

Come, for the sun's first splendour on the country falls,
His sheen is in thy heart, like to a thread of gold,
Entrust to him thy steps, and gain love's heavenly halls,
Where youth doth to thy lips its draught of nectar hold.

What is it nigh my head doth sound ?
As though were flung a cymbal on the grassy ground ?

Eclogues and Songs (1880)

Eclogue II

THE air is steeped in scent of berries, and 'tis crystal-clear around,

How the moss is palpitating underneath thy tread !
And from the rushes strains like unto melodies of flutes
resound,

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

A gleaming rain of blossoms from the hawthorn bush
is shed.

Thou askest—joyful tears within thine eye,

" Why is this, O why ? "

On high

The bird speaks, at thy foot the blossom of the field,

" Only thus can all Spring's wonders be revealed."

Thy breath is sweet with scent of berries, crystal-clear
thine eye is gleaming,

How thy bosom 'neath the pressure of my hand doth
thrill I

From my heart the fervour-laden strains of melody come
streaming,

Even as from a craggy rock there pours a pearly rill.

Thou askest—tender tears within thine eye,

" Why is this—O why ? "

On high

The bird speaks, at thy foot the blossom of the field,

" Only thus can all Love's wonders be revealed."

Eclogues and Songs (1880)

Eclogue III

HOW can there be a heart by hope unthrilled ?
Hark to the sound

Of black-birds ; nests around

With mighty drops of dew are filled.

The forest-lovers in calm, rock-strewn ways

How joyously were beaming !

Their dreaming

Was knit by doves amid their smiling lays.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

Quoth they : " Who can us here behold ? "

Then sped
The sun, and quivering shed
Upon their clinging lips his gold.

" Who knows of all the vows that we have uttered ? "

Then from a flower drew nigh
A butterfly
And 'mid their hair entangled fluttered.

Who would of sun, of butterfly beware ?

For see,
Beneath each darkening tree
A very idyll they prepare.

Eclogues and Songs (1880)

Stanzas

FIRST the whole universe avails us not
But then our every yearning pang declines
In a cool alcove's single shadowy spot.

Above our heads the sun in radiance shines,
Yet we fear seeing it, as birds that fled
Safe from the tempest to a clump of pines

And in their gladness no more songs have shed.

**On the Journey to Eldorado (1882)*

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

The Graveyard in the Song

NIGHTINGALE, on whom in nights of splendour
Hafiz was intent,

Where sing'st thou now ?

Rose, o'er whom full often Dante, plunged in meditation,
bent,

Where bloom'st thou now ?

Star of sweetness, unto whose dream-laden brightness
from his cell,

Tasso's woeful plaint was lifted and his thronging sighs
were sent,

Where gleam'st thou now ?

Heart, that out of flames wast woven, out of roses and
of wine,

Heart of Sappho, whence by Eros lyric melodies were
blent,

Where beat'st thou now ?

Happy billow, that didst ripple tenderly round Hero's
foot,

When Leander, faint from swimming, by the stormy
waves was rent,

Where flow'st thou now ?

Cast into the song your gaze, for there a mighty grave-
yard lies,

'Neath whose surface all the bodies of the gods by man
are pent,

There weeps he now !

Music in the Soul (1886)

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

Melancholy Serenade I

GRIEF ! that in my soul com'st stealing,
From violets that at night-time bloom,
And that like a glow-worm gleamest,
Soft in the summer's evening gloom,
Kindle within my heart a winsome lay,
Full of longing and of bliss,
And then within her kiss
Melt away !

Music in the Soul (1886)

Melancholy Serenade II

NAUGHT brings such grievous pain
As a flute with passionate strain,
When in the rosy glow of eve
The gleams of daylight wane.

'Mid trees the murmurs flow, •
In darkness lying low,
Saying : " O ye dreams of youth,
Ye fill my soul with woe ! "

And it laments and sighs,
In tender, moving wise,
As my belovèd, softly breathing
O'er my brow and eyes.

Hark ! the rushes render,
Accents dreamy, tender,
And they quiver, as 'neath kisses
Thy bosom in its splendour.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

They flow in sorrow blent.
Night is a flower ; there went
 From out its bosom, spreading languor,
A music-laden scent!

Naught brings such grievous pain
As a flute with passionate strain,
 When in the rosy glow of eve
The light of day doth wane.

Music in the Soul (1886)

Autumn has Come

THE leaves, once more dying,
 Are rustling and sighing.
Autumn has reached us on tip-toe tread,
O'er night he has come, in a mist-garment shrouded,
The hues he has softened, the sheen he has clouded,
'Neath his breath o'er the trees gold and purple have
 sped,
 And the leaves, that are dying,
 Are rustling and sighing.

I went from the park ; and the meadows were sodden,
Roots lay there scattered, grown sere piece by piece ;
The fallow-land waste, and the stubble untrodden,
 Save by a flock of cackling geese.

But afar by the wood in a silvery haze,
 Naught but a reaper was standing alone,
With a swing of his scythe,—not a sound did he raise,
 The last of the yellow^hued ears he had mown.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

And methought, as he mistily loomed in the brake,
That this was the autumn, that near to us drew,
Tears in the petals of asters to shake,
Cobwebs on every rafter to strew.

That the autumn it was, that on tip-toe drew nigh,
And lo ! as the scythe he did flourish and bend,
Clearly I heard, from the sheaves came a sigh :
I am autumn and death and decay and the end.

The leaves, once more dying,
Are rustling and sighing.
Autumn has reached us on tip-toe tread,
The casket of old recollections he clasped,
And ribbons, and leaves that are withered he grasped ;
But out of the heart, gold and purple have sped,
And the leaves there are dying,
Are rustling and sighing.

Bitter Seeds (1889)

Walt Whitman

WHO art thou ?—But an atom, quick with song.
What wilt thou ?—Naught.—Where flee'st thou ?
—Back again
To her in whom for ages I had lain,
Ere wonder bore my dreaming soul along.

What see'st thou ?—All, as merged amid one lay.
What creed fulfill'st thou ?—Righteousness and toil.
Thy comrade ?—All!—Whom meetest thou in broil ?—
All men are right, to whomsoe'er they pray.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

What rat'st thou highest ? Boundless liberty !—
Thou fear'st not death ?—'Tis life in other guise.—
What reck's thee fame ?—Less than an insect's drone.—

Thy laws ?—My will can fashion them for me.—
Thy joy ?—To watch creation's billows rise,
And take its visions for my spirit's own.

New Sonnets of a Recluse (1891)

Mournful Stanzas

LET on my brow thy hand so gently fall
That I be not aware how late it grows :
Moss decks the boulder, bloom-clad is the wall,
Through withered grave-yard wreaths a murmur goes,
When the November evening earthwards flows.
Let on my brow thy hand so gently fall
That I be not aware how late it grows.

Long have we gone together.—Go we still;
Not roses, but bare ivy give I thee ;
I sing not nightingales' but wood-birds' trill,
The child's lament that strays upon the lea ;
Thou knowest joy, I know but misery.
Long have we gone together.—Go we still,
Not roses, but bare ivy give I thee.

When roses fade, the ivy still is whole
And around graves it twines in faithful wise :
Till death uncages, as a bird, the soul,
Long do I crave to kiss thy faithful eyes.
When roses fade, the ivy still is whole,
And around graves it twines in faithful wise.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

Let on my brow thy hand so gently **fall**,
That **I** be not aware how late it grows ;
That, what we in long even-tides recall
Fill our remaining journey with repose ;
Thine eyes brought all the peace my being knows.
Let on my brow thy hand so gently fall,
That I be not aware how late it grows.

Life and Death (1892)

Marco Polo

I MARCO POLO, Christian and Venetian,
Acknowledge God the Trinity and cherish
Hope of salvation in eternity
For my sin-laden soul: In this my faith,
In this my trust is set. What of my love,
Ye ask ? And I give answer tranquilly :
My love is long and distant journeys ; ever
New-found horizons, new-found peoples, fresh
Exploits on ocean and dry land, and ever
Fresh enterprises. (This, my forebears' blood)
Much have I seen, to much have given ear ;
I reached the land, whereof ye scarce have inkling,
Where amber grows like golden foliage,
Where salamanders (that ye dub asbestos)
Blossom and blaze like lilies petrified,
Where glowing naphtha gushes from the earth,
Where there is equal wealth of rubies, as
Of holly here in winter ; where across
Their back and on their shoulders they tattoo
The image of an eagle ; where the women
Alone rule, and the men are given up
From **birth to** heavy service till they die.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKÝ

I gazed upon the realm whose ruler is
Khan of Cathay ; and I have sat at meat
With those who feed on men : I was as a wave
Amid the surf : the mighty emerald
(Pre-destined for the vizier of Bagdad)
Beneath my tongue I carried through the desert,
For thirty days and nights I came not down
Out of my saddle. I have seen great deserts
Like ruffled raiment billowing afar ;
The ocean sleeping underneath the moon
Like a stiff winding-sheet ; strange stars ablaze
Beneath strange zones. I visited the realms
Of Prester John, where goodness, virtue and
Righteousness ruled, as in a legend,—yea,
Now meseems almost that I even reached
The wondrous nook of earth, where Alexander
Once lighted on the wilderness of Ind,
And came no farther on his way, because
Of mighty downpours that abated not.
(Perchance upon the faery realm he there
Set foot, or e'en upon the town celestial,
And shrank away in dread, when at the gate
An angel put a skull into his hand,
Saying : "A few more years, and this shall be
Thy portion,—this, and not a tittle more ! ")
And I beheld that land of mystery
Where lay the paradise of earth, where flowed
The spring of youth, concealed within the grass
Amid a thousand others, whence I drank
From many, and, 'tis very like, from youth :
And therefore all endured I with acclaim,
And therefore all, as in a mirror, I
Perceive within my soul, and now portray it.

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

The world is changed of aspect: I shall die
Like others, but my heritage remains :
The lust for seeing all and learning all,
To ransack all for the delight of man ;
Legion shall be my sons : they shall proceed
Farther than I, but scarcely shall see more,
For earth sheds wonders as a snake its skin.
Old age I know, with many dreams and secrets,
And that suffices me. And they who come
After me, let them take, as it may chance,
Of what remains to them, as best they can,
As I did. I sit foremost at the feast
Of distant journeys, and it likes me well,
All prospers me, and I fare well with all.
To make all life a vigil over books,
To rack one's brain 'mid piles of yellow parchments.
Seeking the truth of writing and of thought,
Is much, in sooth ; to live an age in camps
'Mid roll of drums and trumpets in assaults,
O'er ramparts in a rain of missiles, in
Ruins of towns, amid laments of women,
Weeping of children, groaning of the fallen,
Is much, in sooth ; to be a holy bishop,
Legions of spirits to escort to heaven,
(The which he knoweth not) by solace of
The faith alone, and by the word of God,
In marble and in gold to hearken to
The cadence and the dreamy grief of psalms,
Is much, in sooth ; but to behold and know
With one's own eyes the distant, ample lands,
And oceans, plains and star-tracks of the skies,
And divers folk, their habit, usage, gods,
This too, availeth something, and hath charm

JAROSLAV VRCHLICKY

By special token of its newness, that
Doth ever change. And I have savoured this,
I, Marco Polo, Christian and Venetian.

New Fragments of an Epic (1894)

The Rose

IT was in May, 1283.

Near the centre of the Via del Corso, which then formed the mid-point of Florence, opposite the house of the baker Folco Portinari, stood a youth of slender build, clad in closely-fitting black attire, such as in those days was the customary garb worn by bachelors of arts.

He had been standing there for a long time, and it was clear that he was expecting somebody. The golden springtide sun bathed the street in a sea of radiance; the air, of unusual freshness, did not yet gleam with the deep azure of summer, but there was something remarkably dreamlike in its tender billows, which clung to the pointed roofs of the patrician houses, to the towers and domes of the bewitching city. On high, hovered what seemed to be the singing of invisible birds, from time to time the pleasancess and gardens resounded with the solemn rustling of bushy trees, and then again prevailed a dreamy stillness full of unutterable springtide grace and captivating magic. From time to time there glided along the street the brother of some monkish order, with his hands piously crossed upon his breast, with a rosary upon a white cord about his waist; he glided like a shadow which served to intensify the alabaster-tinted wings of the pigeons which flew in whole clusters from the cornice of the Signoria, softly and

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shyly, as if they did not wish to disturb the city plunged in the golden springtide dream of its siesta.

Wrapped in his mantle, the youth stood like a statue, fixedly gazing upon a blossoming rosebush in front of the house. The roses were large and rich in enchanting beauty and dazing fragrance.

At this moment a man, likewise dressed in black, wearing the apparel of a rich patrician, approached along the street with solemn gait and bowed head ; in his hand he held a small scroll, which he conned at intervals, smiling to himself the while. At about two paces from the youth he stopped, crossed his hands upon his breast and observed him intently. For some time, the youth did not perceive himself observed, but at last he shook aside his brooding, stretched out his hands and strode up to the new-comer.

" My Guido," he exclaimed and involuntarily clutched at the scroll which the other had just been reading.

" Not so quickly, Durante/" replied the man addressed as Guido, and elusively he raised the scroll above his head, as if he wished to provoke his friend, " not so quickly."

" You know I am burning with desire," urged the youth.

" Of course ; lovers always blaze with desire," remarked Guido deliberately, as if he were quoting.

" You are mocking me."

" Nay, friend, but I do not know whether my answer will content you. My views about love are other than yours and Coni's——"

" And than those of Dante da Maiano," added his friend. " I know, I know. But in the name of God, give it here. It is your answer which will interest me

most of all. Here——" he thrust his hand into his side-pocket, " you have the answer of Dante da Maiano. I am almost offended by the manner in which he speaks about love. So basely, like the level of his soul's outlook. All the more do I yearn for your answer." And again he clutched at his friend's parchment.

But Guido Cavalcanti firmly held the parchment above his head, and with a frowning countenance he declared:

" Stay, my Durante, stay. My answer will not content you either. How many of us are faithful in our love, and how differently each one conceives it! Cino with mere caprice, Dante da Maiano with blunted senses, you with glowing heart, and I , — I with cold reason. My highest aim in love is philosophy. That is the sweet master who rules me: *Ecce deus fortior me* !—which of us possesses the-truth ? "

" Your answer, your answer, I am aflame with impatience," exclaimed his friend.

While Guido Cavalcanti was handing his friend the answer to his sonnet, the door of Folco Portinari's garden opened, and from it departed two elderly matrons of solemn and severe aspect, grey haired, in rich but simple attire. Behind them in the street appeared a girl of slender form, arrayed in the whitest of gowns, with her head slightly bowed, with a delicate touch of pink in her pale translucent face. She stepped between the two matrons, and in their midst she passed along the street.

The two friends stood aside and awaited them with a deep bow of reverence. The two matrons returned the greeting rather haughtily and coldly, but the girl inclined her lovely head deeply, as though beneath the weight of its beauty, and a richer flush tinged her countenance,

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at that moment resembling the most beauteous rose upon the bush which she was just passing. Only for a moment, with the shyness of a doe, did she raise her unfathomably deep eyes of dark blue, and then with deliberate step and bowed head she went on her way between the two matrons.

" So modest is my lady and so dear/' whispered Guido Cavalcanti's friend, trembling almost with awe and sacred dread.

The older and calmer of the two was likewise moved, and laid his hand upon his friend's shoulder, sadly repeating the last words of one of his sonnets :

" Sigh ! she calls unceasing to the soul."

He then hastily turned away into a side street.

Durante Alighieri stood in silence, his gaze fixed upon the heavenly apparition. Behold, yonder at the end of the street, that "*creatura bella bianco vestita*" was gliding like a radiant lily between the grey stems of a fading reed. She bore herself like a striding flame, and it seemed as if all the beauty of that springtide scene, all the old-world aspect of the pondering city, all the radiance and lustre, all the fragrance and brightness, were only a frame from which she stepped smilingly, with that delicate flush in her face, with that tenderness in her deep eyes, with that compassion which belong to heavenly and infinite love. At that moment all the bells in the church near by began to chime, and a frightened swarm of white pigeons flew out like a cloud of white roses above her head, vanishing in the grey portal of the cathedral, the stonework of which seemed to quiver in the golden air as she crossed its threshold.

" *Ecce dens fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur*

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mihi," whispered Dante Alighieri as in an ecstasy, standing ever in the same spot and fixing his gaze at the end of the street.

" Ah, Messer Durante/' said a voice behind him, " what is the canzone for which you are seeking the final rhyme ? "

Thus addressed, he started like one who has been suddenly aroused from sleep. Before him stood the pattern of a complete fop of that period. In his hand he held a large nosegay and he carelessly swung his dagger in the richly ornamented girdle.

" Messer Simone, God be with you ! In truth, I was seeking no rhyme ; it is not my wont, for it comes before I require it, and not singly, believe me."

" But your pride is well known, you will not admit it. Yet I know that, if need be, you will spend a whole night over a single sonnet/'

" You may be right, but over a sonnet already written/'

" Already written,—truly I do not understand. What is written, is written,—what else remains then ? I would rather ponder my whole life over something unwritten."

" That, too, I can well conceive, Messer Simone. You see our paths lead in different directions/'

" You are right,—you are seeking rhymes here, and I have been commissioned to fetch Bice from church and accompany her home ; I will just pass for a moment across the square and then I will go to the church doors. That would serve for a canzone, Messer Alighieri."

" You—are commissioned ?—And by whom ? "

" By her, by Bice, daughter of Folco Portinari. The word is now mine, messer trovatore, I am meeting her as a bridegroom, as a bridegroom. Farewell, signor, farewell. When you find that rhyme, think of me."

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Dante was no longer listening to him. An ocean of gloom engulfed him. He heard a wild roaring, as if the earth had opened. Oh, if it would but consume him. But in its hardness and cruelty it would not. The trees around him rustled solemnly, the roses continued to blossom, the pigeons fluttered as before from the cornices, the air was radiant, glittering and fragrant. Only within him was there an abyss, darkness of night, tumult. He did not know how long he had been standing there, holding the answer of his friend Guido Cavalcanti, still unread,—the answer for which he had so yearned.—What of that ?—now he had his answer.

Footsteps, voices and laughter interrupted his ponderings. She was returning from the church at the end of the service. Again she walked white and radiant, but no longer between the two matrons, who kept behind ; she went in front, and at her side swaggered and strutted Simon de Bardi, who had spoken with him a short while ago. And now his speech was again all jest and mirth, and she was holding his nosegay in her hands with a slight smile ; the two matrons walked in a stately manner behind them with feelings of motherly pride. Now they were quite near the poet, and their talk sounded louder and more provocative. Dante wished to slip away, but he had not the strength,—moreover it was too late.

" What happiness to walk with you," twittered Messer Simon, " how shall I live after it ! "

" I know not whether it is really so great," she replied modestly.

" Do you desire proofs ? " he asked challengingly.

" To be happy when happiness comes,—anyone can do that," came the sound of her voice, and the poet felt

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how a tear trembled in it, " but in one's happiness to remember the unhappy,—this is a greater art,"

" I do not understand you, signora. Whom am I to remember ? "

At that moment they stood before the house by the bush full of blossoming roses.

" Those who suffer, Signor Bardi,—those who suffer," she said softly.

Then she plucked the loveliest rose and before Messer Simon was aware of it, she had handed it to the poet with eyes downcast and yet full of grace and endless compassion.

She did not utter a word,—nor he either. They entered the house, and he in the street pressed to his lips the fiery rose richly in blossom, which her eyes had hallowed with a tear of heavenly grace and endless compassion.

And young Dante Alighieri stood a long, long time in the street before the house of Folco Portinari, the baker. He gazed fixedly at the rose, first of all dully, without thoughts, in throes of unutterable grief, later he distinguished its whorls, the petals turning one amid the other in delicate spirals, and his alert, winged spirit descended upon them deeper and deeper, his dark mood worked so potently within him that the rose vanished from his sight, and only the spirals remained, ever waning, whirling, descending into an unknown abyss, dread and sinister. At that moment his brain was haunted by a vision of hell upon the rose, the hell of torments through which he had passed ; it gained in shape and aspect and in this rose opened its chasm before him. And meanwhile his tears trickled upon the rose, hot as molten lead, scorching as the downpour of brim-

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stone upon Sodom and Gomorrha. But also purifying and uplifting. In the reflection of the tears it seemed to him that the fierily blood-red rose blanched in his hands, that it gleamed with a snowy light, and by a twist of the whirlwind in his dream he saw how the rose grew, continually grew to giant dimensions, grew to a radiant rose of the empyrean, where every petal was a saint's throne, where the centre was a fiery eddy, where abides that love by which all stars are set astir. And near the centre of a petal arose that "*creatura bella bianco vestita*" and came towards him, holding a wreath of unfading laurel, whose leafage rings through stars and universe like the clamour of multitudes and the tempest of falling waters. Holy, holy, holy,—Hosanna and Alleluja of endless and countless angel choirs.

And pressing the rose to his lips, he divined in his soul the first outlines of his mighty poem which alone helped him to endure treachery of love and native land ; and he knew not that past him went a young man, a painter, who seeing him with a rose in his hand and in a state of deep emotion, also stopped to imprint upon his soul the mighty image of him which he might bequeath to coming ages.

And that painter was Giotto.

Coloured Fragments (1892)

MARTIN KUKUČIN

MARTIN KUKUČÍN (pseudonym
of Matěj Bencúr)

1860-1928 (Slovak)

The Recruits

1

"WELL, so it's morning already. I wish to God it didn't shine on me," thought Mišo Dzúrik to himself, as he woke up. His head was tousled and the confusion inside it was like a Jewish huxter's den. " And why is the bed turning round with me ? Ugh, what a taste there is in my mouth, ugh ! "

He tried to stand up, but one foot went to the left and the other to the right. Both of them were shaky.

" Brr," he shivered, making a wry face. " I do feel ill."

The previous evening, far into the night, he had been at Moses' tavern. They had had something to eat, it was supposed to have been goose ; there had been a lot of drinking and even more smoking. It was this which had left the taste in his mouth and the confusion in his head.

" I suppose I had better get up, if it must be. Well, here goes, then." He yawned and eyed the clothes which he was to put on. They were such as he wouldn't have stolen from a scarecrow. The trousers were one mass of patches, while on the jacket the lining shone through.

" Have you got up yet, Mišo ? " came the sorrowful voice of the distressed woman who had just entered the room. She was short, reaching scarcely to Mišo's shoulder. Nobody would have believed that this tiny woman had given birth to such a giant, and had nursed him at her breast. " Haven't you had any sleep yet ? "

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Miso's face puckered up still more when he saw his mother before him. "I don't need any more sleep, mother. I slept well and I've woke up. I wish to God I hadn't woke up," he added in a churlish voice, as he cast a sullen glance at her.

"Why are you angry?" she reproached him tremblingly. "I am not to blame, am I?"

"Who is, then? Perhaps I am, eh?" he replied in a tone of disapproval. He saw that it wounded her to the heart, but some evil spirit whispered to him: "Good, that's it. When you are suffering, let others suffer, too." And he added: "Why aren't I a cripple, like Jan Rybar, or half-witted, like ..."

"Don't rail against God,—it was His will," she was about to admonish him, but the words stuck in her throat. Her heart was aching as if somebody had seized it with a pair of tongs. "How good, how obedient he was to me, and he has become like this. Will he always be so?"

She returned to the kitchen to unburden her heart by weeping. But she found no tears to efface this grief.

When she came back, MiSo was already dressed. But what a change. Yesterday in fine holiday clothes, to-day in frayed, dirty rags, like a vagabond.

She placed on the table a plate of noodles with warmed-up milk. His favourite dish. From the plate was wafted a pleasant smell of milk and pepper. Miso did not even look at it. He sat down and sank into oppressive and mournful thoughts.

"Why don't you eat?" she asked him.

"I've had enough to eat," he answered stubbornly, roughly.

"But you've scarcely eaten anything at all. The

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whole week you've been starving yourself. You'll be ill."

" I don't want to eat," he retorted sullenly. He liked being able to act like that; never mind if it at once upset his mother. He looked at her as she sat there, subdued, crouching as if she were about to collapse. Perhaps he felt sorry for her, perhaps he was urged by a real need, when he said: " If you want to do me a favour, go into the pantry and fetch me a nice plate of soup. Some cold cabbage soup would suit me best."

His mother, delighted that she could at least do something for him, trotted off to the pantry. But while she was ladling out the cabbage soup, the thought occurred to her: " Oh, God, he's going to-day. God knows when I shall see him. There'll be a war, they'll kill him ; disease will come and overpower him. And when he's dying, he'll complain of his mother: ' She fed me on cabbage soup.' " She would have poured it back, but then she was afraid he would complain that she begrudged him even cold cabbage soup.

" But it's cold, it's no good. I'll warm it up for you. I'll stew a little bacon in it. Such cold soup is no good." She tried to make her voice sound more cheerful. She waited to see whether her son would at least consider her suggestion.

" Give it to me as it is. I don't mind if it is cold. Bacon's all right for you." He was very glad that he could refuse his mother's wish.

She stood by the fireplace and looked fixedly at her son. She looked, not only with her downcast, tear-stained eyes ; with her whole motherly heart she looked at him ; every fibre of her heart trembled with sorrow and hope that he would comfort her. She felt as if her

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heart were being torn to pieces and destroyed piecemeal. And her son sat down at the table, drank up the cabbage soup, and possibly did not notice what was happening to his mother. And if he did, he was glad that she, too, was suffering because of him. He was not sorry for her distress, fear, heartache and hope, any more than we are sorry for the worm which we have trodden under foot. If it writhes, let it writhe; why should I step with care on account of a worm ?

Who would not be sorry for Mišo ? A nice, well-behaved, attractive lad. Suddenly he had to reconcile himself to the idea of being away from home for three years. Ah, the feelings that seethed in his mind ! He had needed much self-control before he could hide them behind the surly answer which he had flung into his mother's face.

Well, what was that compared with his mother's grief ? She was losing a part of her very existence. It was as if her soul were being wrenched apart. Since her son had been called up, there had not been a moment when she had forgotten her grief. Every moment brought her fresh grief, fresh torment.

" What will he be like when they send him back to me, and will they even send him back ? / " That was the most dreadful thought. " Why, even now he's changed, and he has not been away yet. What will he be like afterwards ? "

And these were no empty misgivings. For old Mariena had seen more than once how sons who had been good, industrious, honourable citizens before they went, had returned as malicious, uncouth, conceited time-expired soldiers, filled with subversive ideas, scoffing at everything that they used to love and revere. Who could

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reassure her that her son would not be one of these, or that he would keep to the good principles which she had instilled into him from childhood ?

More than once she pondered in the night when she could not sleep : What is this army ? All sorts of things she pondered over, seeking explanations and excuses, but finding only one conclusion : The army is the scourge of God upon us, it is evil. . . . Ah, if she had the power, assuredly there'd be none of it. She pondered : Who has any benefit from it ? She could think of no such person. She pondered : Who would object if it were proposed to abolish the army ? It always seemed to her that the whole of mankind would breathe a sigh of relief if the army were to disappear from the face of the earth. The soldiers would joyfully throw away their arms ; mothers and sons would joyfully welcome each other in their homes ; the citizens would exult at not having to pay any more taxes for it. Was it, then, superfluous ? What was it for ? And then she saw that the army took the place of justice. Where justice is lacking, there an army has to be. When justice begins to rule, at that moment the army will be no more.

" Oh, where are you, justice, where ? " she cried, as she despairingly tossed to and fro in her bed. " When will your rule begin ? "

Everywhere muteness, everywhere stillness. Not the faintest ray of justice showed itself on the broad, distant horizon.

" Are you up already ? " came the sound of some third person's voice beneath the window. Mišo said nothing and did not even look out of the window. Not that it would have been of any use, for it was not yet light outside, and he would have seen nothing.

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" Yes," his mother answered.

" Good-day to you."

" Welcome, Ondrejko. Come in and sit down," begged the housewife in a friendly voice, exerting herself to greet him with a smile which was very pitiful to see. The new-comer was a tall man with an open, cheerful countenance which was dominated by a Roman nose and two large, smiling eyes. Under his arm he held a parcel, which he at once placed on the table.

" What have you brought us ? "

There was no doubt that the housewife was pleased by this visit, as could be seen from the fact that with her apron she wiped the chair on which Ondrej was to sit. And in truth, his face was not merely expressive—no uncommon thing for a peasant,—but it also aroused confidence. There was something about his expression which made people confide in him.

" Well, you know why I've come. Here you are, already up, and this is what I've brought you. The mayor sent it to Miso."

She untied the knot, and two pairs of pants became visible. The needlework was quite new and it was fine, ironed material. Besides these, there were six pocket-handkerchiefs and a purse, also new, made of leather and nicely ornamented. Noticeably, it was not empty.

" Well, I never! " exclaimed the housewife, and her words expressed both admiration and gratitude. The whole matter greatly moved her, and compelled her to forget all her trouble and to indulge in more pleasant feelings. " Tell the mayor, Ondrejko, that we thank him for all his kindness."

" Don't mention it. It's only what you're entitled to."

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It was the custom for the parish to show its appreciation in this way to the recruits when they were on the point of leaving for their regiments. This was a survival from the times when the parishes were obliged to enlist a fixed number of soldiers. They did this by means of feasts and all kinds of gifts. The mayor still had unrestricted authority to arrange feasts for the recruits and to make them presents. There was nobody living in the town who would have raised any objection to this.

And this in itself produced an agreeable impression on the housewife. She saw in it a proof that she was not deserted in her sorrow, but that the whole parish shared her feelings.

Mišo sat down and scarcely looked towards the mayor's gift. The arrival of the captain reminded him that time was short, and that before long he would have to be making a start. It occurred to him how well-off he had been, ever since his childhood, under the care of his mother and father. To-day he would have to leave all this,—a whole ocean of feelings arose within him and began to surge up. He clenched his teeth and gave a sullen glance into the corner as if he were in a rage. He started back in alarm when he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was the captain's.

"Don't feel upset, Miso," said the captain in his ringing voice. "The army is no picnic, but on the other hand it isn't altogether hell. I know, because I've served my time in it. If a man's all right, he gets on well wherever he is. A man with a contented mind can sleep the night on a rock, like Jacob in olden times, and he won't notice that it's hard,—he'll even say how comfortable it is. At first you'll find it goes against the

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grain, but then you'll think to yourself : I shan't be here for ever, and in three years I shall go back home. And if you do as you're told, you won't be badly off, even there. And then they'll let you go before the three years are up if they find they don't need you. Not that you'll be so keen on getting home by that time. Why, you'll be sorry to see the last of the army."

With a bitter expression on his face Mišo listened to the captain's words. He did not believe what he heard. For he knew from experience that there was not a single fellow wept when he returned from the army,—on the contrary, they sang. There was not a single one who had thrown himself into the water because he had to lay aside his tunic. But how many were there who sacrificed their lives rather than have to put on uniform ? He knew that if it were a good thing, there would be no need to force people into it. Nobody would give feasts to those who enlisted, nobody would look at them pityingly, nobody would comfort them and try to cheer them up. And the captain would not have come to him at sunrise if he really believed what he was now saying.

" And you won't find so much trouble in getting used to it," continued Ondrej. " If you were to enlist all by yourself, I won't say that it wouldn't make you feel unhappy. But, you silly fellow, you won't be by yourself. Why, from our village alone there's Mato Horniák. And how many from the other villages ? Don't be afraid that you'll feel unhappy. You'll forget us. Why, you'll imagine that you were born in the barracks, and that it's your home and your village."

Mišo was staring into the corner and did not turn his eyes away. He was only half listening to what the captain was saying to him. " What does it matter to

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me that several of us'll be there, if all of us aren't there ? " he thought. " I shall be there and shan't know what's going on in the village. And the people here'll be working in the fields, driving the oxen, flicking their whips, having sing-songs, courting the girls, going on rambles, sitting in front of the house, or strolling through the village with reed-pipe and harmonica. Zuzka Luptak will get tired of waiting for three years,—who knows what she will do at carnival times ? "

The mother looked to see how her son was taking what the captain had said. She was watching for some glance from him which would reveal to her that the boy was still hers, even if not entirely, as in his childhood, at least just a little. Was no feeling astir within him, and would he not let her have at least a word, at least a glance ? But she perceived nothing of that kind. Her son's thoughts were wandering in other worlds where they would never meet with her. She hung her head and wiped away her tears. She felt as though she had to lay him in the coffin and close the lid upon him.

" Don't be afraid that you'll be miserable," Ondrej comforted him. " Whatever you need for yourself, inside or out, the Emperor'll supply it. He looks after the soldiers. He considers every soldier as his own son. Why, he'll even call you his children and his lads. Oh yes, he's fond of the soldiers. Every year you'll get a new tunic, so that the whole world'll envy you when you go for a walk in the town. And you'll smoke your cigar, too, just like a gentleman. And when the band turns out and starts playing, why, every vein in you will thrill, and just when you could scarcely move, you'll straighten yourself up and march away in step. And you'll even sing on the march."

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The captain grew warm at the memory of military life, he straightened his back and his eyes shone.

Mišo gave him a fleeting glance and then continued to stare sullenly into the corner. "What does it matter to me? I've never suffered any hardship at home. And if any did come my way, I didn't have to put up with it alone; father and mother shared it. And why should Jano Rybar envy me? And why should the others envy me? They'll get married and will work peacefully in the fields, and won't have any hardships. Even if there are a hundred bands playing to me, that won't be freedom. To have no freedom for three years is worse than being in prison." At this thought his heart-ache was such that he could not breathe for very anger. He went outside.

"Oh, Ondrejko," exclaimed the housewife, when she was left alone with the captain. "My heart is near to bursting. What will become of me when he is no longer here. Oh, my dear son, where have you gone to?" She hid her face and wept.

The captain had more than once been witness of such scenes as this. They were repeated every autumn. His heart had become proof against such outbursts of emotion, and his firm opinion was that the tears which were shed for the recruits were the result of sheer prejudice. He himself would not weep even if he had to accompany his own son to the regiment. He knew that it was nothing so very terrible. There was plenty of bad luck about which we made less fuss. Weren't there enough other troubles we had to bear? And we resign ourselves to them when we see that it has to be so.

"Don't cry, Mariena," he coaxed her. "It'll do you no good, and you'll only make things harder for yourself

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and for him, too. Don't worry ; he'll come back to you. And he'll learn, he may become more clever, and you'll find him better than ever before."

" It's not that so much I'm crying about, since it's got to be. What makes me unhappy is that his heart has fallen away from me. He'll never be the same to me as he used to be."

" Yes he will," declared Ondrej with conviction. " His heart clings to you, but he can't let you see it."

" Why not? "

" Because he's a soldier."

" Oh, what a curse that army is," lamented the mother and sank down on the seat.

II

Duro Gabany' also rose very early that morning. He fed his horses, mixing into their chaff more oats than usual. He combed them down until they were as glossy as a mirror. Every vein in them quivered impatiently. All they wanted was to leap and fly,—such were the steeds which Duro Gabany' owned. In the village they were nicknamed " The ladies." Perhaps because they were so proud, possibly also because Duro treated them with such consideration. He disliked harnessing them to a plough, and they were not used for dray-work. It had to be a grand wedding that he would agree to drive a carriage for.

Every autumn he would feed them and comb them, bedecking their manes with all kinds of ribbons and letting down their tails. This was how he conveyed the recruits to the railway station, and his heart swelled with pride to think that from no village was the transport on so grand a style as from OndraSovd.

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" Duro, harness your horses/" the captain shouted to him from beneath the window. " It's time to start/'

The captain did not go away, but helped Duro to saddle the " ladies." Duro pulled on his smock and mounted the carriage. The captain also took his seat in it. Rarely did he ride like this, and never so grandly except when the recruits were being taken away.

Mišo sat at the table fully dressed. He was wearing his worst garments. He looked like a prisoner. The room was full of people. All the relatives and neighbours had come to take their leave of him, and each one brought what he could. The room was quite festive. It seemed to Mišo as if it was a sort of holiday ; all were in their best clothes, he alone was ragged and unkempt. Would he ever see them again, all together like this ? They looked at him pityingly, as if they all wanted to comfort him. And those who were distant from him, to-day became closely attached to him. And in a short while he would no longer be among them,—he was going among strangers.

Old Mišo sat beside his son and said nothing. Altogether, the room was silent. Only now and then was a word or two spoken. It was like entering a house where a corpse had been laid out.

" Well, let's make a move," said the captain, coming into the room. " Duro's already waiting in front of the mayor's."

The room was immediately astir. Old Mišo pulled on his smock, took his cap and seized a creaking knapsack filled with cakes.

" Well then, God be with you. Let's go," said the old man, stroking back his long hair which straggled down to his chin.

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Miso put on his hat, and went from one to the other. They shook him by the hand, and each one added a few words of comfort and blessing. Thus he reached the stove where his mother stood, overwhelmed by mute grief.

" Good-bye," said Mišo, and gave her his hand. He did not look at her, but lowered his eyes to the ground. He wanted to impart a certain stubbornness and hardness to his voice.

" My darling son,—I shall never see you again."

She threw herself into his arms, and burst into a fit of weeping.

All kinds of feelings again filled his spirit with tumult. The pride which was within him crumbled to pieces. He clutched his mother's face into his hand. It was pale and full of wrinkles. Assuredly they had been thrusting themselves upon her of late. And some of the hair on her temples had become silvery.

" After all, it's your mother," said something within him, when he was looking into her face. " Look, how unhappy she is."

" Shall I ever see you again ? " he thought to himself, and great pity surged through his heart.

" Good-bye mother, I'll write to you." Tears leaped into his eyes.

She saw them. She perceived the emotion in her son's heart. She now knew for certain that he belonged to her, to her only. Joy filled her heart; that moment was the happiest of all that she had experienced. If only it would remain, remain for ever.

He moved away from her a little. She sprang after him, and seized him by the shoulder.

" Don't go yet, my child ; just one more minute."

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He pressed her to his heart, was about to say something, but his voice was smothered in his throat.

"Don't go, don't go from me yet."

She would have given all, her whole life to nestle against his heart only for a minute.

"Come on, leave her,—it only makes things worse," someone whispered to him. He saw the captain at his side.

He wiped his eyes, placed his mother on a seat and walked to the door. Once again he looked round the room. It struck him as strange that the next day he would no longer be there. "Will it be the same when I come back as it is to-day?" And he made up his mind that this should be his first thought on entering the house again.

He went out into the street. A crowd of people were standing and waiting. Some of them came up to him again, while others pityingly watched him from a distance. He stepped forward with his father and the captain; behind them was half the village. Among those who were accompanying them, some were quietly weeping, others were exchanging remarks in a whisper.

They reached the mayor's. There they found Duro Gabany; he was sitting in the carriage and smoking a cigar. The mayor, dressed in holiday garb, and standing on the bridge, was the first to greet Mišo and his father. Mišo again moved away a little from all the people who had accompanied him from home. And he approached the other crowd of people. There in the middle of them stood Mato Horniak and was shaking them all by the hand. Their eyes met; they took each other by the hand, without saying a word. Some of the women began to cry.

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They once more moved away from all the people, put their arms round each other's necks, and made their way up the village.

*" Behind the woods is the rising sun :
From Ondrašova my joy has gone. . . . "*

Thus they went singing, as when a bride is led to her wedding. Behind them their fathers and closest relatives.

They reached a house which was still almost new, and the pathway to the courtyard led steeply uphill. The house stood silent, nobody was looking out of the windows, and the doors were shut.

" Just go on ahead. I'll catch you up," said Mišo to Mato, and slipped away from the clutch of his arms. He ran up to the gate, opened the door and crossed a high threshold. He closed the door and stood still. Zuzka was standing behind the door. When she saw him, she covered her face with her apron.

" Zuzka, I'm going now," he said to her, and his voice trembled. Don't forget me, like the others. . . . "

He waited, but received no answer. He drew her hand from her face and saw that she was distressed and tearful. The knowledge of all he was losing that day weighed oppressively upon his spirit. What a long time it would be before he again looked into her face, from which an undivided heaven had smiled at him.

" Don't cry, Zuzka,—I'll be true to you. In every letter I will greet you. . . . "

" What is that to me, if you aren't here ? " she lamented.

" It's hard for me, too. You are at least staying at home, and you'll be all right here. But I'm going among strangers."

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" Yes, I'll be at home. But I shall never know where you are and what you are doing, or whether you still... • Oh, it's so hard to bear. And suppose something happens to you there, or you give me up." Again she started crying. " How I have to suffer for the sake of our love."

" Don't be afraid,—I'll never, never give you up. And here's a keepsake that'll make you feel we're still together." He gave her a fine, coloured kerchief.

Zuzka took it without looking at it. She felt as if she were going to choke.

Mišo ran up the courtyard and entered the room. " The last time, I shan't be here for another three years," he thought to himself.

" I've come to say good-bye."

" So soon," they all asked, as if surprised. But it was clear that they had been counting the minutes till he came. For they were all at home, although there was hard work for them to do in the fields.

The master of the house gave Mišo his hand and pressed Mišo warm-heartedly. " God be with you. Do what is right and keep true to God."

" You won't forget me, will you ? "

" Never, while you don't forget. We look upon you as our son," the master of the house assured him. " And take this, it'll be useful to you." He pressed into his hand something wrapped in paper.

Mišo demurred, but the whole family pressed it upon him. He had to put it with the rest of the money in his purse. He had plenty,—he himself did not know how much; everybody except the mayor had brought him whatever he could afford. But it all seemed superfluous to him. He did not know that money has its value.

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The whole family accompanied him into the courtyard. There Zuzka was waiting. She was powerless as he pressed her to him ; with an aching heart he hurried out into the street. He stepped out briskly, for the carriage had already passed the precincts of the village. He could see nothing near him. He looked round only when he heard somebody shout to him: " Good luck, Mišo." It seemed to him that all this was an illusion, that he was dreaming. He rubbed his eyes and felt glad that it was only a bad dream.

But beyond the village he caught up Duro Gabaný's carriage. The reality was only too clear.

" We must get in now, or you'll arrive too late/" announced the mayor.

Mato and Mišo got in, with their fathers and the magistrate opposite them. They shook hands with the people outside, Duro whipped up the horses, and the carriage started off at a trot.

" If we were thrown out and got killed," thought Mišo to himself and he felt no dread at this thought. Fields slipped by, the soil upon which every clod was familiar to him. Trees and telegraph poles flashed past, as if someone were thrusting them back.

He looked round at the village once more. It stood amongst rows of trees, from which the leaves were already droppinzg; it stood there the same as always. Nothing had happened to it, and on the morrow it would be just as it was to-day. It struck him as queer that he would not be there. The people would be doing their work, just as on the day before, or at any other time. It would be standing here, but to him it would seem that it had moved away, that it was no longer in the world among the other villages. Life would be astir in it,

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would ebb and flow, just as if he were there, and perhaps nobody would miss him. Such pangs of grief clutched at his heart that he would have cried out if he had been alone. He would have cried out, and perhaps the load which had overwhelmed his heart would shift. But as it was, he sat there and took his fill of this grief. He would have sung, he would have started singing so as to move that stony burden, but it would be foolish to sing when nobody heard him, nobody was looking at him, except those who were being taken away with him, and who were likewise silent. . . .

They passed through villages. In almost every one of them they would have discovered the same scenes as had been enacted that day at Ondrašovd. And it was strange. From his carriage he looked at them as he had looked in the previous year. It seemed to him that what he had experienced to-day belonged already to the distant, distant past,—he was surrounded by a different atmosphere, a different life. Those scenes meant nothing to him.

They reached the town and adjourned to a tavern. The mayor ordered them to eat and drink to their hearts' content; he treated them to expensive cigars. Mišo felt as if he had been with his father at the fair; he forgot the village and the grief which had overwhelmed him when they were taking him away from home.

When they reached the station, they found a great crowd of people there. Most of them were young, like themselves, accompanied by older men with knapsacks, like their own fathers. The mayor moved away from them a little, and shook hands with some fellows holding long sticks and looking as jolly and rubicund as he was. These were mayors who had also brought their recruits.

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A bell began to ring. There was a general movement.

Mišo's heart started beating violently. Before him stood his father, who was tall, but whose head was bowed. All that he had supposed to have vanished long since, now arose before him again. He felt just as intense a grief as when he had taken leave from the village. It seemed to him that only now was the village being lost to his sight. His father embodied the whole village in his person, as it were.

" Good-bye, Dad. Remember me to mother and. . . ." He gave a gulp and laid his head on his father's shoulder.

His father clasped him to his side.

" Come now, don't cry. You'll come back safe and sound." Mišo looked at his father, and saw his grey eyes brimful of tears. " Don't be afraid; we shan't forget you, and we'll pray. . . ." Now his tears began to flow so fast that he could not wipe them away with his hand. " And take this,—here's some money for you. Look after it well. And take care they don't steal your knapsack from you." This he added in a casual, matter-of-fact tone. It did Mišo good to hear his father talk like that once more.

" Well, God go with you." And he took his son by the hand.

The mayor came up to him. During the last few days he had seen much of him and had come to like him. " Thanks, Mayor, for all you've done."

Old Horniak also gave him his hand. And he pressed it cordially. It seemed to him that this man was quite close to him, and indeed was a relative of his. Not at all the old Horniak to whom he had hitherto not given a second glance.

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" Get in. What are you gossiping here for ? You'll miss the train," shouted someone from the platform where the engine was whistling.

" *Beszallani ! Einsteigen !* "*

Mišo picked up his knapsack and scrambled along to the platform with the rest. When he had already passed the barrier, something seemed to thrust old Mišo forward. He pushed his way to the gate in his eagerness to shake his son's hand once more.

" Your ticket! Show your ticket! "

The old man looked round. A railway official stood beside him.

" I haven't got a ticket. I want to tell Mišo something."

" Clear off, don't stand in the way here," and he pushed him back with his elbow.

Mišo looked at the shabby underling and his cap with the " Ks. Od."f badge, and for the first time that day his blood became hot. A man who the day before was probably begging, to-day dared to show contempt for him, a respected citizen. He would have started an argument with him, but the stream of people pushed him aside.

He wanted to see his son once more.. It occurred to him that the train would pass the level-crossing on the high-road. He called the mayor and Gabany, took his seat with old Horniák, and off they started.

Mišo loitered with his knapsack on the platform. He had never travelled by train before ; he did not know where he was to sit.

* Magyar and German for " Take your seats/" [Tr.]

f Magyar : Kassa—Oderbergi vasut (Kosice-Bohumin Railway). [Tr.]

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" Recruits this way!" shouted someone from a carriage at the very end of the train. He had a military cap with a green pine-branch behind it. " This way, boys,—there's plenty of us going/

They got into the carriage, which would scarcely hold them. There were whole piles of bundles in the corners. The smoke was so thick that it could have been cut, and it smelt like a tap-room.

" That's right, come along in. Are you joining your regiment, too ? " said the one with the cap.

" Yes. Thanks very much."

" Good. Take a seat."

A few of them laughed at the joke, for there were no seats in the carriage. Others stared mournfully in front of them.

" Here are some pine-branches. Now everyone can see we're soldiers."

Mišo and Mato put the pine-branches behind their hats. They could not help admiring this man who managed to be cheerful at so dreary a moment.

*" Over the hills and far away,
Sweetheart,'tis for you I stay"*

He began to sing in a powerful, but somewhat hoarse voice, and a few chimed in with him.

Mišo pressed his face against the window and stared at the platform. He scanned the crowd of men who stood behind the barrier. He did not see his father among them.

" He's gone ; he didn't wait to see me off." A boundless grief took possession of him. Never had he felt so intensely the meaning of loneliness. It seemed to him unnatural not to see his father near him. " Will it

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always be like that ? " He could not believe that he could survive three years without a living soul from home.

" So they didn't wait to see me off." He regarded it as something very sinful. If he had seen him at least once more, if he had at least waved to him. . . .

The bell began to ring. The trumpet hooted.

*"Mehetl"**

The engine whistled, puffed, panted, and the platform with the station buildings moved backwards. The faces of the bystanders became blurred.

Mišo stayed by the window and looked at the town. There was the high-road along which they had driven to the town. And there was the very carriage. He could distinctly recognise Gabaný's " ladies " by the ribbons twined into the horses' manes. And there, too, standing up in the carriage, was old Mišo with old Hornidk waving their caps. He took off his hat and flourished it in the air. His father caught sight of him, attracted his attention and smiled at him. Ah, what a good father he was ! God bless you for coming to see your son off.

" Good-bye, father/" sighed Mišo and his tears began to flow.

The train moved round a bend and the carriage suddenly disappeared. Mišo felt as if his heart were bursting. He wouldn't have minded if he had slipped out of the window and fallen under the wheel.

" What, are you crying ? " shouted someone behind him. And a hand pulled his hat upside down.

Mišo turned round angrily to discover who the joker was. At that moment he could have *throttled him without hesitation. It was the same one who had given

* Magyar : " Right away I " [Tr.]

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him the pine-branch. His sprightly eyes smiled at Mišo and there was a little pity in them, too.

" Was that your father ? " he asked Mišo.

" Aye/" he answered sullenly.

" Yes,—not aye. From now onwards you'll always have to say yes."

" Well then, yes/" said Mišo for the first time in his life, and he felt more cheerful.

(1891)

K. M. ČAPEK-CHOD

1860-1927

$$x^n + y^n = z^n$$

MAX HLOUBA, a teacher of special subjects, stepped out on to the threshold of his villa,—it was really a bungalow for one family, which, when he had first built it, had aroused the scornful surprise, later the envious admiration of all those living on the outskirts of the town,—and was filled with enjoyment by the magnificent summer weather. It was the morning of one of those days which exist in the grace of God, and on account of which nature could almost be accused of ostentation if this display did not betoken such a kindly desire to induce man at least to sigh with bliss at the thought of how lovely the world sometimes can be.

And in good sooth Hlouba needed only this blithe morning, goldenly sunlit, to put the finishing touch to his happy mood. That day it had happened that when he had woke up before sunrise, an idea had flashed across his mind and fairly dragged him from his bed, the sudden arrival of a solution which would assuredly

result in the triumphant close of his mathematical labours, hitherto consisting only of vain endeavours. He had seized his pencil and immediately recorded the formula which had dawned upon him, after which he had begun to bestrew the paper with line after line, while feeling more and more delighted by the certainty that this time there was no mistake whatever. Suddenly, as if at the blow of a magic wand, in the granite rock, against which the mathematicians of the whole world had hitherto rasped their finger-nails till the blood flowed, there had been revealed to him an aperture which, though narrow as yet, though only a mere cranny, was already widening, and from it he would certainly be able to shape a victorious entrance where he would lay a mine which would hurl the whole rock into the air and thus rid the world of Fermat's problem, that bugbear of all mathematicians, whatever their nation or habitat.

He, Max Hlouba, a mere Czech teacher in Neznašov !* Beyond any doubt, this time beyond any doubt. Of course, it was perhaps not yet possible at one swoop to strip such a delicate veil as this from the truth, of course not. On the contrary, there was still quite a number of these veils, and what made it particularly difficult was the fact that they were all so fragile, that two could not be removed together, and unremittingly patient labour would be necessary before the last one was reached.

But the mere certainty that he was on the right track ; the happy, victorious certainty, and its realisation made it worth while to have been born and to experience such a morning as the present one when a man's only regret was that his embrace was not wide enough to begird the whole world. Was it really possible that the

* You-know-it-not. [Tr.]

world could be so beautiful? Assuredly, the same intuition which to-day had removed the mathematical purblindness from the eyes of his soul, had brushed against his bodily senses also, the result being that on this, of all days, he unexpectedly perceived the whole picturesque charm of his native Neznašov, the soft comeliness of the mountain azure. And, amazing to tell, not even the trill of the nightingale had ever stirred his heart as much as now the plain ditty of the little grasshopper, the "common locust" *Tettix subulatus*—Hlouba's special subject was natural science—jerkily strummed as if upon silver wires in a warm blade of grass within three yards of Hlouba. And it was all Hlouba could do not to utter a shout of exultation at the mere fact that the small window, from which a luminously flickering spark reached him as a flash reflected by the sun, was a fixture in a cottage on the lonely mountains, at least ten miles away from him in a direct line.

But his real and vitally justified enthusiasm was aroused by the prosaic slap of washing in the tub into which two active hands were suddenly thrust. They belonged to his adorable wife Stefka. She slipped out of the bedroom even earlier than he did, if, as to-day, she wanted to cope with all the work which the washing entailed—she had two children and no servant. If he wanted to say good morning to her, all he had to do was to dart round the corner to where Stefka had placed the washtub in a shady spot. Hlouba did so, and tumbled into his wife's arms so as to make her burst out into full-throated laughter, which sent the strawberry fragrance of her breath full into his face. Stefka, it must be said, was not beautiful, or rather, her whole beauty was contained in her fragrant freshness, the healthy tan of her

skin. Her face was without any rosy pigment, all of which had concentrated itself upon her lips which were ruddier than the cherry, while uprightness and a sparkling humour beamed from her dark eyes.

"Stefka, the game's won, I've managed it at last ! Fermat's* theorem that x to the n th plus y to the w th equals z to the n th can't be solved in whole numbers if n is greater than 2, is nonsense. There are co-efficients which. . . ."

"Oh, darling, I am so glad, but I am still more glad that you are well, that I am well, and especially that Stepanek and Maxinek are well."

She pointed to the perambulator in which the two twins were asleep in the health-giving air. They were alike as two peas and they might have been taken for a copy of one of those child-studies at which Mánes excelled.

"And what about those hundred thousand marks ? Couldn't we do with them ?"

Stefka knew about them, but she sighed :

"We shouldn't want as much as that to pay off the mortgage on the house. I should be quite satisfied if we had enough for that, and we should have it soon if you were to get that job in the bank."

"When I do get it, I'll fetch you a slice of the blue from the sky," exulted Hlouba.

* P. Fermat, the most famous French mathematician of the eighteenth century, in addition to other theorems, left behind him the statement that it is impossible to solve the equation $x^n + y^n = z^n$ in whole numbers, if n exceeds 2. "The remarkable proof" which Fermat claimed to have discovered was not handed down by him and mathematicians are still vainly trying to find it. As a result of a bequest by Wolfskehl, the Göttingen Learned Society a few years ago offered a prize of 100,000 marks for a proof or refutation of Fermat's problem.

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" I only wish it could be this very morning," retorted Stefka. " I could make very good use of a slice of blue sky. I want some blue for the washing just after lunch/'

And she gave one of her crystalline laughs.

" You'll see," he assured her as he gave her a hasty kiss. The castle clock in the town had just struck a quarter to eight; it was high time for him to start for school.

When he got beyond the palings he laughed aloud; he had only just seen the point of his wife's joke.

" Not at all bad, that about washing blue from the sky." He did not realise that there was a touch of bitterness about the joke.

From the perambulator a sound in the key of A was heard, and before the tempo could be indicated, Maxinek and Stěpdnek launched themselves upon a duet which could not be listened to for long. It became necessary to stop up simultaneously the mouths of the two food-seeking artists, and assuredly the wherewithal was not lacking.

At this moment of enforced leisure she gazed dreamily at the mountains and the flickering reflection of the far-away window caught her eye ; a grasshopper faintly chirped in a flower-bed; in the sultry hush could be heard the rising of the blade of grass which Hloubá had trampled under foot.

She felt perfectly happy, and she nearly fell into a doze, but she started up; above the cornfield by the last corner cottage of the town, a man moved to and fro flourishing a large sheet of paper which he pasted up on a wall and then another one, whereupon he departed.

He was a janitor from the town hall, who at other times was phlegmatic to the point of eccentricity and

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notorious for his slowness. At this moment the utterly tranquil township which had hitherto presented the appearance of being uninhabited, began to be animated with shapes rapidly running past the back-yards ; men shouted at each other across the fences in their gardens and fled along the verandas hastily slipping on their coats as they went. But why this long delay with the lire-alarm trumpet and gong ?

But it was not a fire ; the scared men did not escape into the town, but swarmed in front of the placard at the corner. The place was soon black with them and the din of their voices penetrated to where she was.

Urged by a fearful curiosity, Mrs. Hlouba ran along as soon as she had managed to lull the twins in the perambulator to sleep again, and she discovered what was the matter.

War. Mobilisation.

.

It was eight o'clock to the minute on the same day,—but a year later. Mrs. Hlouba was again sitting on the veranda and was nursing, not the twins, who were toddling in the grass before her, but their little brother who was only a few weeks old. Otherwise there had been no change; the wash-tub stood round the corner in the shade, even the reflection from the mountains had reached its eight o'clock gleam and Stefka in a dreamy mood was mournfully peering at it. There had been no change, and it was as if Max Hlouba, teacher of special subjects, had just gone off to school, although it was over six months since he had gone much farther away, when a placard, calling up his class, had duly made its appearance at the corner.

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It had not affected him greatly, for he had long previously lost all feeling for everyday, life. This had left him on the day when war had been declared. At noon he would come home from school and without taking his hat off he would sit down at his desk to his figures. Stefka's anguished reference to the events of the day was noticed only when it was emphatically repeated in the form of a question and disposed of with the brief remark :

" Then I can't afford to lose time. Every minute is infinitely precious and might even cost me a hundred thousand marks."

He took his lunch with pencil and paper and, in fact, he sacrificed every spare moment to his demon of a Fermat, for whose sake he, who till then had been a model teacher, began even to neglect his school work ; he would even get up at night and after he had lit the gas would go on scribbling until morning, when his wife would find him asleep, his forehead resting on his hands. But the most serious part of it was that his love for the twins, which hitherto had been unbounded altogether, suddenly dwindled away as if it had never existed.

When Stefka brought them along to wish him good night, all he used to say to them was : " That's right, that's right," and before he would raise his eyes from his figures and kiss the babies he had to be urged by the violent importunacy of their mother. It actually happened on one of these occasions that he confused Maxik with Stepanek, entirely forgetting the insignificant but unmistakable mark which distinguished his first-born. To all her reproaches and remonstrances, however gentle, he replied only by clenching his fists till the joints

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creaked, and by gnashing his teeth,—he had no time for words. She then had recourse only to tears, but in the end even they failed her, when one day he shouted at her in an abusive tone such as she had never heard from him before and never heard again. For if such was his way, he should not see her shed tears, though her heart were to burst. She turned to stone by his side, when she saw how stubbornly unfeeling he had become. And so now she took no notice when one day he rubbed his hands victoriously and at another time tore his hair,—it was all due to his cursed obliquity of vision.

It was an obsession, it was a fever which became more and more intense, the nearer the day upon which Max also was to enter upon his military duties. He carried out the preparations for this at the last moment with the greatest rapidity, violently wrenching himself from his mathematical paroxysm. Only at the time of parting did it seem that the solemnity of the moment had withdrawn the film of hypnosis from his eyes. Suddenly, with eyes starting out of his head, he stared at his babies in their swaddling clothes just as when he had first been shown them, long had he fixed his glance upon them and at last it was good-bye, and he went. It had seemed to Stefka also that for a moment his eyes had gazed at her as devotedly as they had done long before, but what was more important to him than anything else was a fresh insistence upon the instructions he had given about his scientific work and the continuation of it which he would be sending from the army. She parted from him without tears and without any danger that her heart would burst. It was only when she was left in solitude that she was assailed by an uncontrollable sorrow.

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Not even while on military service did he reveal any awakening of his heart. It is true that not a day passed without the arrival of a field service post-card from him, but every single one of them was covered with mathematical formulae, written with copying-ink pencil, and sometimes algebra was replaced by huge columns of figures, so that there was hardly enough time left for the writer to add any good wishes or the news that "everything is as usual," but what the "usual" was, Stefka never discovered.

The letters arrived without a hitch, for he himself was acting as censor.

Only when she informed her husband that "if God grants, you will find at least one more of us, dear daddy, when you come back; I only wish you could come back earlier" did she receive about five heartfelt lines, and as a proof of how undisguisedly heartfelt they were, there was a sort of large blot in which the conclusion of the letter dissolved into a bluish smear just at the point where he referred to the 100,000 marks, and about the journey which, thank God, was now unmistakably close to its successful termination.

Then more and more cards with more and more figures, some of which were underlined several times, instructions as to their safe disposal, till at last the cards had stopped coming, twelve weeks previously, shortly before the third heir to the name of Hloubá uttered his first cry, and she still did not know whether she was nursing a posthumous child or not.

Startled, Mrs. Hloubá stared in front of her. There, as if he had sprung from the earth, a messenger from the town hall, and the expression on his face recalled Stefka's mind from distant dreams to the immediate present,

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suddenly rousing her from her bemused and listless condition. He broke the distressing news to her considerately, and when he had gone there could be no further doubt,—she held the confirmation of the truth in black and white. Nor did this confirmation lack the seal of strictest authenticity, with which the last six field post-cards were fastened together; they were handed to the widow with a few trifles which had been left behind by the dead man. The post-cards had been in his breast-pocket when an enemy bullet entered his heart.

On the post-card it was not possible to decipher a word or a figure except the heading which was common to them all. " Conclusion of the proof of the untenability of Fermat's problem."

But the conclusion itself was utterly and hopelessly effaced in a smear of blue and red. Stefka Hlouba sat long over this last message from her husband, before her eyes released the scalding torrent which forms the outlet for all such tears as have been kept back for months at a time. She did not rid herself of them at once, nor even in a day, or a week, but nevertheless a point was reached when they grew less and were no longer so scalding, yet she felt no relief. One day, during the same winter, while clearing out her late husband's desk, she came across all his post-cards containing the unfinished proof of Fermat's theorem in a drawer where she had put them to await, now vainly, his return.

Suddenly her fingers clutched feverishly at the batch of papers, and when she had separated them from the cards bearing the traces of Max's tears and blood, she laid them aside. The rest she grasped resolutely and threw into the fire. Just as they were flaring up, she

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stretched out her hand, as if she wanted to save them.
But it was too late.

" And even if . . . no, not for a hundred thousand,"
she whispered to herself.

Not until the last of them had shrivelled up in the
flames, did Stefka sink on to her knees and press her lips
for the first time upon the last red trace which Max
Hlouba had left behind him in this world.

Ad hoc (1919)

ANTONÍN SOVA

(1864--1928)

Alder-Trees

YE alder-trees, to me how dear,
At eve, with fragrant coolness near,
When o'er the water bent alone,
Your shadow here and there was thrown.

Somewhere the fishers' voices trailing,
Within the depths of night are quailing ;
The mill-sails, as they rustle low,
Have stirred within me old-time woe.

Among the reeds a snipe, black speck,
The pond with ripples did bedeck ;
And likewise in my soul, meseems,
Has strayed the bird of golden dreams.

From My Country (1893)

ANTONIN SOVA

On the Hill-side

HERE is the sweetest grass-plot for a bed,
In softest lethargy to close the eyes,
On naught to brood, nor yearn, but let the head
Droop in the grassy couch. . . . Like wreckage flies
A huddled clot of clouds, that yonder soar
Behind the mountain's ridge. . . . All lulls thee here,
Insects adrone, grass, plant-stems bending o'er,
The flight of sluggish moths. . . . To thee appear
Gleams as from waters, with a radiant leap.
And by thy head there stands a calm unknown.
Thou feel'st 'tis wondrous with the dead to sleep,
For Earth has cradle-ditties of her own !

From My Country (1893)

Smetana's Quartette " From My Life "

I

OUT of the concert-hall, as I were drunken,
Amid the bustle of the throng I staggered . . .
The seats clattered, and the lamp-bulbs* muffled
Their bluish glimmer. Mingled fragrances
Floated above the jostle of living creatures
From shawls in which the ladies wrapped themselves . . .
Still in the practice-room the pizzicato
Of a violin sobbed tenderly near by
Beneath the player's finger ; he was flushed with
The tempest of applause ; with toying lilt
Echoing laughter shook ; a lackey's voice
Was hoarsely raised ; a girl's voice cooed and chirped ;

ANTONÍN SOVA

**And a broad stream of townspeople suddenly
Began to surge along the corridors
With carpet-muffled gait . . .**

The night was clear,
The azure frosty sky breathed on my face,
And piercing was the glisten of the snow.
There in a torrent from the staircase swayed,
Blurred masses of a motley city crowd.
Cabs clattered on and carriage doors were slammed,
Somewhere the ambling trot of horses faded,
Merged in bewildering hubbub of the streets.

II

O marvellous, O magical quartette,
Setting the soul astir as genius doth,
Urging the spirit on to manful endeavour !
The mighty breath of it is still with me ;
Ardour, youth's tempest, blitheness, melancholy,
Laden with wistfulness and pondering,
Dreams of young escapades, and delicate,
Winsome musters of words that brim with love,
Placid noblesse and then harsh storms again
Singly the strains unloosen in my soul :
And then, that note that ends itself in horror,
As if it were left hanging on a height . . .

in

He quitted life with wise submissiveness,
When he had heard but this one lofty tone,
When voice of friends he caught not, nor could hear
The thunder of the orchestra, nor had heard
Even if earth were riven with a crash,—

ANTONIN SOVA

He who heard not the tune of his own poor hands,
When the lights glowed above a marvelling throng,
He who heard not acclaim nor mockery,
But only with sorely ailing brain tracked all,
And to its time-beats let his baton swing
Above the busy giant orchestra,
And tracing out the agile and mute movements,
In sheer conception of the manifold strains,
He stood there in his dead, unmoving calm. . . .

IV

O master, master, this thy mighty song
Wherewith we go to trade in mighty marts,
With which we thrust our art upon a booth,
God's pity, is not completed, not completed,
In it is missing yet thy final outcry
Of one who in the midst of treacherous gloom
Is grappling with his dreadful malady,
And snatches convulsively at creative moods,
Snatches at moments in his soundless void,
Snatches at light in his dismantled brain,
And gropes for cadences, but on a sudden
They slink away like sullen, sneering lackeys,
Who pillage a palace, setting it aflame,
Abandon it and leave their master crazed
And in a fearful bankruptcy of mind
Stretched headlong in some room upon the floor. . . .

O master, in this deathless song of thine,
There is no whit of gibing at those dogs
Who dragged thee through their folly and abasement,
Setting a felon seal upon thy ruin,

ANTONIN SOVA

It utters no rebukes on those by whom
Thou wert from Göteborg welcomed with affronts,
O master, in this deathless song of thine,
The dreadful end of thy benighted brain
That dashed itself against a madhouse wall,
The ending of the end is missing there,
Tis missing there, 'tis missing there, O master,
My master, pardon, but 'tis missing there. . . .

A Shattered Soul (1896)

Bizarre Dream

I SPAKE unto her: " There is naught that we can
await from this Life,
Naught from this Earth, and naught from this Heaven
and naught from these Saints.
Loathsome to me are To-days where the Past hurls
mocking echoes,
Come thou with me, most precious, I wot of another
World, revealed to my spirit/'

And I spake : " Sever thyself from all and we will depart
(as though it were naught)
When thy mother sleeps and thy father is in the tavern
and when the city reeks of mire.
On tiptoe . . . I will fling away weapons, those that in
fever I seized on
For shielding of my head and thine . . . thus . . . now
I reject them for ever.

Thus beside me, fused with my sorrow and passion and
terror and ecstasy
Shalt thou go. But ward off memory of cowering mortals,

ANTONIN SOVA

These vermin with venerably outworn statutes,
Thou must abandon old Earth, thou must rend all bonds
asunder."

Though she wept and her lips were aquiver (waveringly)
she girded herself towards nightfall
Yet she came, but tarried at every step, sobbing she
hearkened awhile
To her mother's breathing, when doors clattered,—she
remembered companions of old
And dancing halls and the springtide evening by the
river near native forests. . . .

" Ah, " quoth I, " not thus mayst thou go with ballast of
accursed memories.
They are but marshy vapours, upon which our souls
have thriven.
Forget not that evil the world was contriving against
thee, what tears thou hast shed,
Forget not wounds from accursed hands, and laughter
of them that defile.

Or that from youth they arrayed thee as a puppet for
pastime of men,
For domestic lust of gluttons and lecherous bodies of
burgesses.
Forget not how they craved that thy soul should be
Weakness, Weakness,
That under the savour of sin it might seek Christ and
Mary.

Wilt thou not forget ? . . ." Long we fared together.
Days and nights passed by,

ANTONIN SOVA

Over mountains we stride, and shun the dwellings of
mortals.

Yonder where mistletoe clings to the pine-trees, yonder
where the moon hangs in the darkness,
Yonder is goodliest faring, yonder are loftiest dreams
and most lavish of blossom.

" Wherefore now weepest thou ? Believeest thou not in
New Life upon Other Worlds ? "
That she should weep not, when I led her across fallow-
lands, forests, over waters,
Beneath the silvery glimmer of evening I began to speak
falsely
Of Legends of beauty to be and unknown regions of
foreboding.

And thus did we fare. And lighted on vessels. . . . That
was a sorrowful Ocean
And a Land for marvelling, a city with lights that were
drab and pallid
And sightless windows, and towers with pinnacles in the
clouds.
And I led her to the vessel and craved to be borne into
Unknown Worlds.

Thereon was only a steersman I knew, with a thousand
fiery promptings
Meseemed that he guided the vessel, but his name I
knew not,
Whether it was Fate-Avenger or Fate-Redeemer,
He uttered with never a word, but deeply inclined him
earthward.

ANTONIN SOVA

Thereon was only the old steersman, known to me from
perplexing apparitions ;
Through space of unconscious beauty we journeyed with
glowing horizon.
Ha, I was mirthful, seeing her take heart after so lengthy
a span,
And urged him to journey like lightning, securely remote
from mortals.

And we journeyed and journeyed . . . the air full of
cinnabar vapours
Grew chill of a sudden and gray (I perceived the old
steersman had duped us)
Only his docile eyes of wisdom glittered with uncertain
lustre betokening ill,
When earthwards he bowed him and spake " Forthwith
we achieve our goal."

" There is the Land/' he spake thereupon with malign
craft in his smile
And pointed to a pale streak which lifelessly emerged
from clouds.

*' Thou liest, dog! Yonder are the self-same mortals
again/' I screamed in my fury, .

" Cranes I behold on the shores, windows of houses
glittering in the sunshine.

Thou art one of that human rabble, confess, thou
basilisk,
I will slay thee, thou dog, thou Evil incarnate, cozening
huckster I "

He bowed him with chattering teeth. Thereupon the
pale streak of earth again vanished

ANTONIN SOVA

And again on the distant path from the world of mortals
we journeyed.

Days passed and horror of fruitless waiting clung to **our**
hearts,

We sat us down in embrace and she wept, whispering of
bygone days.

" Knowest thou, how, in summer, twilight slumbered
above warm pastures,
Silvery light was a quiver above stillness of secret
footpaths ? "

" Dost thou see, thou dog, again she remembers/' I
cried. Evil of portent

Was the old man's muteness by his compass (his hardi-
hood allured me to murder)

" Again she weeps, dog, journey swiftly where beneath
conscience there is dawning,
And where there is gladness and music and fragrance of
blood-red blossoms."

Days passed and nights grew dim. I beheld her tresses
had whitened,

Haply with dread, as the waves battered the sides of the
mouldering vessel.

"Dost thou see how her tresses have whitened? " I
cried in despair, " dost thou see, thou accursed old
man ?

Even me hast thou deceived, I trust thee not, nay, I
trust thee not."

And I slew him with a ferocious blow, the dissembling
demon,

ANTONIN SOVA

The deck rumbled with the fall, and the creak of the rigging was as laughter.

" Now he shall no more deceive us by return to accursed Earth.

He knew not Worlds of Revelation. . . . Shall we die ?
Ah, to live thus. . . .

Oh, vainly thou pleadest, never shall I return to Earth,
nay, I return not,

Having destroyed thy youth, thy happiness and hope
for the Land of increase. . . .

And having destroyed thy soul by tarrying for the light
which cometh not,

No more shall I return to Earth which I curse, the
cradle of Evil.

Naught remains but to wait, or to perish in frenzied
embrace

Upon the deserted vessel amid an ocean greenishly
lifeless . . .

But yet weep not, I shall swerve not for thy sake, firm
is my will,

And happiness it is to perish afar from the squalor of
Earth. . . ."

Sorrows Overcome (1897)

Reverie

I KNOW that the setting sun will quench the fear of
the coming morn,
And that before a new blossom the old one is slain by a
chilling blight ;

ANTONIN SOVA

Visions, all visions grow mute at the vision of souls new-born,
And God in His temples trembles at new gods that rise to smite.

How silent and cheerless and bare ! I was yesterday in my bloom,
Yet shall I come to perceive that I am fading to-day ;
I shall close my shrine for ever and the bells will peal my doom,
And my lamp no longer will burn, and empty will be my way.

Sorrotvs Overcome (1897)

Yellow Flowers

THE meadow of death grows sere in the gloom,
The land is athrob with the lute of doom ;
Someone a blossom asunder strips,
And presents it close to feverish lips.

The aged folk are on the brink,
And in sips their wine they drink ;
Upon their locks the moonlight rests,
On withered skin and drooping breasts.

Still may they tarry for a space,
And still to something turn their face.

Still to the field they will not go.
The yellow blossoms rustle low,—
They will not die. They answer " No."

Sorrows Overcome (1897)

ANTONIN SOVA

The River

IT was like to a child,—slender the springlet
Glistening among the coarse-grained sand—
In gigantic, unpeopled stillness
Old Earth brought it forth
Under the trees coloured with mistletoe,
Under twilight depths of shaggy firs,
In gigantic stillness it sang through the grass
From serried wedges of lime-stone rocks.
Unwieldy black pine-stems were lying
Like transparencies of the yellowish sun
Upon its crinkled surface.
Their bloated roots were like swarthy leeches,
And wavering shadow came only to drink of it . . .
While in glory it sang and in rhythm of life. . . .

O passing winsome it was in the murk of the night,
When forests were ending their song unto it,
Into the moonlit plain it poured from the hollow,
How the black clattering mills seized it
Craftily into their unwieldy circlings,
That, grievously crushed into lissom dust,
It screeched and simmered, stormily tumbling !

As if stunned, upon tip-toe, it slipped through the
grass,
As if stunned, softly "Don tip-toe,
To sorrow-girt coverts, where the silver of the moon
Soldered the spare birches to their ground-plots
And osiered fields in the tvrilit hazes.

ANTONIN SOVA

O, was it fain to set the glorious vaultage of heaven
And all creation glittering in warm tranquillity,
The song of the stars chanted to the Unknown,
Aquiver upon its surface
And glory of night ere birth of the day
And its golden foot-print ?

Came forth then the first tortured mortal
Unto the radiant sheen of shifting vapours,
From mists the vagrant hobbled over the pastures . . .
Slipped his bloodstained tatters over his feet
Livid with foulness and canker, in which Death squatted,
He plunged his running wounds therein . . .
And the sky-line grew dim and dim afar,
Thickening mists in the fens, where a bird faltered,
Canker of grave-yards, stench of mortal lodgments
Wafted from the banks a burial requiem. . . .

Through gulleys leaked foul contagions,
Mouldering in quagmires, from the rended lining
Like ulcers they burst forth therein, meadows,
Waterlogged marsh-land they lulled there to slumber,
In the wake of the wind sobbed a burial requiem. . . .

Here it floated into the city cess-pool. . . . Windows
Hurled their sheds of light upon its surface
And outlines of homesteads were trailing eerily
On the wrinkled waters
And trees dipped their sickly green, garlands loosened
from cornices
Straggled down in the tarnished mirror of the waters.

Here mockeries of mortal being were revelling,
Here shrieked the song of unmolested espousals,

ANTONIN SOVA

Writhing orgies of man the carnal
Of herds that are huddled and wedged together
By the shared pangs of inherited sins.

Days, straggling levies of muffled martyrs,
Breathed out plague on the torrid paving
With stench of serried throngs in decay,—
Of beings ill-nurtured. . . .

Eyes shone with innermost despair cheek by jowl with
 rejoicing
Like lamps consumed by the slow passing of ages,
By the lengthy journey of exhausted souls,
By the loftier re-birth of beings . . .

And roaring from the city cesspool, venom-laden,
It carried the first corpses, amid greenish slime
It carried them forth, roaring a burial requiem,
Unto the torrid sands of days without hope. . . .

Whither away, O my soul ? Already I behold
New Sorrows plunging into thee from afar
Pinnacles of their loftiest turrets. . . .

Sorrows Overcome (1897)

To Theodor Mommsen

TO you, who have treacherously assailed my
 nation, covetous dotard,
Brutish, overweening ! To you, on the brink of the grave,
Arrogant bastard of Roman emperors and conquering
 Germania ;
To you, dotard, blinded by vainglory,
I chant the infuriate song of a barbarian, aroused by the
 smiting of hoofs.

ANTONIN SOVA

With metallic buffetings

Scornfully I smite your enwrinkled visage,

O bestial fanatic of relentless Kaiserdom ;

Your shrivelled temples I smite, your turgid Neronic lips

I smite,

Covered with foaming of impotent fury.

Was this the " reason " you discovered amid the ruins
of Rome,

Which now seeks to lay in store of flesh for the slaughter-
house,

And to shatter the brains of manacled and vanquished
victims ?

For your unified Imperium to humiliate bondsmen in
hordes,

Whom gladly you viewed trampled upon in triumphal
arrays,

Humiliated by Roman Caesars, the bondsmen in hordes,

Meet to be fashioned into saleable myrmidons to enrol
for the Imperium.

Arrogant spokesman of slavery !

Do you behold naught else but the blossoming peaks of
your country,

And all beyond would you leeringly crunch

Beneath war-chariots of the conquerors

And their uncouth tread ?

Now, after battle-triumphs of your Imperium,

You hankered to enslave what of Europe remained,

To enslave, to enslave, woefully to enslave,

Bondsmen predestined for seizure, dung for enriching of
soil,

Beasts to be yoked to the chariot of triumph,

ANTONIN SOVA

And from them you deemed barbarians, to break in
levies
For the Imperium, your insatiate Imperium.

But, even as once, long ago
We flouted the flabby wisdom of your Luther,
Reformer purveying peace unto contentedly fattened
townsmen,
Begetting children with God-abiding spouses,
And stifling freedom,
So now do we flout your crude, senile wisdom !
It is enkindled not by sorrow of us, nor of all humanity ;
Therein is not the purity that perishes for its faith ;
Therein is not the passion wherewith the martyr at
Constance* was ablaze ;
And therefore, brutish dotard,
Grown hoary in the service of your baneful Imperium,
From whose relentless wisdom are hidden the mysteries
of maltreated spirits,
What avail you now your lore and your revered gray
hairs ?
Your sorry wisdom has conceived not the light of
righteousness,
Nor the gladness of youthful nat'ons in their own
destining;
Has conceived not that an ancient realm durst not
enslave,
Would it warm and illumine,
And not be but a chafing and burdensome
Monstrous millstone about the neck of a galley-slave !
What avail you revered gray hairs, since you babble
senile saws.

Hus. [Tr.]

ANTONIN SOVA

O dotard, tottering on the brink of the grave ;
Since you have forgotten to proclaim unison and
 humaneness,
Destruction of tyrannies and of hatred ;
Since you have forgotten to reconcile your own infirm
 self with the world,
And to utter a prayer for all-accomplishing compassion ?
What avail you revered gray hairs, since you drudge for
 darkness,
In an age when a myriad slaves hunger with an all-human
 suffering
And clamour at the gates of retrieval!
Since through the causeways of ancient cities range
 spirits of anarchy
Scoffing at your Kaiserdom ;
Since from down-trodden bondsmen of all castes and all
 nations,
Flicker the first torches of humanity,
Even as from amid the barbarians impaled upon stakes
 by Nero,
Blazed forth the lustre of Christendom !

Over your grave, that our grandsons shall forget not,
They will glitter, torches ablaze, unto your sightless eyes,
And will lay bare your words, wherein is sealed the down-
 fall of your race;
But ere that, I, with disdainful retaliation
Welling up from the sorrowful soil of this cowering age,
Advance to the rim of your grave,
And fling it upon you, despotic dotard,
That with this grinding reproach you may be burdened
 eternally, eternally. . . .

(1897)

ANTONIN SOVA

0, *That a Joy Might Come* . . .

O, THAT a joy might come, calm, artless, mar-
velling . . .

Let us ponder and open the mire-bedaubed windows,
The soul's festivity arises, morning-illuminated stillness.

Or that a joy might come, like evenings before a festivity,
When blossoming trees amorously nestle towards the
moonlight,

And when cleansed thresholds beneath the stars are
aglimmer. . . .

And the ample and free song-tune of Forgiveness and
Reconcilement,

O, that it might rove through all opened windows,
Through tumult of chimes, hosanna, hosanna, through
the soul's festivity.

With wings uplifted, buoyant, shimmering, woven of
pliant fabrics

Of gold, carmine, of blue tinges from unknown regions,—
O, that a joy might come, calm, artless, marvelling.

Once Again Shall We Return (1900)

Lovers' Estrangement

WE found each other once in a single yearning : to
love the same and the same to revile,
Until into our hearts the same Tempest had wafted
unending snowdrifts.

We heard not Yule-tide chimes, nor herdsman's ditties,
Nor knew that He had been born who might redeem us...

ANTONIN SOVA

We found each other again in a single yearning : to
grow dead one to another,
Unending snowdrifts in our souls and unending night-
times,
To clasp hands with final embrace of those long ago
sundered
And never to hearken again to brutes of passion that
panted within us.

We are being severed. On snowbedecked fields of our
Spirits
Stand rugged forests, heaven-towering, wherein no land-
marks could be thrust,
Ravens of dreams range low beneath grey vaultage of
branches.

We are being severed : for years beholding not one the
other, but only perplexing music
Reaches us yet. Between us are outcries of pilgrims
On opposite sides, waning into snowclad distances.

Once Again Shall We Return (1900)

Once Again Shall We Return . . .

ONCE again shall we return musingly, where so
potent
Was a blossom's fragrance, that it lured us from the
pathway, when in dusky silver
Evening floated over rivers, and once again shall we
return
Where we heard a song from windows, which looked on
to muteness of gardens.

ANTONIN SOVA

And once more shall we seek out the one path and the
one hill-side thicket
So utterly radiant with autumn, in such a revel of
colours,
And we shall search after splintered strains of an echo,
After the soft and buoyant footstep, that perchance left
secret traces.

The soul with memories graven upon it will pour forth
into the grass
Such a bounty of lyrical balm in a resinous trickling,
And will steep its lofty and darksome branches in
autumnal sunshine.

Its slender stem will range duskward unto vanishing
clouds,
All in a single moment, upon the twilit pathway
And at the sunset hour, which so wrings the hapless
heart. . . .

Once Again Shall We Return (1900)

A Mood

NEVER so eerily yet
Soughed my native wood :
I should weep, I should weep
If I but could.

There is mockery in the twilight
Beneath each heavy bough.
The evening seems to drag its broken wings
Over the earth now.

ANTONIN SOVA

And what is that laughter in the leafage,
And what is that dry chuckling sound ?
With seven-league strides, O my soul,
Whither are you bound ?

Once Again Shall We Return (1900)

The Poet

STEPPING across graves I come to living men,
That I may learn what sets their hearts aglow.

Mornings are my delight, that I may arouse.
I wait till evening for my burials.

My world appears remote from human-kind,
My dreams being shaped on the loftiest range of
thought.
A world of imagined towers and mountain-tops
Loving but heights and horizons, abysses of despair.

My world looms forth from solitudes and is poised above
earth,
Where, a breathless onlooker, I have stayed my flight
On boughs of a tree which towers gigantic heavenwards.

Once, an outcast demon, I toppled from on high.
Yet am I grateful; still do I set astir
My singed wings. Still is my defiance not quenched.
In peril and amazement I delight.
Often do I descend that I may hearken
How perish hearts of men. And I am stirred
By the earliest greeting of those aroused at morn
And by the last words of those perishing at eve,

ANTONIN SOVA

I long to incite men to mighty acts of daring,
To hound slavery from cages, those dancing sadly
On market-places at nightfall, when the lamps flare
sootily,
To the music of hurdy-gurdies, to the laughter of lovers,
Sacrificing to their lusts in darkened copses,
While traders count the profits, coin by coin.
I long to open a little the vent-holes for
The age-old sorrows which ferment and seethe,
That 'tis a wonder they burst not the iron clamps,
When the guardians of mankind deem themselves safe.

I mould my words, snatched from the clutch of gods,
Upon the glowing gold of the noontide sun.

And I await the day, await the hour.

Daring Ventures (1900)

The Eagles of Discontent

HIGHER and higher the Eagles would rise,
E'en where the heart would have flown—
To the rugged crag beyond thine eyes,
Where a man may perish alone.

And upon my Eagles there came dismay ;
To the sun is a distant flight,
And farther at autumn-tide is the way,
Treacherous is the height.

In the depths of the waters the Eagles wept,
With their dreaming all fordone :
" We to the highest summit have swept,
Why might we not reach the sun ? "

During Ventures (1906)

ANTONIN SOVA

Eternal Unrest

SPIRITED words had soaring zest,
The puny heart was frail and shy . . .
We can soar to each topmost crest,
Or linger here. The heart sobbed : Try 1 . . .
And when I made endless heights my quest
The heart wailed here below despairingly . . .
And when with the heart I sank to rest,
The eagle's eyrie stirred me snaringly.

Lyrics of Love and Life (1907)

*Morning Prayer of Adam and Eve in Their Old
Age*

FOR our awakening we thank thee, for the smiling of
morn. . . .

In old age 'tis a hundredfold blissfuller than it was in
youth,
Though scantier ever. . . . Yea, for perchance the day
soon comes
When the Sun no more will awaken us. . . .

Grandsons of our grandsons ! Come and play at our feet,
Sunburnt as tawny lion-cubs of a glowing Eden,
In blossoms and sand plunge your bodies, your tiny
arms,
In gourds draw ye the escaping well-water,
Play on your reed-flutes,
Shake bronzen discs,
Dance and be mirthful, ye sometime children of our
children. . . .

ANTONIN SOVA

Eden has not ceased to be Eden for him, who in strength
And youth made ready for life's beginning,
That he might taste of life's fruits. . . .

Eve, our lives are waning. . . .
Still are we in Eden. . . . We have not yet forfeited
Aught of gifts, or of beauty, or of God's hidden love,
Still doth the tree of life with ripened fruits abound and
abound

In the generations to be. . . .
Still are we in Eden. . . . The guilt didst thou fear,
Eve,
Didst dream of a wrathful God, didst await the Arch-
angel
With flamingly bright sword,—but my thoughts' coldness
and clearness
Knew that God is great, and that he is unending,
And that he fashioned the tree of life,
Not to punish therewith, but his own
Praise to intone evermore. . . .

None drove us forth that time,
When we tasted of fruits of the tree of life. . . .
Unknown to us is God's wrath. . . . Nay, never came
Archangel with fiery sword to drive us away in awe
From the tree of life. . . .
For we are here beneath its stem, whose roots unto
midmost of earth,
Whose boughs unto the heavens extend.—
As many of lives it gives, as of deaths, as many of joys
as of sorrows,
As many of Abel's offerings, as of Cain's defiances,
Our equally beloved sons, ill-plighted sons. . . .

ANTONIN SOVA

Yet sorrows will pass like savage tempests on the horizon,
Immense calms will pass like mute clouds,
Tears of fathers shall be dried in hopes of the newly
born....

As stags upraise their antlers, waxing with years,
Proudly shall yearnings be uplifted. . . .

We thank thee, we thank thee, for our grandsons' more
beauteous smiles .

When their gladness sits at our feet. . . .

For glance of animals shyly halting,

For their faithful fondness. . . .

For the chill fountain which flings itself at our feet

From silent depths of earth. . . .

For the green grass-plot whereon the shade settles

Fragrances' coolness. . . .

For din of dark forests, hailing the distances

Of the broad world. . . .

Eden's unendingness is spread throughout life's length,

Behind us, before us, behind the generations, before the
generations,

And meaning of our long journey,

This is the meaning of Eden. . . .

In the wake of birds' morning song amid its unbounded
silence

Since our youth we have wandered,

Unto trusty eyes of enchantment we journey throughout
Ufe,

We allure h arts unto us

As surface of waters the sun. . . .

We behold not ever the end of all our Eden,

We behold not any end to trees, glowing blossoms,

Timid, nestling animals,

ANTONIN SOVA

Souls loving us, marvels begirding us. . . .
Human Eden hath no end, therein is no perishing of
the sun,
Nor is it ever void of creatures which we engendered,
once youthful,
Strong in the stormy spring-tide of strength. . . .

And now Eden seems unto us something that was long
ago
Bowed with old age,
Infirm with destiny, with tarrying, with death which
shall come
To close our eyelids,
We shall yield to His will. . . .
Bur we know not His wrath. . . . Ne'er revealed He it
unto us. . . .
Ne'er as avenger, ne'er as God warning us with flaming
sword. . . .
Ne'er did He reveal Himself save mutely hidden in all
things.
In beauty of life, in wild awe, in warning of decay. . . .
Ne'er did he drive us from Eden. . . . Life was beginning
of death.
Begetting sons and daughters unto His glory and ours,
We did but yield eternal love
Unto life, unto death. . . .
Great is God, great is God, great is God,
Glorious and unending,
He fashioned the tree of life,
Not to punish therewith, but His own
Praise to intone evermore. . . .

Contests and Destinies (1910)

ANTONIN SOVA

The Morning Wind

PLAYFULLY it arose above moist meadows
Beside living mountain-waters . . .
By cottages it dallied with bared heads of children,
Fair, curly-locked, winsome . . .
It fingered lilac and jasmine, roses and corn-ears,
Bespattered birds with dew, crinkled the grass upon
tombs,
Unloosened ripples of fish-ponds in silvery cadences . . .

To be unleashed, unleashed, unleashed,
Was its smothered morning prayer . . .

Soon sated with play, idyllic and peaceful,
It dreamed of strength. . . . To be unleashed,
unleashed . . .
Amain to shrill through earth's miles, convoyed by
swarthy clouds . . .
Dreamily to descend, asudden to dart upwards,
Above ridges of dark forests, where stags mournfully
troat,
Even above murder in sequestered covert. . . .

Was this then the self-same one, which, born early amid
blossoms
Amid stillness of a fragrant valley,
Toyed with green tops of pine-trees
And passionately fondled tiny birds'-nests,—
Was this then the self-same one, which murdered at
evening ?

ANTONIN SOVA

Was this then the self-same one, which gently stroked
tresses

And glowing faces, white and slender hands,
Whose fingers vied with it as they fluttered over piano-
keys ?

Was this then the self-same one, which turmoiled at
evening ?

Was this then the self-same one, at whose wafting halls
were opened, thronging

With young bodies serried together,
Gardens freshly breathed, fragrance-laden, lamp-lights
flickered

Swayingly upon sand-bestrewn pathways,
Weather-vanes sighed upon old towers,
And delicate music drifted through open balconies of
green cottages ? . . .

Was this then the self-same one, which now ranted at
nightfall ?

Behold : Wildly now it blusters in the stormy evening ...
Has rended giant tree-trunks, flung nests to the earth,
Has trampled on clay hovels, with husky voice of horror
Has intoned an elemental song. . . . * ,

Assuredly it was the one . . . which, before gentle,
refreshing,

Which seemed to seek strains of seraphic harps,
Murdered at evening . . .

Gentle souls ! Gentle souls ! Gentlest souls !

Shall I remember that even ye, dreaming of your beauty
and power,

One day will murder, frenziedly murder ?

Morning and Evening Meditations (1920)

J. S. MACHAR

J. S. MACHAR

(b. 1864)

Brooding

A FEW more years,—and they will drag my bones,
And let them in a charnel-house be shed,
After my melodies have hushed their tones,
Mute as a grove, whence nightingales have fled.

Will someone then the empty skull upraise
Upon his trembling hand, with Hamlet's view
Amid the cradle of my dreams to gaze,
That has to nature paid its final due ?

Will he mark out each divers track of thought,
The irk of love, and all the anguish there ?
And will the pallid jawbone tell him aught
Of laurels that this brow was fain to wear ?

And will he wonder where the soul may lag
That once urged on its wings to starward flight ?
Pooh ! He will mumble forth some pious tag,
And cast the livid skull away from sight !

Confiteor I (1887)

Song in Autumn

T WAS at the moment when the sun is low,
Sinking to slumber in the evening gloom,
The time of roses, songs and souls aglow,
Our love began to bloom.

J. S. MACHAR

Now fly the winds with shrill and piercing din,
The song is over and the roses fade,—
My heart in summer was a nest, wherein
A bird of passage strayed.

Third Book of Lyrics (1892)

Autumn Causerie

ALAS ! youth fades, the inmost longing wanes,
Wild roses in their season clustering bloomed,
But on some autumn morning there remains
A twig, thorn-laden, doomed.

And shallow joy, frail bliss and moments sweet,
Relentless time into the distance carries,
The summer-tide of life, so fleet, so fleet,
And a long autumn tarries.

Our lot is sad. By coming into life
We are but into Death's dominion borne,
Whereof are sorrow, woes, our lifelong strife
An overture forlorn.

Our soul can foster for a span of hours
Only the thoughts from which the tears can flow,
Like fallow-land, whereon there bloom no flowers,
But only brambles grow.

Third Book of Lyrics (1892)

October Sonnet

ONLY an anguished melody still flows
From earth where hazes spread a veiling net...
In every nook the faded beauty stows
Her faded blooms, lest springtide she forget.

J. S. MACHAR

But the desire, as ere to gladden, glows
Within ; unchilled her inmost ardour yet,
And gaudy sashes round her waist she throws
And asters in her tresses she has set.

Fain would she laugh as in her bygone days—
But 'mid her wrinkles laughter takes to flight
And from them only pity, pity cries. . . .

Divining this, perchance she has surmise :
A hundred tears each morn her garb displays
Shed in the anguish of her sleepless night.

Four Books of Sonnets (1892)

Autumn Sonnet

WE in our sentimental salad-days
Loved autumn, and the leaf age drooping sere,
And the descent of misty greys
On gardens growing drear.

But now these things to man are dear :
The mighty sun, that on the sky-line sways
In glory ; and the days in warm career,
The glow of earth beneath his feet ablaze.

When tearful autumn roves across the land,
And everywhere a parlous mist is poured,
And every day a purgatory seems.—

We gladly clutch the wine-cup *in* our hand ;
For there the ardour of the sun is stored,
Heat of July and bliss of summer dreams.

Four Books of Sonnets (1892)

J. S. MACHAR

On Golgotha

IT was the third hour, when the cross was raised
Betwixt the crosses.

Now, flushed with their labour,
Upon the trampled, blood-stained earth, the soldiers
Had sat them down. They shared the raiment out.
Then for the shirt, that had the woof throughout
They played at dice.

And many from the crowd
Approaching thither, turned their gazes upwards,
Wagging their heads, and jeering : Ho, ho, ho,
Down from the cross,—'twas king you dubbed yourself!
You were the one, who would destroy the temple,
And in three days would build it up afresh,
Help now yourself!

Priests also tarried there,
And there were scribes with white and flowing beards ;
They said amongst themselves : 'Tis very true,
He would help others, let Him help Himself.—
And from afar were many women gazing,
Who had of old served Him in Galilee, .
Salome, Mary and the Magdalene ;
They to Jerusalem had fared with Him.
Numbered with rogues, He hung upon the cross,
Naked and shorn. Upon His lash-seared body
Clung clots of blood. And on His hands and feet
The red streak oozed, drops trickled to the earth.
With rigid stare his eyes were turned afar
Across the glittering town, the knolls and groves
To crests of peaceful hills, in whose lap lie
Blue waters of the Galilean lakes.

J. S. MACHAR

He bowed his head.

Then to his ear was wafted
The hum of plumage. Not His Father's angel
With quickening draught for the exhausted soul;
An unclean spirit spread his vampire-wings
And scoured the air and lighted at His side.
He could not flinch, when Satan sat Him down
Upon His cross,—yea, squatted at His head,
For His tired spirit was disarmed from strife.

And Satan said : " O hapless sufferer,
Upon this wooden cross we meet again,
To-day, and then no more. To-day 'tis settled,
The fight fought out.

You know, three years have passed,
Since in the wilderness I bore you forth
On to a lofty peak and let you see
Strong kingdoms, all the glory of the world,
And all I promised you, if you would sink
And kneel before me. But you flouted it.
You went to preach the coming realm of heaven
Unto the poor, the weak. To stainless hearts
You offered treasures of undwindling worth.
To simple souls you sought to show the way
Unto the Father's glory. From men's brows
You strove to cleanse the trace of Adam's curse.
You turned to death with calm abandonment,
Like to the lamb, that opens not its mouth,
And you have shed your blood as it were dew,
So that your new-sown grain might not be parched.

Jesus of Nazareth, behold these throngs,
That surge like billows round about your cross !

J. S. MACHAR

'Tis not long since, when glorified you rode
Into the town, they littered palms beneath
Your ass-colt's hoofs, and they cried unto you
Your glory, and proclaimed you David's son,
For they supposed, that now the realm of God
Was heralded, and this the longed-for time
Of milk and honey. But you flouted it.
The cozened throngs then in the wrath of vengeance
Dinned ' Crucify ! ' into the ears of Pilate.
And here they loiter, wagging with their heads
And jeering : Yonder hangs the King of the Jews !
Find He His own help,—He's the Son of God.
His Father hath, forsooth, forgotten Him !—

The Father has forgotten.

See this sky,
Where in full glory, you have deemed, He sits :
Cloudless and radiant it softly smiles
With that blue unimpassioned smile, the same
After you, as before you. And the birds,
Scouring the air, and every living creature
That roves the earth, has lived and lives to-day
After a single law,—and that is mine.
The stronger ever preys upon the weaker.
And so with mortals too. This whole wide world
Is my domain. For I am Life itself.
I rule alone. I lurk in hearts and souls,
And none shall hound me out or banish me.
Not you, and not your Father. Your God's kingdom
Is dream. That dream I leave to men for ever.

Under the cross, behold the Roman captain
In peaceful converse with the white-haired scribe !

J. S. MACHAR

So shall it ever be. These twain inherit
Your words, your dreams. The one will change his idols,
The other his Jehovah in your name,
And in my covenant the world shall live.

Why did you scorn to take all kingdoms, then,
And the world's glory from my bounteous hand ?
Then your young life would not have ended here
In shameful pangs; you might have lived untrammelled
To your own gladness, to the weal of myriads.
What have you brought ? You sowed dispute and death,
Yourself first victim. For your name, your dreams,
Hundreds and hundreds yet will shed their blood
On crosses, in arenas, judgment-places.
And when it seems as though your dream has conquered,
Then *in* your name, and only in your name
Shall murder thrive. As far as eye shall see
Will stand a rank of flaring stakes, whereon
Burning of victims in your name shall be,
And in your name shall frenzied wars be waged,
And *in* your name shall towns be set ablaze,
And in your name shall countries be laid waste,
And in your name shall malediction speak,
And in your name shall there be servitude
Of body and of spirit.

See this captain

And here, this scribe. The first will, in your name,
Do murder and the second, in your name,
Will bless him. Millions of ill-fated men
Will forfeit for your dream their dearest portion,
Their life.

And over all the squandered blood
Your dream of the eternal realm of God,

J. S. MACHAR

Of heavenly glory, will go drifting on
Like a mere wraith to recompense the dead,
To lure the living till the crack of doom !
Why did you scorn to take all kingdoms then
And glory of the earth ? For mine is life,
I, I am life, and lord of all things here,
And age on age I lurk in hearts and souls ! "

And Satan, then uprising, folded out
His tawny-hued and mighty vampire-wings,
Whose girth with stirring of a tempest waxed
Dread, overwhelming. On all Golgotha,
Above the town, the valley and the hills,
Above the plain, above the distant mountains,
Above blue-watered lakes of Galilee,
Above the realms and oceans far-removed
The black and frowning mantle was outstretched.

And there was mighty gloom on all the earth,
And quaking.

And last time of all, the eyes
Of Jesus turned, and with loud voice he cried :
" Eloi, Eloi lama zabachtani! "
And breathed away his spirit. . . .

Golgotha (1902)

Tractate on Patriotism

THAT nook of earth wherein I grew and lived
Through childhood, boyhood, and my years of
youth
With all sweet folly of first love, with all
First pangs, deceit and misery of it;

J. S. MACHAR

That one white township in the vale of Elbe
With dusky forests on the far horizon,
With its old castle, with its wild-grown park,
Its placid market-square, its church, that shaped
Outlandishly, peers forth with huddled tower
Across the country-side ; billowy fields ;
Avenued paths, the agony of God
Where crossroads meet ; the meadow-lands that flank
Calm streams ; our cherished hamlets round about;—
That nook of earth is all for which I crave
In the shrill streets of this afflicting city.
Yet rather is it craving for the years
Of youth I lived there. . . . Since the soul portrays
Fondly unto itself those places, craves
Piningly for them, while,—fond thing—it harbours
A trembling hope that by returning thither
It may bring back its years of youth . . . I know
That I would likewise love another place
If I had passed elsewhere my years of youth. . . .
This is my native land. Naught else, I lack
Aptness to worship that terrestrial
Concept, which diplomats have glibly framed
In their bureaus ; which pedagogues to us
Imparted out of atlases ; the which
Must needs, as each and all terrestrial
Concepts, to-morrow, maybe, shrivel or expand,
According as upon some battle-field,
In dreadful strife which is not our affair,
More striplings fall on that side or on this !

I have not found my pride in history,
That temple of idolaters, wherein
Dreamers devoutly cast themselves to earth,

J. S. MACHAR

And in a frenzy beat their breasts because
They too are Czechs : nay, even as elsewhere,
Our annals are a file of dreadful deeds
(By us accomplished and by us endured)
Of recreant men, of surging passion-throes,
Betrayals, dominations and enslavements ;
And men of light there were, who then became
Clear-ringing currency of daily catchwords
For tricksters of to-day, here as elsewhere.
Nor do I vaunt me of our own days. We
Than others are no whit the better . . .
We are but palterers and caitiffs ; where
Power is, there do we bend our necks to it
In slavish wise ; wherefore are we abased
By evil lords. Time-serving braggarts we,
Testy and witless, laughing-stocks amid
Our pride, and palsied in vain peevishness.
Felons we have, dotards and pillagers
And hucksters dealing in pure love of country,
And a mere handful of the men who are
Ever untainted and downright,—but these
All nations have elsewhere,—ye gods, is this
To be, perchance, our fountain-head of pride ?

I am no patriot, nor do I love
My country, for I have none, know none, nor
See cause for loving one. . . .

I am a Czech, even as I might be
A German, Turk, Gypsy, or negro, if
I had been born elsewhere. My Czechdom is
The portion of my life which I do feel
Not as delight and bliss, but as a solemn
And inborn fealty. My native land

J. S. MACHAR

Is within me alone ; and this will I
Trim round at no man's beck, nor give it tinge
To match with fashion's daily whim ; nor shall
They rob me of it ; when above my tomb
The grass has grown, it shall go living on
In other souls,—and if, some day to be,
In them it wither, then and only then
Shall it be lifeless, as old Kollar sang.

And if I toil for it, then that is toil
For Czechdom as I feel it in myself.

And if I ever pride me on it, then
I pride me only on my life. . . .

Golgotha (1902)

Babylonian Inscription

SHARRUK-INU am I, strong king of Agan.
I had for mother a princess ; my father
I wist not of. My father's brother dwelt
In distant mountain-lands. At Az, my city,
The which is set upon Euphrates' banks,
My mother, the princess, bare me in secret.
She laid me down within an osier basket,
Firmly with asphalt closed the orifice,
And to the stream committed me. The stream
Carried me unto Akki, the water-bearer.
Akki, the water-bearer, kindly-hearted,
Lifted me out. Akki, the water-bearer,
Fostered me as his son and nurtured me.
And Akki, the water-bearer, trained me as
His gardener. To me, the gardener,

J. S. MACHAR

The goddess Istar lavish was of grace :
I became king. For five and forty years
I ruled in glory. Of the dark-haired people
I was the lord. And upon bronzen chariots
Thrice did I fare unto the distant mountains.
E'en to their summits thrice did I ascend.
And thrice I ranged to Nitukk, which is set
Hard by the very ocean-waves. I made
Earth pay me tribute far and wide ; its kings
I humbled, and destroyed the rebel cities.

If after me there come a king, who rules
Over the dark-haired people, and who thrice
On bronzen chariots fares to distant mountains,
And to their summits if he thrice ascend
And thrice doth range to Nitukk, which is set
Hard by the very ocean-waves, and make
Earth pay him tribute far and wide, its kings
Then humbles, and destroyeth rebel cities,—
Then let him tarry here and con this tablet,
Mindful that I achieved it all before him,
I Sharruk-inu, the strong king of Agan.
Mindful that he is now what I have been,
And that he soon shall be what I am 'now.—

.

And in among the ruins lies this stone,
'Mid piles of other stones and it is mute.
And in the desert sand the ruins lie,
Which desert stretches onward far and wide
And it is mute. Mute the hot sky above it,
And ages journey there with silent tread. . . .

In the Gleam of Hellenic Sun (1906)

J. S. MACHAR

The Deathbed of JEschylus

NOT a line more. This epitaph suffice me.
Æschylus the Athenian, and the son of
Euphorion the vine-dresser from Eleusis,
Died here in distant, corn-abounding Gela.
The grove of Marathon will evermore
Attest his life. . . . This only, if ye will. . . ,
What of those seventy tragedies of mine ?
Poetic glory ?—Things that pass away.
Nor are they mine, I was God's implement.
Once, when a boy, I watched over our vineyard
There in Eleusis. I remissly slept.
Twas noon. Swelter. And from the dusky grapes
Red moisture gleamed. His radiant, smiling self
Did Dionysus to my head incline,
And bade me write these divers happenings
Of gods and men. I wrote. And that is all.
He prompted my obedient soul with verses,
He fashioned scenes,—'tis all the work of hii ,
T was but. his devoted scrivener.
To others likewise he was gracious. Ever
Unfathomed in their plans are the immortals
And unrelentingly they cast aside
Him upon whom they once bestowed their favour.
That he contemned me was no fault of mine,
E'en as his favour before was not my merit.
My trembling hand wrote on, perchance it was
Through former custom,—but of this enough,
Bitter as gall is such a memory. . . .
But blossom of my life was Marathon
And it shall be pride of my bones. All else
Is strange, is strange.—Write this upon my grave. . . .

In the Gleam of Hellenic Sun (1906)

J. S. MACHAR

Pythagoras

O YOUTH from Syracuse, tired of the world,
But yet unsated, yearnest to join our circle,—
What, seekest thou wisdom ? We possess it not.
Nor is there any mortal doth possess it.
We do but call ourselves the friends of it.
And truth thou yearnest for ? There is none, boy.
Thyself appearest now to be another
Than thou wert once. Thou in another body,
Another age, another zone of earth,
Didst live, another mortal,—but from then
Faint inklings surely sometimes flash upon thee :
Thou seest a strange land thou hast trod of old ;
Some thought that thou didst think in another life.

There only is one mighty harmony
Of spheres, fates, things. Which only for a flash
Appears to thee, or may be heard by thee,
But cannot lastingly be seized upon ;
And then, boy, there is certainty of numbers
And lines and shapes. This can be given thee.
And such a gift is no small thing in life : ,
A firm point whereon a man may lean,
When thoughts and systems crumble into naught,
And a safe anchorage for thine own soul. . . .

Number's the soul of things, for it doth live
As tree and stone, air and the river's tide.

Into this world we'll lead thee. But thou must
In the old world leave your old self. The path
Tówards us is burdensome. Thou needs must oft

J. S. MACHAR

Be silent, worth of speech to learn ; thou must
Renounce life's joys, that joys thou canst attain ;
All things must thou reject which have been thine,
That thou mayst value what things are vouchsafed thee.

And to thee is vouchsafed but certainty,
The soul of numbers, harmony of shapes,
No name, no glory.

Once there dwelt with us
Hippasos, a stripling of thy build and years,
With thirsting spirit. Hippasos discovered
One new tone 'mid the harmony of things,
Known as the twelve-fold. He, drunken with pride,
Proclaimed his find, giving it his own name.
And then it was I flung him from the crag
Into the sea. For the new life he betrayed
And the soul's thirst would have assuaged with glory...

Consider all, O youth from Syracuse.
And if there tremble weakness in your soul,
Withdraw betimes. When the snake sheds its slough
Tis dazed with pangs and sufferings, the which
As touching harmony of fates, O youth,
Shall befall thee. Depart from Kroton city
Homeward, and from the maids of Syracuse
Take to thyself a wife, get children, live
As lives the human herd.

Or else remain—
And living, thou shalt vanish from among
Memory of the living, and shalt be
Only a tone amid the harmony
Which sounds and wanes that it may sound anew. . . .

In the Gleam of Hellenic Sun (1906)

J. S. MACHAR

The Martyr

WHERE are ye haling me ? Your eyes are bloodshot,
And foam is on your lips. Into my face
Ye spit, and with your staves ye strike my head.—
O Christian people, Christ's confessors ye.
And the priests fan your fury yet the more,
And from his chair the bishop yonder nods
Assent unto your frenzy. O ye servants,
By whom the Lord's name is betrayed. I see,
As Stephen did, first witness to the blood,
Of old, the heavens opened in their glory.
And Christ I see at the right hand of the Father,
And I see too how He enjoins His angels
To keep their flaming swords within their sheaths
And to cherish compassion with your blindness,—
But in His garb He hides His countenance
That angels and saints may not behold how pain
Trickles forth from His eyes. Strike ye, strike ye.
Spare not your spittle. For your every blow
He, Christ, will soothingly caress my face
And change your spittle into glory's sheen
And give kind words in place of your affronts,—
Then spit and rail upon me, curse and strike me ;
I shall not hold my peace, the while I have
Spirit in body, tongue in mouth. Shed ye
My blood, and this my blood shall cry to you
E'en what my lips did clamour in your ears :
Ye are accursed, ye are the sons of hell;
Christ, Who entered the world with love, did ye
Imprison in the dungeons of your souls,
And daily do ye scourge Him with your pride,
And with your greed ye fashion gyves for Him,

J. S. MACHAR

And **with** your lust ye spit into His eyes ;
Your gluttony doth make a mock of Him
And with the hardness of your hearts ye stone
My Saviour's radiant brow. Day after day
Your lack of loving-kindness chaffers for Him,
And every prompting which doth stir your souls
Pierces into His limbs with barbed nails,—
Ye are accursed, offspring of Belial.
And ye, the leaders of this savage herd,
Ye evil shepherds, ye who are its priests,
Ye fatted gluttons, *in* whose fleshy faces
Reflected gleams from hell already show,—
—Threaten and curse me, hound me, buffet me,—
I yet can laugh. I see domains of hell
And ravenous flames which are agog for you.
And ranks of demons sitting there exalt
This work of yours achieved for their domains.
And hell shall be all paved with skulls of priests,
Their eyes shall be uprooted from their sockets,
That they may shine like lanterns there, upon
The sufferings of the damned. Your unclean hands
Shall be hacked off, and the devil stoking there
Shall 'neath red cauldrons rake the flames with them,—
Then strike ye . . . strike. . . . A stone . . . a second
stone. . . .
O Jesus Christ, thanks to Thee for this favour. . . .
That Thou dost let me die . . . as Thou didst Stephen . . .
Amid a shower of stones . . . that Thou wilt show me...
Thy glory . . . where shall enter in . . . my soul. . . .
And hell . . . which shall devour my murderers . . .
And murderers of Thee . . . Lord Jesus . . . **Christ....**

The Poison from Judaea (1906)

J. S. MACHAR

In the Catacombs

THE judgment-day shall come, the hour of reckoning.

Ah, the good shepherd then shall crush the tigers,
And from the wolves drag forth their evil hearts.
The husbandman upon his threshing-floor
Shall sunder wheat from chaff. Earth, sinful garden,
Shall quake with dread, having not hills enough
To hide her guiltiness, nor waters enough
To cleanse away her shame. The spotless lamb
Hath heralded its advent, even as
The bridegroom of our souls his marriage-feast.

Jesus, the lanterns of our hearts are kindled,
And the flame lights the gloom unto Thy path.
O come, O come, and guide us from our exile
Unto the promised land to deathless feasts.
Unto Thy glory and Thy godly sway,
Where chant the angels and the seraphim,
And where the martyrs dwell in exaltation ,
Amid the holiness of Thine apostles.

Thrice blessed are the ones who dared to shed
Their blood for exaltation of Thy name.
Them didst thou spare the other pangs of life,
Didst turn temptation from them, and the snares
Which the base world doth garnish for the body.
O, holy judge, succour Thy suppliants,
Open to us the portals from this Ufe, ,
Whereon we beat in tearful throes of yearning.

J. S. MACHAR

Why didst thou not commit our lives to us,
Why set thy ban on casting them aside,
When they are burdens ? Why are they a stronghold.
Whence by its will the soul may not depart ?

O grant Thou that the world may shatter this dungeon
And in its rage destroy the stronghold's ramparts
Before thy judgment-day is come. The day
Is near, but greater is our longing. Grant
That we become the blood-stained witnesses
Unto Thy words, Thy truth, as Thine exemplar,
Grant unto us, O Lord, a martyr's crown,
The which more swiftly leads unto Thy glory,

O grant it soon, grant it betimes, O Lord,
Ere Thine annunciation be fulfilled,
Ere come destruction's day. Neither the day
Is certain, nor the hour,—only Thy words
We have, O Lord.

Behold our woe, vouchsafe
To us the boon of them whose bodies here
Sleep biding resurrection.

Or enjoin
Angels to trumpet forth the judgment-day
And, wielding Thy sword of sovereignty, ascend
Thy throne,—for we are pining with desire,
And this, our life, has now become a torment.

The Poison from Judaea (1906)

Galileo with Milton at Torre Del Gallo

THIS tower they left me and the vault of heaven.
 And so by day I gaze and gaze afar,
 Into the world whereon I durst not step,
 By night the starry realm from whence I drew
 Renown unto my name, grief for my life.
 But threatens now relentless Destiny
 To take e'en that. My eyes are waxing weak,
 And if I gaze without the helping lens,
 I do but see a glimmering silvery dust.
 You, Sire, are young, in life's heyday, a poet,
 Son of the land which dragged its neck away
 From grim and chilling clutches of the Church,—
 O happy mortal. . . . Are we not myths to ourselves ?
 At least I haply to you ? I plainly showed
 What before me Copernicus had found,
 What e'en the sages taught in ancient Greece,
 That this, our world, has no firm fundament
 In starry space, but on predestined path
 In a year's course rotates around the sun,
 During the which, like a deft dancing-girl
 Twists round its axis as it ranges on,—
 And lo, then rose the Holy Church in wrath •
 And clamoured that I desired to shake belief
 In truth of Holy Writ. Joshua, quoth 'a,
 Spake once in war : Thou, sun, shalt stay thy course
 Up against Gibcon, whence 'tis passing clear
 This world of ours turns not, but 'tis the sun
 Itself must be twisting about our earth.
 Ah, can you know, young man, what folly is ?
 You know not, but I have quaffed it to the dregs.
 When from their pulpits Jesuit Fathers spake
 Homilies to the words of Holy Writ

J. S. MACHAR

As touching me : Why stand ye there, O men
Of Galilee and gaze aloft ?—When they
Bade me deny the truth I e'en had spoken,—
When unto Rome they summoned me to judgment
And they who judged are versed perchance in Scripture
But never in those deathless, starry worlds,—
And when the Holy Father wroth thereat
(Not roused by mishap that befell the Scriptures
But deeming rather that in my dialogue
I play the zany with his affirmations
And quiz him in a sorry figure which
Is called Simplicio in that same tractate)—
When at this long and never-ending trial,
I, sick and vexed by questionings and dicta
Whereat His only possible to scoff,—
When at this trial. I underwent perforce
Examen rigorosum, which is called
Torture in parlance of holy inquisition,—
(As though the deathless law can be o'ertuned
When at the end a tortured human worm
Spake : Nay it turncth not. I spake thus ? Well,
I wot not) Marvel not, O foreign sire,
At an old man, when he remembers, nay,
Remembers not, but clutches at his wounds,—
Wounds, quick and open : that words, that phrases surge
Burstingly from his lips, so wild, pell-mell
E'en as thou heardest. All in me is aquiver,
Voice upon lips, and blood in veins, and soul
In body,—yet the earth doth turn and turned
Aye, spite of Joshua ; and it shall turn
Evermore, spite of Jesuits, and spite
Of Holy Inquisition. . . . And herein
The myth of me . . .

J. S. MACHAR

Gaze heavenward, gaze,
Yonder, yea, yonder is the dayspring of
My earthly dolours all . . . in yon white lustres
Dayspring of all my woes, my prisoning
And earthly glory. . . . Weaker grows my gaze
Yon realm shall vanish from me soon. . . . Perchance
Somewhere up yonder lies the solving of
That riddle which is dubbed the life of man.

The Apostles (1911)

A. Diirer Painting the Saviour's Head

1526

THEE do I seek for, O my tortured Lord,
Through the wide world,—I seek, but do not find ;
Tiger-like, serpent-like is man, and aye,
One of the brood the devil pastureth,
Yet, deignest Thou to sojourn in the world,
Only a human soul is Thine abode,
As Luther, man and servitor of God,
Or Melanchthon, who is Thy wisdom's bee.

My tortured Lord, I am not worthy that . . .
Thou shouldest come beneath my roof. But Thou,
O love, yet graciously approachest. In
Most wondrous moments do I feel that Thou
Dost take Thine ease amid the chamber of
My spirit; with mine eyes Thou gazest. Thou
Vouchsafest gently with my breath to breathe.

Wherefore to Thy most hallowed head I dare
To give my lineaments, most gracious Lord !

The Apostles (1911)

Cromwell at the Corpse of Charles I

THE strength and soundness of this body promised
Long course of life. . . . Even as on King Saul,
The Lord bestowed all gifts on him, and him,
Even as Saul He sentenced with His sentence . . .
We were the voice of Him, the sword of Him.
He doth but lend authority to kings,
But gives the people power to judge a king ;
For kingly power thrives only from the people.
And since this Stuart was a murderer,
A traitor, tyrant, foe unto his people,
The spirit of the Lord departed from him,
And him His wrath delivered to our judgment.
Thus, after the exemplar of old times,
And as exemplar to all coming ages
Hath been this body's fate. . . . The people are
R'en as the apple of God's eye, and most
When the Lord yields a king unto their judgment . . .
Falsehood, deceit and feigning were his weapons,
And they are broken as a reed doth break ;
And all his men-at-arms and servitors
Bowed them like sheaves before our smiting swords . . .
Now staunchly onward, ever in God's counsel.
And from the earth blot we out all amongst us
Who in base pride run counter to the people,
And God thereof shall have his glory, and
A godly benison this land of ours.
Cherish we glowing trust upon the Lord,
And keep the powder in our muskets dry !

The Apostles (1911)

Last Will and Testament

CALL not the surgeon,—hell avail me naught,—
 It was a goodly wound,—a devilish stripling,—
 But only prop my head, that I may set
 Last things in order,—as a keepsake, have
 My steeds, lieutenant,—and be worthy of
 The spirits of the beasts,—Corporal, receive
 My sword,—'tis full of stains,—but cleanse them not,
 They're the renown of it,—No priests for me,—
 Too late for that,—and where's the need, at all ?—
 The emperor's captain hath his place in heaven,—
 Yea, sure a thousand,—two, 'tis very like,—
 Czech pike-men I converted to the faith
 Of Rome,—likewise dispatched to hell,—for so
 Need sometime was,—Upon my breast I have
 A wallet with a brace of thalers,—wait
 Give 'em the priests for mass,—not for my soul,—
 That hath, so said I, warranty in heaven,—
 But for a pike-man,—Once,—'tis years ago,—
 Father Ignatius with me, I did swoop
 Upon a village,—heard the creed out,—well,
 'Tis thus we drove the straying herd unto
 Salvation's fount,—Inside a building sat
 An aged pike-man,—he was stubborn,—clung
 Tight to a book,—their scriptures,—would not yield,
 Shook his old pate,—a lime-tree stood within
 The courtyard,—and thereon I bade them hang
 This errant soul,—And as they led him forth,—
 He gazed at me,—Thou art a murderer,
 Sir Captain,—and some day or other, at
 The hour of death,—thou shalt-remember me,—
 • — I do remember,—how the eyes he had

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Were like two withered cornflowers,—yet it was
No murder,—for therein ne'er shifted ground
Father Ignatius,—Yet for safety's sake,—
Give ye the thalers,—that they read a mass
For that same pike-man's soul,—that when my foot
Is set in heaven,—the carrion may not
From flames of hell look forth upon me with
Those eyes of his,—the ending,—Yea,—because——

The Apostles (1911)

Beethoven

After May 20th, 1804

MY hero,—and a tyrant ? Bonaparte.
My own, an emperor ? And unto him
My Third, my dearest child I dedicated.
And Bonaparte is now Napoleon.
Swashbuckler, Jenghiz Khan. How mad I was.
How loathsome art thou to me now, my Third.
How do I hate thee, O thou errant dream.
Dost thou deride me, misbegotten child ?
O thou, my grief, my straying hope. My hero
In glory now will enter Notre Dame
And set a glittering bauble on his head,
The while the people shout his fame aloud,—
O, Revolution's children will exult
That once again a tyrant wears the crown.
O, ill-starred music, O, accursèd Third.
It is the end, the end. I shall depart
From this abode, where I in foolish faith
Cherished these dreams. The graveyard of our dreams
Is hateful and more loathsome than all others.
But wait, O Bonaparte. In this, my Third
There is a funeral march, wait, O thou traitor,

J. S. MACHAR

Thine shall it be,—I shall not burn thee, Third,
Because of this march. It was to be the ending
Of deeds victorious,—the hero's life
Wanes in a swift splendour, like a mighty star
Which soars, still blazing, from the firmament,—
But on this field of fame thou shalt not die,—
Tyrants die in their beds,—then shall this march
Have power to tell thee what things might have been. . .
Out awhile, out to yonder peaceful vineyards,
Which rest in sunshine. My head throbs and aches
With burial pangs. . . . My hero's now a tyrant. . . .
Away from men, there's not a man among them,
Away from all things,—all things are deception,
Out to the sunshine and the cooling wind.

He (1921)

Two Cossacks

(Tilsit, June 25th, 1807)

—S E E Fedka, that small man with the white paunch,
O Walking there with the Tsar, our Little Father,—
'Tis He.—

—But our priest said he's a hairy fellow,
And that this godless devil is decked with horns.—

—Thou seest 'tis not so. With him consorts our Tsar,—
How could the orthodox Tsar walk with the devil ?—

—Thou thinkest then that he is not the devil ?—

—How should he be, thou dolt ? He's not, for sure.—

—Five from our village were taken to the war.
And the priest told us 'twas against the devil,

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And for the Tsar and for the true belief.
Now Uncle Mitaj has his head torn off,
And bayonets ripped Sasha and Petka open,
And someone hacked my brother Ivan in twain,—
Then tell me, O thou man of deepest wisdom,
Wherefore all this ? Why were we driven from home,
Driven for hundreds of versts to foreign lands,
Afar to bayonets, cannons, muskets ? Wherefore
All this, since He is not the devil, and now
Our Gosudar, our sovereign orthodox,
Consorts with him, as with a kindred brother ?—

—Ah, Fedka, thou art as a poppy-head,
Stripped of the poppy-flowers. All this was done
Because they could not thus converse together,
And they at last can thus converse together,
Because 'twas done. Thou sheep's-brain, is it for me
To give thee learning ? Hold thy peace,
Open thine eyes, see with what courtesy
The mighty of the world converse together,
And pray in seemly wise to God the Father
And to his saints, that for long time to come,
They may not, to the harm of our well-being,
Kindle their anger one against the other.—

He (1921)

Faust and Don Juan

AN elderly gentleman was proceeding along the street with a deliberate and dignified gait. His yellowish countenance was bordered with a dark clipped beard, which here and there showed signs of becoming white ; in his gentle eyes lingered a delicate and melancholy

gleam; his forehead, as far as it was not hidden by his hat, revealed a network of deep wrinkles ; his handsome nose was slightly widened at the nostrils and the tip of it was tinged with a delicate carmine,—the result of indulging in snuff.

He had a black morning-coat, from the pocket of which the tip of a blue handkerchief peeped out; his boots were double-soled, and in his hand he carried a large walking-stick with a curved handle.

His melancholy eyes gazed with a gentle glance of resignation upon the people and the street. He replied to the salutations of the passers-by with a pleasant smile, each time describing a parabola in the air with his white straw hat, the band of which was of black silk ; and this process revealed a large shiny bald patch on his head. He expressed his thanks in a soft and agreeable voice with a " Charmed to see you, sir," or a " Good day, sir/'

Another gentleman, also quite elderly, was advancing towards him from a distance of about fifty yards. His attire was faultless. His coat was open, and in his buttonhole he wore some lilies-of-the-valley. On his waistcoat swung a glittering gold chain. In his gaily coloured necktie he had a pin with a small bronze horse and jockey. His feet were enclosed in a pair of pointed, brightly polished shoes. His small, aristocratic hands were covered by dark yellow gloves, and in his right hand he carried a walking-stick of the same colour as the gloves, with a silver mount upon which a silver monogram was engraved.

His face was interesting. His rather tired dark eyes with long lashes and thick brows gazed from beneath the brim of a straw hat. His nose was almost Greek, and

slender in the middle. His cheeks were covered with a dark beard turning grey, which, in the French style, was trimmed to a point at the chin. This gentleman had a proud bearing and a firm gait, while in his mouth he held a dainty cigarette, the blue smoke of which he puffed with enjoyment through his nostrils, humming a popular song the while.

These two now met. They exchanged glances, opened their arms, and held each other in a firm embrace.

" Noble Don ! " exclaimed the first with emotion.

" Doctor Faust! " cried the dandy, kissing him.

They stood for a while in silence, gazing at each other with joy.

After all those years Don Juan had met Doctor Faust!

" By Heaven, Doctor," remarked Don Juan after a moment, " where did you spring from ? How are tilings with you ? What mostly surprises mc is that you're still alive. But, pardon me, don't say a word, let's go into that wineshop and celebrate our meeting and tell each other all the news over a glass of red liquor."

Faust gave a melancholy shake of his head. " I don't drink wine at all," he said solemnly.

" Then a glass of Pilsener," said Don Juan pressingly.

Faust consulted a large silver watch. " Very well," he said, " I've a bare hour to spare, and then, I must resume my professional duties."

" Why, good gracious, Doctor," exclaimed Don Juan in astonishment, " what are you now ? "

" Teacher of chemistry and physics at the technical school here," replied Faust softly. " I passed my examinations in philosophy too, hoping to become a university lecturer, **but** my philosophy was too pessi-

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mistic and would have been, so they said, fatal to young men. Still," he added, " I'm satisfied even so. But I must be back at school in an hour without fail."

In the meanwhile they had entered the tavern.

" And now, my dear Doctor," remarked Don Juan, raising his glass with its large white crest, " let's drink and then talk."

They clinked glasses and pledged each other's good health.

" Really, I don't know where to begin," said Faust with a sigh, as he wiped the froth from his beard. " My life, as it is known to the world, is a tissue of lies."

" Just like mine," declared Don Juan eagerly.

" Once I was young," began Faust solemnly, " and I was in love. . . ."

" Ah, Marguerite," said Don Juan, interrupting him.

" Yes, Marguerite," continued Faust, " how I loved her! How beautiful she was ! She used to sit by her sewing-machine, a Singer's high-grade, and there was a favourite ditty of hers which began like this :

**My joy is lost,
My heart is sad. . . .**

Oh, my friend, she was an angel ! So gentle, so good-natured, an excellent housekeeper. She had angelic blue eyes, fair hair,—the model of a beautiful, well-bred German girl. My love for her was pure and ideal. Believe me, Don, I would have married her."

" Ideal, Doctor ? " enquired Don Juan with a threatening gesture of his forefinger, " I have read a somewhat different version of the story."

" Don Juan," replied Faust earnestly, " let me tell you that my story in the written version is a pack of

impudent lies. Indeed, I was going to bring an action against Minister Goethe who wrote the thing, but some of my friends dissuaded me. He was an old gentleman who had deserved well of literature and his nation. . . . But to return. I could not marry Marguerite,—at that time I had not passed my examinations. She went and married an apothecary, and with a broken heart I left my native land. That business about the devil is a stupid fabrication, and also the tale of Marguerite in that song. . . ."

"Excuse me, Doctor, do you smoke?" asked Don Juan, offering him his cigarette-case.

Faust shook his head, produced a silver snuff-box, and took a pinch.

"Oh, I see," said Don Juan with a smile. "Well, and what then?"

"So here I am as a teacher, and altogether a serious-minded person, who guides the young in the way they should go, and I write."¹

"Ah!" exclaimed Don Juan in astonishment. "What?"

"I have issued a work in popular language entitled *On the Cause of Thunderstorms*, replied Faust modestly. "My pupils are fond of me, and I am happy. Only sometimes I can't help abusing the poets. Poetry is one of mankind's unfortunate maladies which has caused no end of harm."

"And women?" asked Don Juan, inquisitively.

"*Tempi passati*," replied Faust, waving his hand. "Still," he added confidentially, "I am again in love ... and this time I think. . . . But what about yourself, my dear Don? How is life treating you? What are you doing now?"

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" The times are bad," answered Don Juan, " women are wiser than I am; it's hard to make a living. Of course, I've had my successes, but they've been very much elaborated by the poets. The real thing is different. I'm really ashamed to mention it. Every year a few paternity cases, a few actions for defamation of character, and lately a prosecution for debt. ... An unpleasant life, Doctor. . . . Where is a man to keep getting the money from ? Oh, it's disgusting. ... "

Faust looked at his watch. " Well, I must go. Shall we be meeting again ? "

" I hardly think so, I'm leaving here for good."

"To-day? "

" Yes, to-day."

They emptied their glasses and left. In the street they stopped.

" I must go this way," said Faust, pointing to the right.

" The left's my direction," explained Don Juan*

" Good-bye, then ! "

" Good-bye, and good luck ! "

With an embrace and a cold kiss they parted. Faust stepped out with the deliberation of a serious-minded man. Don Juan set off with his mincing gait. After a while they both stopped and looked back.

" A dull fellow," said Don Juan to himself, as he waved his hand to Faust.

" A dull fellow," said Faust, waving back to Don Juan. And raising their hats, they turned round again and went on their way.

Old Prose (1903)

ANTONIN KLASTERSKY

ANTONÍN KLÁŠTERSKÝ

From "Ironical Sicilian Octaves " (1913)

(1) *Funeral Rites*

HE is no more, alas ! So great, so rare !
His merit gleams, a star in gloomy sky.
See, what black edges all the papers bear,
And in the streets half-mast the flags will fly.
The grateful nation ! Not an inch to spare
In sorrow's dwelling. . . . Hear the widow's cry—
While round the pressmen crowds are jostling there,
Their names for publication to supply.

(2) *Official Soirée at Prince X's*

THE prince bids welcome. Sombre garments mate
With flash of uniforms. All ranks are here.
Some stand in clusters, others sit in state ;
Flunkies with wine and lemonade appear. . . .
Heels click and clash. See some bald baron prate
His tittle-tattle. Laughter. Some get clear
In starving pangs, some empty many a plate—
Cigars cram someone's pockets at the rear.

(3) *The Past Life*

THAT I have lived in other worlds of yore
The strangest inkling haunts this soul of mine.
I was a poet . . . rugs and flowers galore
I slept on. Patrons asked me out to dine.

ANTONIN KLASTERSKY

I was still young at thirty. By my door
Publishers thronged and struggled in a line.
No critic leered. Yes, I have lived before—
To this my soul continues to incline.

(4) *From a Meeting of the Common Council*

THIS worthy man will soon be fifty. . . . Sirs,
I think . . . in him such qualities we meet . . .
A patriot . . . it everywhere occurs. . . .
A house we'll buy him . . . cheaply, all complete. . . .
I've one for sale. . . . His life is full of burrs ;
Let his old age be jubilant and sweet. . . .
Rank opposition noisily demurs :
" No house ! But after him we'll name a street !"

(5) *To Czech Poetry*

ONCE not a hair of yours durst slip aside;
Staidly attired, you let no tress be shown ;
But then you loosed your locks, and far and wide,
Like birch-boughs in the breezes they were blown,
Dishevelled thus,—but there is naught to chide ;
My ample love for you has never flown,
Whether your hair be trammelled or untied,—
If but the locks you show us are your own.

(6) *Art*

IPENNED a mighty epic poem of yore,
But afterwards observed that it was naught,
And burnt it ; but with one chant I forbore,
Which was a gem of sentiment, methought.

ANTONIN KLASTERSKY

Later, **with** deeper care, I read it o'er,

And quoth : " Its point in *satire* could be caught 1 "
But now—the reader gleefully may roar—
Only an epigram, in fine, I've wrought.

(7) *A Question*

THE critic writes : " Our art appears to me
Quite weak and wheezy in its aged distress.
Where can our epoch's youthful spirit be ?

Who'll chant of spring in poems that possess
The sap of spring ? Who from the grave will free
Youth, strength, with wondrous verses for their
dress ? "

He wrote. And rubbing both his hands with glee
He squinted at his *own* book, in the press.

(8) *Before the First Number of a New Volume*

THE Editor of *Sunbeams* looks distraught.
He gets no sleep, or wakes in loud dismay.
If he but knew what miracles are wrought
For the first number of that cursed *Day*.
Will he have Alpha ? So much—and he's bought.
Or Beta ? What a price he asks ! But, stay,
It is with lime, you know, that birds are caught—
In the first number, it's the *names* that pay.

PETR BEZRUC'

PETR BEZRUC'

(b. 1867)

From " Silesian Songs " (1909)

Kijov

HO, ye youthful swains, top-booted and lithe,
Ho, ye damsels in scarlet wear.
In Kijov town ye ever were blithe,
And blithe shall ye ever be there.

E'en as from fragrant vines it had gushed,
E'en as ye seethe, my lays ;
The blood of the Slovaks is fierily flushed,
Lips burn and eyes are ablaze.

Who shall smite us, who shall afflict us with ill ?
Of a master naught we know ;
And as blithe as we live and drink our fill,
As blithe to our end we shall go.

The Pitman

1 DIG, under the earth I dig ;
Boulders glittering like the scales of a serpent I dig ;
Beneath Polska Ostrava I dig.

My lamp is quenched, upon my brow has fallen
My hair, matted and clammy with sweat;
My eyes are shot with bitterness and gall;

PETR BEZRUC̣

My veins and my skull are clouded with vapour ;
From beneath my nails gushes forth crimson blood ;
Beneath Polskd Ostrava I dig.

The broad hammer I smite upon the pit ;
At Salmovec I dig,
At Rychvald I dig, and at Pětvald I dig.

Hard by Godula my wife freezes and whimpers,
Famishing children weep at her bosom ;
I dig, under the earth I dig.

Sparks flash from the pit, sparks flash from my eyes ;
At Dombrovi I dig, at Orlovd I dig,
At Poremba I dig and beneath Lazy I dig.
Above me overhead rings the clatter of hoofs,
The count is riding through the hamlet, the countess
 with dainty hand
Urges on the horses and her rosebud face is smiling.

I dig, the mattock I upraise ;
My wife, livid-faced, trudges to the castle,
Craving for bread, when the milk has dried up in her
 breasts.

Good-hearted is my lord,
Of yellow masonry is his castle,
Beneath the castle is dinning and bursting the Ostravice.
By the gates two black bitches are scowling.

Wherefore she went to the castle to pester and beg ?
Grows rye on my lord's field for the drab of a pitman ?
At Hrusov I dig and at Michalkovice.

PETR BEZRUC

What will betide my sons, what will betide my daughters,
On the day when they drag out my corpse from the pit ?
My sons shall go on digging and digging,
At Karvinna digging ;
And my daughters,—how fares it with daughters of
pitman ?

How if one day I should fling my accursed lamp into
the pit,
And stiffen my bended neck,
Clench my left hand and stride forth and onward,
And in a sweeping curve from the earth to the skyline
upwards
Should upraise my hammer and my flashing eyes,
Yonder beneath God's sunshine !

The Hideous Spectre

UGH . . . 'tis a hideous phantom!
So say the justices of the golden city,
So says the sage leader of the people,
Patriot ladies shake their dainty heads,
So say Rothschild and Gutman, Count LaryS and Vlček,
And his Lordship Marquis Gero,—
When from the throng of the seventy thousand
I rose up aloft. So did they smite me with a whip !
Like the Vitkovice foundries my one eye glared down,
From my shoulders fluttered a blood-stained gown.
Upon one I bore a German school,
Upon the other I bore the Polish church,
In my right hand the heavy hammer I bore
—My left was struck off by a boulder of coal,
My eye was scorched out by the blaze of a flame—

PETR BEZRUC̣

And in my heart were the curses and hatred of seventy thousand.

God knows, I am hideous !

From me the stench of a corpse is wafted,

Upon hand, upon foot, my flesh is bursting ;

Knowest thou the forges at Baška ? Thus my eye glares down,

From my shoulders flutters a blood-stained gown,

In my right hand the pitman's hammer I bear,

My left was struck of by a boulder of coal,

My eye was scorched out by the blaze of a flame—

Upon my back squat a hundred murderers from Modrd
—Like savage rats they gnaw into my neck—

Upon my hips squat a hundred Jews from Polskd,—

Jeer ye, my God, jeer ye ! Such my array,

I Petr Bezruc, Bezrut of Tesin,

Bard of an enslaved nation.

How do the youth of Vltava maltreat a captive
flittermouse ?

How did the Romans upraise Spartacus, the leader ?

Thus shall I stand,—long since have perished my nation,—

A hundred years shall I stand with my brow upraised to
the skyline,

With my smitten neck shall I touch the azure,

I, Petr Bezruč, Ahasuerus of the Czech conscience,

Hideous phantom and bard of a bygone nation.

Vrbice

BENEATH Bohumin, where the speech of my
grandsires has ceased to resound,

And by Hrušov, where smoke issues from a red factory,

My lord's factory, where we breathe hard and hardly,

Thou liest, my hamlet, with the wooden chapel.

PETR BEZRUC

Decayed are the huts, upon whose roofs the moss grows
rankly;

Four poplars show Christ on the cross.

Thus

They thrust a crown of thorns on my brow at Bohu-
min,

Nailed my hands at Ostrava, at Těšín they pierced
through my heart,

At Lipina they gave me vinegar to drink,

By Lysd they pierced my feet with a nail.

One day, ah, one day, thou wilt come unto me,

Thou maiden with dark and lack-lustre eyes,

Who bearest a poppy in thy hands.

Still shall the whip resound, still shall they hound us
down

Beneath Bohumin and at Hrusov, at Lutyn, at Baska,

No more do I hear ; I reck not thereof,

I reck not of aught.

Who in My Stead ?

SO scant is my blood, and now from my lips
It flows.

When there grows

Above me the grass, when my body decays,

Who in my stead

Will my scutcheon upraise ?

My eyes dimmed, and flame from my nostrils trailed

By the Vitkovice foundries in smoke I was veiled,

Whether with sunshine or twilight at hand,

With a frown on my brow these slayers I scanned,

Rich Jews and counts of a noble line,

I a hideous pitman just sprung from the mine.

PETR BEZRUC̣

Though glistened their brows with a diadem,
My rigid stare did not flinch from them,
Nor my clenched fist, my scorn,
The miner's wrath, Bezkyd-born.
So scant is my blood, and now from my lips
It flows.
When there grows
Above me the grass, when my body decays,
Who'll relieve me on guard
And my scutcheon upraise ?

Ostrava

A HUNDRED years mutely I dwelt in the pit,
A hundred years coal I hewed,
In a hundred years my shoulders were knit
Stiff as if iron-thewed.

Coal-dust upon my eyes is smeared,
The red from my lips has escaped,
And from my hair, from eyebrows, from beard,
Coal clings icicle-shaped.

Bread with coal is my labour's prize,
From toil unto toil I go.
Palaces by the Danube arise
From my blood and my sweat they grow.

A hundred years I was mute in the mine,
Who'll requite me those hundred years ?
When my hammer made them a threatening sign
They each began with their jeers.

PETR BEZRUC^ˇ

I should keep my wits, in the mine I should stay,
For my masters still I should moil,—
I swung the hammer,—blood flowed straightway
On Polskd Ostrava's soil.

All ye in Silesia, all ye, I say,
Whether Peter your name be or Paul,
Your breasts ye must gird with steely array
And thousands to battle must call;

All ye in Silesia, all ye, I say,
Ye lords of the mines below ;
The mines flare and reek, and there comes a day,
A day when we'll take what we owe.

/

i

I AM the seer of the folk by the Bezkyds ;
God gave me not to them. He heeds but the country
Where gold of the corn stretches up to the skyline,
Where pansies are fragrant, forget-me-nots blossom,
Where cymbal and fiddle make music for dances,
Where cities are broad and castles majestic,
Treasure-filled churches and skiffs on the river,
Where men trust in heaven, and gladness abounds.

He whom God had condemned to a sulphury chasm,
He whose lips in their starkness no prayer ever uttered,
Sat on a crag with a time-old defiance.

He stared with an eye that was murky as nightfall,
'Neath the hush of the Bezkyds and 'neath Lysa Hora.

PETR BEZRUC̣

A century's grip, the yoke that has humbled
The collier's neck as a bough in the bending,
Turbulent grasp of the foreigner, dragging
The vanishing speech from the lips of the children,
The sign of betrayal, of hands in entreaty,
—For a hundred years' span his gaze it had haunted—
Stirred up the demon.

He smote at the boulder.

Down from the crag leapt the hideous prophet,
Nurtured from serfdom, from blood of betrayal;
He sobbed at the moon and he railed at the sunshine,
With a clench of his fist he threatened the heavens,
And each of the slayers, though golden their lustre,
And though at their feet were bowed down as to godheads
Yonder at Těšín the colliery bondsmen.
He dragged in the dust in his wrath and defiance,
The bounty for life that the demon had given him,—
Down from the crag leapt I !

ii

IN August, when sunrays are ruddy and slanting,
When spurtings of heat ooze out from the boulders,
The Moravka torrent is parched in its courses,
Below are uplifted the arms of the miners,
The blacksmiths are pounding the iron in its redness.
On the span of the fields at Krasna, at Prazma,
Women bow down in the glow of the sunshine.
I roused myself up from this peaceable people,
Even whose cradle was guarded by serfdom,
Even whose childhood was fettered by bondage,
Ill-plighted scion of miners and blacksmiths ;

PETR BEZRUC̣

I sped me from Ostrava, Vitkovice, Baška,
From Frydlant, from Orlovď, Dombrovd, Lazy,
I flung in the pit my hammer and mattock,
I left in the field my mother and sister,
I snatched from its hook my grandfather's fiddle,
My tune I began.

Once, haply, resounded
Strains of delight from it, youth and affection.
I know not, I know not. Tis long ago, now,
Three strings were rended.

I flung from the church the foreigner's preacher,
From the foreigner's school I harried the master ;
By night I enkindled my woods they had taken ;
I slaughtered the hare on my overlord's moorland.
They dragged me to Těšin, God tangled my senses.
'Neath Lysd I play to the goats and the squirrels,
Beneath the red ash-tree to sparrows that perch there.
From hamlet to hamlet in heat I have wandered,
In heat and in cold, in blizzard and rainfall.
I have played behind hedges and played beneath
 windows ;
Only a single string has my fiddle, .
The heavy sigh of the seventy thousand,
That have perished 'neath Lysd, hard by Bohumin ;
They have perished amid their wrenched-away pinewoods,
In the wrenched-away Bezkyds slowly they perish,
They in Sumbark have perished, in Lutyň have perished,
In Datyne perish, in Detmarovice,
They in Poremba perished, they in Dombrovd perish.
Strike ye your tents and quench ye your watchfires!
A stirring has come o'er the seventy thousand ;
Long ago on the Olza was pitched an encampment,

PETR BEZRUČ

Far have we yielded beyond the Lucina,
We shall cross to the Morava, beyond the Ostravice,
A nation of silence, a stock that is gone.

As David in front of the ark, so before them
Like a mad snake to the sound of the reed-pipe,
Doth dance the quaint bard of the seventy thousand,
The Bezkyd Don Quixote, with juniper spearshaft,
Armour of moss and a helmet of pine-cones,
A mushroom for shield, and he peeps from the spinney.
Eager to seize on the stern arm of judgment,
The knight's tawny sword in the golden-wrought corselet

I, Petr Bezruč, the Bezruč of Těšín,
Vagabond fiddler and piper of madness,
Lunatic rebel, and drunken songster,
Ill-omened owl on the turret of Těšín,
I play and I sing, while the hammers make thunder
From Vitkovice, Frydlant, and under Lipiny.
Around are rich men of a faith that I know not,
—O Petr Bezruč, how lovest thou them !—
Men who have names that are lordly and peerless,
Haughty as stars and lustrous as godheads ;
—O Petr Bezruč, who shattered your home,—
Around there are women in velvet, in satin ;
Around there are men, glorified, mighty,
In the city of gold, by the side of the Danube,
Around there are poets from Vltava's margins,
The lovers of women, as Paris has bidden.
The string in despair 'neath the bow is aquiver,
The heavy sigh of the seventy thousand ;
I sing to the stones and I play to the boulders,
I play and I sing,—will ye give me a kreutzer ?

PETR BEZRUC

III

I AM the first of the Teschen people,
First bard of the Bezkyds who uttered his strains.
Of the foreigner's plough and his mines they are bondsmen.

Watery, milky, the sap in their veins.
Each of them has a God in the heavens,
Greater the one in their native land.
In the church they pay Him on high their tribute.
To the other with blood and a toil-seared hand.

He, He upon high, gave thee bread for thy life's sake,
Gave flowers to the butterfly, glades to the doe ;
Thou, thou who wert bred on the Bezkyd mountains,
To Him the broad lands beneath LysA dost owe.
He gave thee the mountains and gave thee the forests.
The fragrance borne by the breeze from the dale ;
At a swoop the other has taken all from thee,
Speed unto Him in yon church, and wail.

Honour God and thy masters, my son from the Bezkyds,
And this shall yield fair fruit unto thee.
Thou art chased from thy forests by guardian angels,
So humbly to them thou bendest the knee :
" Thou thief from Krasna ! Is this thy timber ?
Thou shalt sink down meekly, and earth shait thou
kiss I
Quit thy lord's forests and get thee to Frydek ! "
Thou upon high, what sayst Thou to this ?

But thine ugly speech is a bane to thy masters,
To those guardian angels it is a bane.

PETR BEZRUCĚ

Have done with it, thou shalt fare the better,
Thy son shall be first thereby to gain.
Thus it is. The Lord wills it. Night sank o'er my people,
We shall perish before the night has passed.
In this night, I have prayed to the Demon of Vengeance,
The first of the Bezkyd bards and the last.

OTAKAR BŘEZINA

(b. 1868)

Gaze of Death

AT bed-sides, in dusk of forebodings, many a time, I
JLJL know,
Before thy conquering gaze has my gaze been laid low.

In mine was frailness and yearning, flashing steel's
mirth in thine,
And in its mirror my own pondering I could divine.

To far-hidden, unknown cities, pale and bewildered it
went
In gloom and polar nights with journeyings mute and
forspent.

It stared with anguish of doubt, and the cold of eternal
space
Its tortured and wearied limbs in a metal garb did
enlace.

'Mid folds of vanishing shapes from thine eyes through
misty rifts
As from bloom of a mystical tree snow was scattered in
drifts,

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misty rifts
As from bloom of a mystical tree snow was scattered in
drifts,

OTAKAR BREZINA

And thickened and darkened, and quaffing of lustre it
scoured and gnawed
At scars of my ponderings, as in flames it crimsonly
thawed.

At bed-sides, in dusk of forebodings, many a time, I
know
Before thy motionless gaze has my gaze been laid low.

As a sleep-walker lured from his bed, pallid, fettered and
dumb
My dream do I follow, and me an Unknown's promptings
benumb.

And in wearied hands of my days, aquiver before me
arise
Lights of funeral torches enkindled by thine eyes.

Secret Distances (1895)

The Arts

O MOURNFUL graveyard, where souls of the mighty
dream,
And throngs of glistening shades pass age-long to the
tomb,
Glowings of mystic fires, like to a polar gleam,
Upon thy portals loom.

Sleeping, I near thy radiance 'mid my garden-close,
Where night has flooded, like a darksome ocean-bay,
A field of perished flowers, which phosphor-livid glows
In lustre's blue array.

OTAKAR BŘEZINA

Trembling of silenced words, quenched passions' misty
veil—

Time with grey woof has spanned amid thy mute
despair ;

Deep sighs of perished throngs across thy seed-plots trail
And moulder in thine air.

Beneath a vault aloof, upon a tiny shrine,

Where o'er a marble city towers thy metal fane,
Eternal One, durst I, marred with blood-lusts of mine,
My mass for Thee ordain ?

And soak the bread of Ufe in wine of rapture, on

The altar-table, which conceals in hallowed stead
'Neath roses of my dreams and lights of orison
The relics of Thy dead ?

Or will Thy body yield marvel of blood, perchance,

Vine-like, in golden goblet, heavy for my weak hands,
And with angelic lustre wilt Thou light my glance,
Born amid twilight lands ?

Upon my pyre of days I bid Thee : Torture, burn,

In sorrow's prison-house blanch Thou my face as snow;
Grief to Thy fragrant incense-glory will I turn
'Mid song-craft's pulsing glow.

And form of ecstasy, as gleaming flowers unfolded,

Flung by love's ferment, I on dark-tinged floors shall
heap,
With bliss of maiden forms, where perfumes, bosom-
moulded,
'Mid alabaster sleep.

OTAKAR BREZINA

In glowing pillar's guise my soul shall skywards grasp,
And cofined in my strength, sleeping I shall abide,
When as a smitten priest, I in the secret's clasp
Kneel at Thine altar's side.

Legend of Secret Guilt

FLASH of my coming hours illumined this moment
in dreams
And bloomed in my festive halls with every lustre ablaze,
My coming springtides and hidden graces rippled in
tuneful streams,
I was dazed by lips, with breath that beguiles, with
laughter that gleams,
And eyes where awaited me muteness of rapture glowed
there with yearning gaze.

But vainly I strode where quivered, in rhythms that
dumbfound,
Life's chant. The shadow of One before me and after me
wended,
Flitting from hall unto hall, bright blaze at its coming
was drowned,
Mirrors grew dim, yearning trembled and music's
conquering sound
As if thrust into lowliest octaves of silent anguish was
blended.

O my soul, whence came it ? And how many centuries
has it passed ?
Haply through souls of my forefathers, ere unto me it
came ?
On how many marriage-tables as a requiem-cloth was it
cast ?

OTAKAR BREZINA

On how many rose-hued smiles came its chill and earthen
blast?

And in how many lamps did it blanch amid salt and
essence of flame ?

Dawning in the West (1896)

A Mood

F^AINT with the heat, a murmur on the calm branches
falls,

Motionless hanging, while in grievous intervals
The forest breathed, oppressed ; sap in a bitter tide
From the burst herbage let crude-savoured fragrance
glide.

'Neath the unmoving trees pale faintness sought a place,
Sat by my side and breathed forebodings in my face,
Grief of the ceaseless question in my eyes immersed,
And with my soul in speech of lifeless words conversed.
The sun's o'erripened bloom quivered in glows of white,
Quailed in the dusk of boughs and 'mid blue leaves took
flight

With listless calm's mute wane of strength; in mosses hid
It smouldered, lulling me in weariness amid
A bath of mystic breath, as though 'neath waves I lay,
And from my opened veins blood softly oozed away.

Dawning in the West (1896)

Brotherhood of Believers

O^UR ponderings have bathed in fiery waves of a
sacred summer,

Which kindles azure of souls with glow of all August-
tides and ripening of all stars.

OTAKAR BRÉZINA

And when they had cleansed away their grievous tokens
of earth, they rose up in purity of earliest radiances.
And fathomed potent blisses of time : its breath was
sweet with hope of the dead
And with baffling tempest seethed therein budding
burgeons of all gardens to be.

Days that were void of mornings cast lights upon us
from afar, like time-old echoes of yearning,
We were frenzied with frenzy of love, that was an orison
to the Highest.
From our lips trickled its sweetness and yet they burned
with sacred thirst,
Our eyes drank thereof from brotherly eyes and to our
brothers' gazes gave it to drink
And in quivering of an unknown blood-kinship it chimed
to us with riddling music.

Our dreams were merged in a single dreaming, and
myriad trees of a single forest rustled,
When by their tremor the boughs one to the other give
tidings of a single wind from unknown oceans.
Upon our meadows lay fragrance of all blossoms,
sweetened into a single welded accord,
And radiance of our souls, fused into a single flaring,
garbed the invisible with colours
And the voice of all our united wishes caused powers
to blossom unto us as marvellous gardens.

And we culled our rapture, like grapes on a single
bewildering cluster,
That burst at the touch in the spurting-forth of a single
wine:

OTAKAR BREZINA

Apples from a single tree, which when **cleft, are aflush**
with blood they share with ours,
Kisses of a single night, wherein souls sing of death **and**
coming lives,
In a single enkindling of lips, age-long infirm with bliss
of that single burning contact.

Polar Winds (1897)

Song of Sun, Earth, Waters and Secret of Fire

THE anchorite's eastward-facing windows
Crackled, molten with approaching fire-glow of
day!

On pallid faces was kindled splendour of blood
And drunken with scaling the summit, the heart was
chanting its song
Of sun, earth, waters and secret of fire.

Sun ! Deadly to eyes that are fixed ! Fire-laden fountain
of thirst!

Rigid, but in illusion approaching ! Rigid, but in illusion
departing !

Casting and feeding on shadows ! Dallying with night-
time !

Silent art thou !

Dost thou remember that outcry, borne throughout
ages,

When life at the first was astir, perplexed by thy radiance,
And rigidly bowed in ecstasy of amazement was reeling
from darkness ?

When burden of thy smile roused winds of earth and
souls

OTAKAR BREZINA

And when a myriad ethereal wings, held fast by gleam
 of thy lustre
Beat at thy lattice, resounding as unseen harp-strings ?
And when through stillness of forests uprooted, ages of
 expectation,
Flew the first mournful tune, craving deliverance,
And in love and thirsting chanted thine annals,
Glittering Captive-Holder,
Thyself in captivity !

Earth ! Roving through ages !
Shackled by prompting of an eternal glance, that by day
 encompassed with radiance
Opens itself at nightfall and in greenish depths
 phosphoresces,
And rigid in an unknown motion is suddenly aflash with
 myriad sparks,
And haunts thine every movement amid thy dance
 through spaces of worlds f
Vessel, enchanted within a single circle, thou floatest
 through ages,
And hours, perplexingly silent mariners,
Guard thy numberless strangers,
Yearningly from the deck gazing into distances
In treachery musing on liberation ;
Age upon age in a single circle through ages thou floatest,
But billows thou flingest in a myriad circles surge up
 to the marges
Of dawning years.

Waters ! Mirrors of heights, where age-long star-images
 have faded !
Treacherous, ye that have kissed Ufe in a thousand kisses,

OTAKAR BREZINA

And captivity of earth ye concealed with beauty, and
ye at noon-tides have been
Bath and wine of the sun, and thousandfold heaved by
its ardour,
Afresh and afresh ye returned for solace of earth !
From roses and violets and dew ye wove fragrant garb
of mornings,
And enticed to yourselves with gazes and flashes ;
The poet, who roves by your margins,
In dizziness of your thirst-ridden depths,
Amid your stillness waxes drunken with grievous
remembrance of ages,
When breath of the Highest above you was lifted,
And your storm is to him the recoil of a fashioning
gesture,
Which soared from pole unto pole,
Fateful upraising of a seed-strewing hand.
For amid your depths through ages have slumbered
images of plants yet to be,
Glacial vegetations of winds on a captive's casements,
And ere upon earth, in your billows, forests have
murmured, spring-tides have chimed,
Berries proclaimed their brief sweetness and fragrance
in whisper of blossoms,
Vain kisses of beings have seethed, tears glowed in lustre,
And the unborn sobbed in their final strivings.

Secret of fire ! Deliverer !
Lustrous emblem of the Omnipresent!
Haughty outbreathing of potency ! Embraces trans-
formed into radiance !
Stretching aloft!
Illusion of hues sunk into a single flaring 1

OTAKAR BREZINA

Tongues aglitter above heads of the holy !
Gardens of flames, hidden in depths of matter,
Blooming in splendour of changes from seen unto unseen !
Lo, souls of the strong wander in your avenues with their
adoration,
And like a love-song resounds unto them whispering of
your gladness,
Flames, friends of a new-risen tempest !
Conquerors kindle in you their touches for dawning of
years to be,
And sorrow of thousands roves there, and plucks your
blood-red, quivering blossoms,
And gathers with naked hands from their glowing crown
the leafage, as from roses,
And casts them, transmuted to lustre and fragrance
Upon the pathway of souls.

Polar Winds (1897)

Prophets

U^NTO cities, whose towers and palaces shall one day
quiver
In earthquake (when clouds of strange patterns
Wail in anger, wounded by lightnings from their own
depths,
And fire, which in a thousand hidden caverns dreamt of
its glory,
Shall stir to avenge the age-long captive,
And with all its tongues shall shriek forth thy name,
And the sun shall change its known guise which it dis-
played unto ages)
Shall arrive, unperceived, thine envoys,
Conquerors of thy kingdom.

OTAKAR BREZINA

Amid music and dances of maidens and song-tunes
Shall they hearken unto thy sacred breath,
Which shall quench radiance for mortals, but blazing
 of worlds
Shall fan to a white-heat;
Wherein blossoms stir not, when it whirls in their depths,
Yet age-old crags it shatters like morsels of fragrant
 bread,
For delicate lips of tarrying life.
Their voice, clutched by whirlwind of time, shall waft
 behind them,
Sweet as fragrance behind a rose-bearer, bitter as torch-
 smoke,
And most secret thoughts of their own, terrified by
 omniscience,
Shall they hear above them chanting in starry firma-
 ments,
Beneath them in fiery and secret muteness amid depths
 of earth,
Antiphonies of lustre and night-time.

Of thee do they speak and thy glory,
Of the curse resting on the brotherhood of souls
And sundering speech of the builders ; and their love
From age unto age roves above earth,
Like summer from settlements, whither vertical sunrays
 endlessly beat.
New fruit is yielded by trees of the earth,
Engrafted shoots from their secret gardens ;
But their hopes, apt for such lofty flights and song-
 tunes
Build their nests on a level with earth,
Like nightingales.

OTAKAR BŘEZINA

And when their destined moment approaches, the dead
world
Shall darken their sun ; like a trickling wound in the
heart of a lover
Their lustre shall change into blood; and before their
gazes
It shall spread regions of coming ages,
Glittering with new star-clusters.
Myriads before them shall stir at thy breath, like billows
Of eternal ocean, which in broad gulfs laves upon earth
And changes its continents through the ages.
Across the snow, wherewith secret of time conceals thy
winter-crops,
Bare-footed, as exiles, they shall pass, and their thoughts,
an untold multitude,
In a thousand footprints shall bleed,
At every step.
In escape shall they flee across burning cities of coming
ages,
As on a fiery carpet, outspread upon stairs
Of thy sacred height. And each of their ponderings,
Which turns back in compassion,
With knowledge shall stiffen to stone.
And new and new clouds of the ages shall thunder before
them :
Lightnings which fling livid pallor on faces of reapers.
Fateful impact of daring vessels in mist.
Roar of a throng upon sites of secret buildings,
Whose scaffoldings, blackly hidden, are sullied with
blood,
Places of execution !
O songs of passion, which they hear ascending from
flames,

OTAKAR BŘEZINA

Glances of future sufferers, their magical contact,
Kisses opening new eternities of radiance and sorrow.
A single soul's frenzy, upon whose glittering, billows
Earth is asway. Ages suffering, centuries perishing,
Undying,
Bearing burden of all star-clusters,
Perceiving its own glory.

And when at the end in festive calmness
Mastheads of fleets of coming destinies,
Which sailed forth at this world's creation,
From secret coasts they behold approaching,
The oars yet hidden by curve of the sea-level afar :

Then their delight shall utter a shout of strength and
ardour

And impatience. And they, who have known not bliss,
In bliss shall awake from their vision,
And grief alone worthy of their strength, shall clutch
their souls :

Grief of time delaying.

Too slowly earth revolves for them, too slowly do morn-
ings arise,

And too long do noons repose in shadows of trees,
Amid reapers.

They crave to soar with speed of light through the ages,
To possess a thousand hearts with whose blood to nourish
their rapture,

And with flush like unto sunrise

And polar radiance and blazing of worlds

Countenance of their love !

All souls to gladden with wine which yielded them such
festive

OTAKAR BŘEZINA

Sorrow and rapture,
And which gushes from a single spring
In concealment,
And unto the whole universe sheds fragrance of happy
earth,
Only unto its children for whole ages yet
Vainly 1

Temple Builders (1899)

Monologue of Earth

I AM like to a tree in blossom, chiming with insects and
bees ; I am calm, I am gay :
Blood is a sunrising, where amid fire bathes the day
become young ;
I have scattered fragrance in corridors of light, where my
lovers pass on their way
And every secret of night-time in woman's lap I have
flung.

But jealous, I will not, when I slumber by night, foredone
with embraces of spring,
That thou shouldest pine for my sisters' ethereal beauty,
with the dalliance-lure of its call:
A myriad years have I stored up my riches, e'en as the
dower of a king,
And unto them who crave after naught, do I bestow it
all.

Theirs is my love with the goad of its fierceness,
Languor with calm of the tomb,
Depth of my gaze, from which glitters
Star-clusters' eddy of doom,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Draught of my moments, where light of eternity
Flickers in utter defeat,
And swoon of caresses,
Evil and sweet.

I am not as my sisters : my dreamings
Glow forth from eternal night,
O'er lovers' heads with torch of espousals
The house I ignite :
Blossoms which were sown by me, with fiery sickle were
 mown by me,
Birds which were lured by me, my flames drive back
 once more ;
But souls that have tarried each century, fly from their
 night-time's mystery,
'Mid deadly stillness their rustle is borne to me,
Ethereal moths which sparkingly soar,
And circle about my torches I have enkindled
At earth's fire-laden core.

Slave of the Eternal, priestess of frenzy, matter's lowliest
 voice I know,
Glory of earliest sun, last days' dusk I discern ;
Tear-streams over my visage's beauty, and from bliss
 of drooping eyelashes flow,
And in my weeping night's music trembles, and circling
 stars amid it burn :
For curse of a secret guilt and time, in my laughter,
 mingle with sobbing throe,
And my weeping that echoes with blitheness of radiance
Intones a hope of Return.

Temple Builders (1899)

OTAKAR BREZINA

World of Plants

WORLD of plants. Motionless the trees dream of
their journeys
Through age-long change of guise. Saps of earth bliss-
fully trickled to them from darkness
And sweet to the sucklings was radiant milk of the sun.
And loftiest bliss ; to set the delicate shape
Ablossom through secret of poise and winds and lustre.
In depths blazes
Memory of fire. Abundance from the overflowing cup
and splendour of kisses
Are theme of fragrances' discourse. Though all manner
of insects may come,
Even them awaits here toil, and both the loathliest
And the loveliest are equally greeted by moon-pallor
And passionate flush of the blossoms.—O my soul, afar
from us
Life flows here, plashing of a far river through the night.
Beneath silent stars I hear it murmur,
As in ferment it simmered through fire of tertiary ages.
In its mirror
Beheld morn and eve their colours' glory, secret reflex
Of eternal loveliness. Afar behind us it flows and rolls its
depths to a sea
Whose tepid and blood-sweet waves bore us to these isles.
But stillness holds sway by the rocky springs and by
shores of future earths,
And likewise mute unto mortal hearing is the downfall
of worlds
And a new sun's first whirling in glooms of mystical night,
As a fashioning of fragrance and a thirsting of the roots.

Temple Builders (1899)

Moments of Glory . . .

MOMENTS of glory I had, when my soul in majesty
of its fetterless flight
Above centuries uprose in an eddying cyclone of light,
Age-old herbage it flung aside, and the husbandman on
time's field
In July-tide of his gaze let ripen new treasures that
corn-ears yield.

And when my harvest-laden garner blazed, I chanted of
beauty of fire,
Of a palace of dreams, starward plunged, thousandfold
spire upon spire ;
And when it likewise blazed, and a wind around me
mockingly fluttered.
Chanting and muteness I mastered, and never an outcry
of anguish I uttered.

Earth beauteous, as never before through ages, since it
* has flown
Whirling in dimness of space, by bloom of my dreams I
was shown,
I beheld arrays of giant-like springtides, suns darkened
amid their torches gleam,
Myriads of earthly springtides were spanned to their
chariot's team.

I saw kingly summers upon beds of purple splendour
repose,
Lulled by tuneful eventides, by strains that from delicate
harps arose,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Moonlit nights in pleasancess of women, dazing vintages
of love,
And enchantment of dying, most blissful, with stars
inflamed above.

Gardens of winter I saw, boughs with crystalline blossoms
arrayed,
Like newly enkindled lustres with rainbow dalliance
still they swayed ;
Like ice-palms on windows of mystery, they were
illumined with frosty sheen,
And drawn nigh, set a-sparkle and opened, as though
gardens of cosmos they had been.

But I likewise saw earth sorrowful, as she was since
ancient days,
With bitter smile conversing to man, in the distance was
plunged her anguished gaze ;
Earth in the universe one of the poorest amid her sisters
around,
Isle on an ocean of stillness, that except death no peace
has found.

In clouds of time I saw lightnings, like apocalypse-script
with fiery power,
A Caesar's beck unto bondsmen, arenas with blood, like
roses in flower,
Gaze of man, earth's pride and will, hardened by strife,
by victories rended,
Gaze of woman, earth's delight, wherein reproaches and
yearnings are blended,

And all glory of my dream, splendour of night with its
flaming brands,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Did I forget when I beheld my brethren with their
wearied hands,
Bloodstained, clenched in anger, and while a surging
ocean laughed
Sundered by buffets of oars, when they clung to an over-
laden craft.

Clatter of mystical fetters amid my dreaming stirred,
And in its age-old cadence music of myriad hearts I
heard,
Of myriad hearts, like stars one from the other removed,
estranged :
One for the other secretly yearning, and deep amid
frosty twilight ranged.

Upon my brethren's threshold I sat, a baffling stranger,
when evening appears,
And amid distant rumble of waters, amid song of winds
and glittering spheres,
Of toil of earth and the world, which in depth of love I
saw dimly shine,
For solace of brethren I chanted, gladdened by their
smile, and belief was mine.

The Hands (1901)

The Hands

IN dazzling whiteness of light lay the earth, like a book
of songs
Opened before our eyes. And thus did we sing :

Lo, in this moment the hands of myriads are locked in a
magical chain,
That all continents, forests, mountain-ranges, begirds

OTAKAR BREZINA

And across silent realms of all oceans is outstretched
unto brethren;
In cities that loom darkly up from deep horizons, tragical
altars of sacrifice;
And where the sun, mystical lamp, suspended low from
azure vaults,
Bloodily smoulders in smoke, circling over stations and
cathedrals,
Palaces of kings and armies, council-chambers, prisons,
amphitheatres,
And where the ardour of a myriad hearts in the twilit
heaven of spirits
Flares up enkindled, in feverish tempest of sweetness
and death,
Grains of glowing coal, uprooted by implement of
iron ;—
In frowning silences of lowlands, in grievous forebodings
of summer,
When torrents of spring-tide powers, quenched in the
blossom, petrify as lava motionless,
Days, like toilers in secret foundries, creep onward in
weariness,
And in drops of sweat sparkle man and beast, a brotherly
coupling in the yoke
Under a single invisible lash, that scourges from sunrise
to sunset;
On waves of oceans and of souls, where anguished behests
of sailors, clutched by the whirlwind,
Rotate around the masts, outdinned by triumph of
lightnings, when skies and waters
Are welded into a single element of horror and death ;—
At all forges, looms and presses, in quarries and subter-
anean shafts,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Upon building-sites of the Pharaohs, where nations
lament in bondage
And raise up gigantic tombs above uncounted lords ;—
Tn the demoniac movement of wheels, pistons and levers
and overhead whirring hammers ;—
,On battle-fields, in observatories, academies, lazarets,
laboratories;—
In workshops of masters, pondering over marble, where
slumbers
A mightier world of horror and glory and from the fabric
of age-old drowsings
Half-illuminated arises in the flash of chisels and the creative
sparkle of eyes ;—
And yonder, where passion on volcanic steepes of death
lets blossom
Orange-gardens of yearning, and wines and poisons the
fieriest ripen
In the feverish never-setting sun ; and where pleasure,
Alchemist poisoned by vapours of his vain ferment,
Raves in hallucinations;—in twilights of mystery and
music,
Where pondering draws nigh to forbidden places and
amid thunder of orchestras
In a dream of forfeited harmony metals lament, and from
the strings
Is wafted a torrent of songs like the earliest tempest of
earth over weariness of souls ;—
Beneath electrifying gesture of maidens, where sparkle
dazing spring-tides,
Night-time of destiny resounds in soaring of kisses,
stars are as lips aglow
And woman, suddenly blenching at the outcry of her
hidden name, in agonies

OTAKAR BREZINA

As upon stairs oozing with blood, descends to the
enchanted wells of life,
Amid the wailing of ages hounded in a circle, amid the
envious seething of invisible beings,
And with cry of horror starts back, livid, and with
grievous flaming of hands
Clasps her prey to her breasts : a life, lamenting in
contact with the sun ;
In the clashing of a thousand wills, shattered by streams
of thy mystical will,
Alone among the myriads, man labours, countless hands
are aquiver,
From age to age they are fixedly clutched, wearying never
On both hemispheres of earth. . . . In tragical triumph
of dreaming
Like hands of a child they toy with the stars as with
jewels
But on awakening they grow turgid and numb, blood-
stained with murder,
Livid with chillness of ages, and amid the soaring of
earth, staggering over abysses,
They cling in despair to its herbage. . . . Frenzied hands
of a ruthless hunter
Tracking the elements down ! Curse-laden hands of a
half-naked slave
At the scarlet forges of toil ! In clasp of entreaty, the
hands of the vanquished
Fused like sand by the blow of lightning ! And those
cleansed with tears,
Glistening, overflowing with lustre, with the bleeding
stigmas of love
Branded for ever ! Filled with magic and balm, with a
touch of the brow reading the thoughts of brethren

OTAKAR BREZINA

Kingly, lavishing ! Lulling into celestial solace !
Aetherized as light, and unto the fruit of mystical trees
Stretching forth through the whole universe into the
endless!

And our hands, enfolded amid a magical chain of count-
less hands,
Sway in the current of brotherly strength, which laps
upon them from afar,
Ever more potent from pressure of ages. Unbroken
waves
Of sorrow, daring, madness, bliss, enchantment and love
Suffuse our bodies. And in the beat of their tempest,
with vanishing senses
We feel how our chain, seized by the hands of higher
beings,
Enfolds itself in a new chain unto all starry spaces
And encompasses worlds.—And then in answer to the
grievous question,
Concealed in dread by centuries, as a secret of birth
Which first-born dying reveal to first-born,
We heard the roundelay of waters, stars, and hearts and
amid its strophes,
At intervals melancholy cadences, dithyramb of worlds
following one upon the other.

The Hands (1901)

Thus Sang the Waters

BETWIXT two fires, sun and earth, spell-bound we
rove through ages.
From life's thirsty roots we mounted to ethereal stems,
To splendour of blossoms, clenched in throes of grievous
yearning,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Through streams of nummulite oceans, dimness of
ancient diluvial forests,
Kingdoms of bygone creation gigantic,
Caverns, where man, secret brother of beasts, earth's
coming deliverer,
Slaked in us fire of his blood, curse-beset,
Burning eternally, unquenchable.

In stars of morning dew we quivered upon battlefields,
In rivers of tears we fierily flowed over judgement-places,
To life's quickening rhythms we chanted in marble cities
Beneath triumphal bridges and with buffet of waves in
our oceans

In mocking pathos we thundered the epic of earths
Buried amid ages. With fire's glowing leavens
We fermented into ethereal glaciers of cloudy mountain-
ranges,

Above the golden sun's hidden lair at his setting,
Like airy mirages, recoiling through distances of cosmos
From a giant world more resplendent.

The rainbow we conjured in weeping of waterfalls and
beneath ocean's starry mirrors

We concealed age-old contests of our unnumbered
creatures

Mute and relentless, illumining the black depths with
lightning-flashes.

Like alluring serpent-orbs we glinted in treacherous
eddies

Upon scaly rivers, but like unto graveyards of myriad
graves

In grief-ridden gulfs we poured as oblivion,
And with words of a hallowing prayer we fervently
whispered

OTAKAR BREZINA

Above magical simmer of balm-laden fountains, in
thousand-fold guise.

Before the despairer's glances our delicate billows are
opened

As numberless lips, eternally moving in frenzy
Stunned by the blow of sudden, horror-laden knowledge.
But conquerors read our hidden wisdom from their
heights

Out of the silvery chart blazing to them from depths, as
lines upon night's hand

And as on a coin, the inscription's glittering imprint
proclaiming the value;

Unto them speak life's joyful secrets in our thousand
pathways,

Which from all mountain-peaks pour to a single sea
And from multiple strains of our springs, river-courses
and oceans,

They hear the chant of a single kindly power,
Which in numberless changes seeks earth's true counte-
nance.

And lo! Before their glance the severed throes of a
myriad hands

Stiffen to a single gigantic spirit-hand, begirding earth,
Which in a sculptor's splendid and tragical gesture,

Kneading the ball of his tractable clay,
Transforms the secret of things as prompted by his
vision's magnificence

In torturing pangs of creation
Never assuaged.

The Hands (1901)

OTAKAR BREZINA

Thus Sang the Burning Stars

EACH instant, ever within our places
Amid mystical dancing of worlds
We circle through the cosmos.
Into spirits' radiant spheres we blaze alluring
With beauty.
Around our heads
In aureoles
Sparkle golden tresses,
Stretched like resonant lassos
By flight's whirlwind.

Into our faces, burning with ecstasy,
Breathes ages' chillness
And clutched by our flight's rapture,
Overpowered by glittering of grievous bliss,
With outcry, that scours the unbounded,
Harmonious, exulting,
We sink, mystical dancers,
And in our blood, as if buried in roses,
We perish.

Sisters arise in our places,
White-shimmering,
And in song, that soars through eternity's twilights,
With ever increasing billows,
Anew and anew into spaces advances
Amid upraised dust of nebulae,
The mystery's gleaming advance-guard.

The Hands (1901)

Roundelay of Hearts

EVER with equal
Raising and sinking of pinions
In postures higher and higher
Repeated
Above the burden of earth
Prevails the glory of soaring.
Spirit voices are chanting the paths of grace,
Like birds encircling their whilom nests,
In magical gardens of enchantments,
O mystical husbandman !

Hear ye the secret seething of blood ? Simmer of
ripening ferment
Dazing the senses ? Feverish chiming in darkness of
hives ?
Grievous music of hearts, attuned by the ages like strings
For starry harmony ?
Wailing of strings too tensely wound, rended apart ?
And scouring all worlds, the fiery cadence,
Compassing seraphic harmony ?
Baffling remembrance of myriads in glorious embrace,
Ere this visible cosmos blossomed with heavy splendour
Amid infinities ?
Signals of return, awaited by all beings of earth,
Mustering the brotherhood of huntsmen
In mocking labyrinths deep in the forest of dreams ?
In the grief of multitudes over bloodstained fields,
In the anguished blenching of usurpers,
In the secret victories of woman,
Like flames on a thousand-armed lustre,

OTAKAR BREZINA

At every opening of doors, by which **the awaited**
approach,
In a gust of spirit-music
Hearts are aquiver.

Hail to you arrivals !
Vintages of our most potent grapes
Mark the path for you !
Black, charred traces of our fires,
Where we have sat beneath the sparkling of heavenly
lights,
In silence of night, singing of your advent ;
Hallowed tokens,
Which in the language of nations destined to perish
We have graven on vertical scutcheons of rock,
Ruined arches of triumphal gates
Of our rulers,
Temple-obelisks hidden beneath
Deposit of ages.—
Because of the secret of grief, of death, and of new
birth
Blissful is life !

Because of the invisible presence of the great and holy
among our kin
Who wander in our midst in gardens of light
And from the farness of all ages converse with our
souls
Graciously,
Blissful is life !

Because of the kingly gratitude of the vanquished
Who trustingly lays his head upon the bosom

OTAKAR BREZINA

Where thy radiance sings more potently,
Because of embrace of foes in enchantment of our
 loftiest season,
Blissful is life !

Because of celestial fragrance of newly-unfolded blossoms
In rapture of song, in glory of kisses,
Blissful is life!

Because of the starry spirit-gaze
Begirding earth on all sides together ;
Crystal solitudes of the poles, of earliest ages, of ancient
 mountains, of statute, of number ;
Silent oceans of blossoming light, of happiness, harvests,
 and night-fall;
Feverish tropical gardens of blood, of thirst, and of
 princely dreamings ;
The burden of all fruits ripened by suns visible and
 invisible
And that clamour for tempests and culling ;

Seething of bee-swarms before dispersing; contests of
 nations through centuries;
Harmonious soaring of earth in the splendid curve of its
 orbit, even amid earthquakes ;
Azure mirrors of heaven even above the isles of them
 accursed by leprosy;
Chalk mountain-ranges where oceans once thundered
And where once again they shall thunder,
Sparkling of insects in forests of grass,
Sparkling of worlds in infinities,
Sparkling of thought in spirit-herbages of the un-
 known.

OTAKAR BREZINA

Because of the delicate smiling of eyes undeceived by the
gigantic Hallucination,
Blissful is life !

Because of blood that gushes from age to age out of the
sinewy arms
Upraising the load of the past like hinges of prison-
portals !

Because of the sublime cause of the joy of myriads !
Because of the secret price of the death of all brethren
who died for us

—And all who have been, through all centuries, upon the
whole expanse of earth

Have died for us—

Because of all crops, sown by a myriad hands and yet
ungarnered I

Because of the alluring gleam and perils of all unvoyaged
oceans !

Because of every span of earth that is destined as the
battle-field of our victories,

And is therefore secretly marked with blossoms and gold !

Because of all beauty yet unkindled upon countenances,
Unatoned guilt unbestowed upon brethren, kisses still
waiting for lips,

Blissful is life !

Because of the outcry of the desolate heart
When it exults from its anguish like a straying bird
That has found a singing multitude of brethren
Blissful is life !

Because of gusts, cataclysms, tempests ! Paroxysms of
love and desire !

OTAKAR BREZINA

Warfare of spirits !
Ceaseless ardour and thirst of uniting endeavour!
Because of our mystical sharing
In labour of all conquerors,
Who mark all happenings as a flock for the shearing
With the branded token of their destiny,
Ruling over ardour and sorrow of myriads
And dispatching death to their fields as a gleaner
And to their quarrier as a hewer of stone for their
 building
—As a multitude in amazement gazing to a single
 point
They leave the ages behind them ;
And kingdoms, like ships, upon which mariners have
 leapt from the shore,
Sway beneath their poise even to capsizing—
Because of the mighty bliss of being mauled as a billow
By the surge of a majestic ocean of brethren
And of spurting up in the crest of foam like a sprig of
 white blossom
At the buffeting against cliffs of the promised land.

Because of hidden spring-tides of harmony
Set in the woven fabric of all things
Like butterfly-wings of the opalescent azure at evening,
Asparkle with the scaliness of stars,
Blissful is life !

Because of the approaching advent of the radiant mortal
 of mystery,
Who alone among myriad brethren that shall be and
 have been,
Conqueror over space,

OTAKAR BREZINA

Shall change the earth from pole to pole after thy sacred
will
And by thought that from submissive suns
Has learnt deftness and dances and tunes,
Shall sit in thy secret^ council
Among princes of the cosmos—
Blissful is life!

The Hands (1901)

Pure Morning

WHEN into the garden at morning-tide we entered
weary with many dreams,
The whole of earth, like to our souls, we saw abloom in
fiery gleams;
And we to winds, to waters, plants, birds, bees a question
sent:
What secret one this bygone night along our garden
went?

The sand, a golden changeling, lured where'er the sacred
marks were shed
The waters murmured healingly, as set astir by angel
tread,
Each breath had strength of life, as though for many
glowing days,
And awe of new-engendered things was seen in every
gaze.

Our grievous secrets' burden we as will of thine did not
resist,
A missive that by humble lips, ere rending of the seal, is
kissed;

OTAKAR BREZINA

E'en at our gates the ambushed foe whom slumber
overcame

As thine o'erwearied messenger we greeted with acclaim.

In havoc-ridden solitudes, that by the demon sprites are
scoured,

As though it were a lily-bed, our cravings' tender garden
flowered,

And women who most fervid were, most comely and most
sweet,

As though our stainless sisters in their radiance we could
greet.

The Hands (1901)

Responses

WE are curse-laden: even amid our yearnings'
loftiest flight

We by burden of earth are vanquished, plunged into our
blood's dim night.

" Ye are potent and deathless ; and in your souls where
secrets abound,

Suns and spring-tides and vintages numberless are found."

In silence of cosmos, in the midst of stars, that are flecked
with blood as they wane,

We are cut off in solitude, as by watch-fires of foes in a
chain.

" Armour of heavily-armed is your burden: unto
contest ye

Are summoned, that ye therein may set all earth-born
creatures free."

OTAKAR BREZINA

Upon the riven breast of the vanquished we strive to
 kneel,
And even when we yearn to love, no love we feel, no love
 we feel.

" Hardened are ye like fruit unripened ; but in the blaze
Of a secret summer ye ripen, your brethren's embraces
 to praise."

Gladness is sunshine beheld in a dream : on awakening
 it is dulled ;
Sorrow has thousands of eyes, and never in slumber is
 utterly lulled.

" With myriads in secret brotherhood ye are tied
And only in gladness of myriads will gladness of yours
 abide/'

To floating islands upon a furrow of fragrance we float...
We float and the islands float onward, and keep us ever
 remote . . .

" Blindfold are ye with deceit that your kingly glances
 wield :
Islands of radiance that bloom in your souls, before you
 they have revealed."

The Hands (1901)

The Present Age

L IFE has not weakened upon the earth, as is sup-
posed by the over-wearied amongst us. All great-
ness of past and future is hidden in the present age, and
is ever prepared to flash forth in beauty. In the fire of

OTAKAR BREZINA

our every instant are encountered the same powers which enkindled the myriad suns of the milky way, which with billows of radiance rolled the seed of life from star to star, and our oceans throb with the same quivering of motherhood as when they felt in their depths the first pregnant stir of new beings. Lightly as a dulcet wind there drifts through all creation the same breath which shook the lost tertiary herbage, aroused unnumbered kindred of animals and sent them forth as the spirit's vanguard from hot forests of an ancient spring-tide. Uninterruptedly toil the same powers, by which languages were fashioned, nations were mustered, and while we dream, earth changes through endeavour of myriads. The air which we breathe has the same secret structure as the mountain breeze amid which was braced the giant breast of heroes, prophets and lovers. Equally astounding to-day as ages ago is the art possessed by waters and suns in shaping of earths, equally alert the life of crystals and metals, equally harmonious the rhythm pulsing amid workshops of matter, which know not sabbaths and repose. String after string bursts upon the secret implement with which life plays its song of bliss and torment of countless beings, but the remaining strings assume the whole bequest of those rended, the whole compass of their intervals, and ever bolder and severer, more perilous and intricate is the playing, an ever greater skill is needed to maintain the original lofty poise of vital ardour, ever more spiritual and baffling are the variations on one and the same theme, developing through the ages. But although the aim of life is perpetually being fulfilled and at every instant attained in hidden depths,—all that lives, even the weakest, **weariest,** **most** misshapen of creatures in their contest with **death**

OTAKAR BREZINA

and their victory over it have moments of rapt **and** glowing beauty,—yet only spirit-forces, toiling upon earth, appear to-day freer, their manifestations prepared through ages, by which the body has been transformed, richer and more marvellous, the need for love and happiness more delicate and overwhelming, like a whirlpool clutching myriads of mortals in ever widening eddies. From every past age have arisen several of the great masters among our kindred and joined the ranks of intellects on guard, watching over our labour, and although they have evolved for the loftier sphere of a spirit-universe, they do not abandon earth, which they loved over-much, always ready to return in lustrous embodiment to solitudes even of this poorest among lovers, and in a sufficiently deep stillness, prepared by the heart's fervour, to speak to it in language more eloquent and sweet than they were wont to speak in to their disciples amid groves of bygone cities, beneath stars that shone in nights ages ago.

Radiance of unbounded day, strangely magnificent, immoderately intense, increases at every instant above the spirit-earth.

Unbelievable have become all things. Every stone, every blade of grass, insects for whom a moment suffices to achieve their flight to death, the tree in blossom, which age-long breathed in sweet self-abandonment of its mute happiness, everything with unfamiliar strength bestows balm upon keenly receptive senses. Our souls appear bewildered and stunned by half-evolved truths which like fragrances, perilous with excess of heaviness, have suddenly trickled from myriads of invisible blossoms, as if in another world had arisen a season of marvellous springtide recurring once'in long ages. From the night-

time of our surmising ascend worlds, and their splendour slays imagery and suns, as reflectors of spirit-flotillas they seem to draw near to us from dark oceans of the universe. There ensues a dizziness of the feelings from manifested greatness of the last generations; new concepts of man, matter, cosmos. Sorrow of seekers and secret distrust of what is discovered—a distrust hidden until death;—graves into the countenances of numberless mortals of this age secret signs by which all are revealed as in a deep spirit-kindred. Truths are allied like sorrows ; a rank of spirits suffers equal creative torment in isolated regions of pondering and, knowing not of their nearness, dread one the other in jealousy, when they suddenly meet, with blissful dread and unfaith of lovers who have beheld themselves in unforeseen solitudes.

And the final discovery, to which man begins to draw near upon earth, the body. . . . The body in its pangs, sicknesses and in its ripening, valuer and judge of things, creator and mocking plunderer of illusions, the body,—a spirit seeing farther than our reason, the body,—shaper of dreams, which, a feverish weaver, it weaves from all fibres, from moonlit twilights, from mists and gloom, and which it stretches and furls as a mariner his sails according to peril or favour of cosmic winds. The perplexing body, turned to this earth's sun, and on the yonder side spiritual, blossoming beneath invisible suns of another universe. Are not its thriving and decay, the beginning of its sickness and the return of strength, soundness and goodness revealed from hidden resolutions of thought ? From choice of metaphors, from establishing of proofs, from selecting of wisdom, from justice of the will ? What betokens rhythm and intonation of the voice, which evokes beings dead long before us and

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reveals distant kinships? And contours of smiles, speech of hands, grim exactitude of gestures, which as lightning-flashes blaze into the night-time of our hidden annals? To find a brotherly word, irrefutable, potent and delicate, into whose ardour is wafted the chill breath of highest intellects, is that not a curing stream for the body, a magical medicine which begins its healing from the invisible? And seek not all our prophets this word? And does it not already resound hidden amid the soul's depths? What an apparition, at which the breath is bated, to behold a countenance harmonised by the gentle life of higher mortals, a smile purchased with victorious days and victorious nights, and a glance from which a dazzling inner universe blazes with unwavering certainty from places where death is not. No epoch was without these instinctive fulfillers of a statute, who were teachers by the mere fact of having existed, by the unbounded haleness of their being, by the involuntary greatness of their every action, even the simplest, and in whose nearness all things showed themselves to be good, happiness attainable, destiny kind, as if their every gesture evoked and controlled a spirit-music inaudible to the hearing, perceptible to an enraptured heart.

The word life acquires new significance on the lips of mortals. Perhaps more than any other word, secret, ample, immeasurable, it to-day embraces a statute which visionaries, prophets and seers have yearned to utter in myths, symbols and silences. A statute, unreachable in its dazzling magnificence, speaking to each being with different tokens, but a statute altogether definite, disobedience and the nameless heresy to which are punished by a fermenting, by tragical hallucinations

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and forfeiture of love. It is murmured from winds, chanted by waters, summoned by forests across the whole horizon. In silent devotion it is complied with by flower and animal; families of daring and ruthless insects, mustered like armies, victorious birds and heroic beasts of prey, the worm severed by the husbandman's spade, the tree-trunk wedged in by anxious roots amid a rocky cleft, phosphorescent greenery of underground caverns, beings, which in spite of all suffering, gamesters undaunted by all losses, anew and anew cling to life as if performing the rites of some eternal belief, severe and fierce, which has imposed a tax even upon oblivion, dalliance, sunny ecstasy, delight of slumber, and which has endowed bliss with the thirst for eternity, that the onslaught may be the more violent, pain and death the more terrifying, but the more magnificent the gesture, creator of beauty.

It is a statute, obedience to which renders thought and deed clairvoyant, upraises the spirit like a whirlwind, and all beings, which through overmuch strength would be perilous to their kindred, it makes magnanimous and kindly, thought too deeply penetrating and perilous to life it severs by sudden tenderness, and before glances too clear in their range and undeceived by the universal illusion, it lowers a rain of tears like a veil, moderating the fierce relentlessness of vision.

It is an optical delusion of the spirit that precisely the magnificence of present time eludes us. Never was the hallucination of immensity, the kingly zest of the spirit for embracing all things, mightier than in the marvellous days in which we live. Where are dreamings of bygone man, who created a right to his own enclosed garden, to his happiness anxiously guarded even to

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beyond the grave, and who established rampart, dense forest, waters, multitude of slaves, terror and death as a guard, in order to bestow safely upon his kindred ? The man, whose nearness we surmise in the trembling of our hearts, in a sudden, unfamiliar ring in our voices, in kisses of a beloved woman, in unrest of our ponderings, that it seems to us as if all clouds upon our horizon were pillars of dust, rising along his march, the powerful and brotherly man of to-morrow is already to-day overthrowing in our dreams the frontiers of realms, and he is taking earth as his boundless garden, hedged in by the heavens ; his arc continents and islands, flung like baskets of flowers upon waves of the oceans. Nations toiling upon both hemispheres take turns at his labour like pitmen on day and night shifts, descending to a single gallery. In the dreams of his creative architects, whole cities arise, in a single creative gesture, in a single victorious casting of shapes, a gigantic crystallisation in accordance with a single statute of number, bloom of matter in accordance with a single statute of growth. Cities with their gardens and chimneys, glowing gloomwards, where toil the demons of mastered forces, obedient to the spirit, and where in twilights of solemn evening hours magical moons are aglow above streets through which multitudes press onwards. The silent revolt of those suffering among all nations, and the still more perilous revolt of loftiest spirits in radiant solitudes of understanding, in calm of computation, in sparkling of intentness upon all things of the earth,—this bestows the intensity of great historic resolutions upon the present hours. We feel that the day of judgement is not in the future, but is uninterruptedly present in the universe. That each hour judges over all hours, each of us against his will is the executor

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of justice in lives of mortals, the woman in the life of man, the man in the destiny of woman, and in the destiny of both the child which, a mysterious guest has come and sat down at their table, even the one which shunned their house. . . . New love, loftier and more overwhelming than elemental passion, which was a black earth for its magical blossom, glitters in our tears and in our ecstatic smiles. The heart of throngs—secret index of the hour in eternity—begins to feel horror which it never felt yet: horror of brother-slaying ; it begins to feel a yearning for peace, the kingly right to a dream of happiness, of liberty and mastery of earth. Brotherly assemblies of myriads amid nations of all tongues, and ever more vehement contest of spirits and a more fervid hunger after power and bliss, all that places man beside man, strength against strength, all seems as if it were directed by a gigantic spiritual unity, awaking from a myriad of years of enchantment and toiling serenely upon all sides at once, both in the light of day and the stillness of night, in passionate darkness of hearts, in cravings for motherhood, for knowledge, for the unattainable ; rejecting naught, secure in its omnipotence, and to it even what we call chance is as a stone in the hands of the builders. In spite of all weariness of disbelief, despair of lovers, in spite of guilt whose unatoned silence burdens whole generations, man is growing towards a spiritual unity throughout the whole earth. Nothing can hinder this power which like a cataract is rushing forth with unsurmised rapidity, a current which embraces nations isolated for ages, it shatters bonds and fashions new ones more spiritual, for new thoughts it shapes new bodies, upon myriads of beings it spreads hope and sorrow. What are elemental

OTAKAR BREZINA

calamity, cosmic change, cooling of suns and earths to the spirit? The impossible, incredible, insane, appears within its precincts joyously easy, alluringly natural, subtly wise, beyond all consideration. The more perilous the immediate instant, the nearer decay and death seem, all the speedier and more feverish is the stir of thoughts and hearts, the more enticing the art of pleasure, the more bounteous the help from secret hoards of an invisible world; the frailer the implement of life and the more precious its preservation, all the more delicate is the feeling for sorrow, that instructress in the law, that protectress of beauty. If it is needful, life, ever victorious, wise in experiences of all worlds which have prepared this world, summons diseases tending to higher health, creating a cult of purity, reason, coldness of feeling, when lust and poison are threatening the race, and death is in its pleasures like a gardener who transplants the seedlings each on to its plot, from visible to invisible.

Life has not weakened upon the earth. More vehement than ever before seems the thundering of secretly yoked suns and worlds soaring through ages. More magically, more mightily, more blissfully self-certain is the gaze of women, and reverence for the child, the inheritor and preparer of a new earth, is increasing.

(1908)

JAROSLAV KVAPIL

(b. 1868)

Dialogue

LO, now the sunset wanes, and far the path ahead.
—Where dost thou hasten? Gravewards. Tarry yet a space,

JAROSLAV KVAPIL

Deep shall the night-time be,—and wilt thou feel no
dread ?

—Lo, how the sky-line's purple blends with the stream's
blue trace.

There are unpeopled tracts, and far we have to fare.

—To us God softly speaks here in an earthy guise.

Clutch of dead loneliness has filled us with despair.

—O peace unending. Come, we'll sleep 'neath starry skies.

Submission (1896)

JAROMÍR BORECKÝ

(b. 1860)

A Viola in the Garden . . .

A VIOLA in the garden sobs an Italian air.
The fragrant tears of night on the blossoms heavily
flow.

0 shadowy retreats, love's sanctuaries of prayer (
Moon, to caress the darkling lovers dost thou go ?
Through clustering clouds on wings of seraphs thou dost
flow.

Behold, o'er earth thy jasper vessel mistily sways. . . .
1 lean on a severed lattice and scan hushed lawns below.
Nightwards from the balcony She steps white to the gaze.

Kosa Mystica (1892)

JIRÍ KARASEK ZE LVOVIC

(b. 1871)

The Spectral Ship

IN unknown oceans of regions unknown
Upon dead waters deep stillnesses weigh.
In a livid heaven the moon's array
Is lustreless, hueless, silent and lone.

JIRI KARASEK ZE LVOVIC

A mighty vessel with sails all grown
Blackened with age, has ceased to sway
Upon the dead waters. Now dawns its decay.
Long, long has it been here, silent and lone.

In the cabin a stifled gasp of dismay.
Over the deck dim shadows tread.
The ship is utterly spectral and dread.

A funereal lantern, the moon's array,
Chalkily shines on the greenish faces
Of mariners lured into unknown places.

Walled-up Windows (1894)

The Dream

WAS it yesterday ? Was it a hundred years since ?
I know not, yet very weary and unfirm I was,
And my steps were the steps of a man who walks in a
dream.

And I passed through darksome causeways
And vacant and empty they were, and in them the wind
moaned.

So grievously moaned.
And from a turret the hour chimed. . . . And meseemed,
That this voice summoned me into a cathedral
vault,

Where beneath heavy slabs with knightly scutcheons
Slumber my ancestors. . . .
Am I living or dead ? I know not, but meseems,
That although these causeways are strange and unknown
to me,

I have wandered therein of old,—
Was it yesterday or a hundred years since ?

JIRI KARASEK ZE LVOVIC

In this or in that life !

I know not, but my gait is firm and unwavering
As the gait of a man who wanders a wonted path.

And I hear the creaking of door-posts,
And hands unseen are opening
Heavy portals of a gloomy palace.
And I tread the stair-way of black marble
And my steps call into the darkness
And dead spaces answer unto them—
And I stride through darkness of passages
And pace the emptiness of ancient halls

Ancestral halls,
At the sides of which I surmise pictures of grandsires
And tatters of captured banners
And rusted weapons from old-time combats,

Which savour of murder. . . .
And I feel the mildew that bedecks all,
And the air, that the dead inhale.
And I see flickering in the darkness
Haunting shadows and sorrowful crape.
And I feel how my heart is beating vehemently,
And my temples, how they are moistened with sweat
And anguish clutches me at what I have endured,
And what long is no more.

Walled-up Windows (1894)

Adagio, op. 27

Beethoven

O SORROW brackish, burdensome and petrified,
O sorrow of statues, which display *in* temples
Their white and marble-wrought nakedness to pilgrims,
Enter my spirit!

JIRI KARASEK ZE LVOVIC

Enter my spirit, wearied with long living.
Set foot amid fruitless and overcast days, all in sable,
That trail one after the other in sluggish greyness,
Desolate and listless.

O sorrow of exalted, majestic rhythms,
O sorrow of funereal, billowing rhythms,
Where in darkened shrine the black-robed priest
Sanctifies a requiem.

Ah, bitter vainness of hope ! All must end.
All vanishes, wanes, benumbed and chilled amid ashes.
All outlived and marred. All wastes away,
Mere shadow amid shadows.

O deadness amid unsounding, motionless deadness.
O hand of death, laid suddenly upon the forehead.
O horror of ending, that at the last, sets aquiver the body,
Which long has been dying.

Calm, endless calm ! And final oblivion.
Calm of the dead, who are resting in vaults
Under a heavy slab with its arching scutcheon
Of perished kinsmen. ,

Calm of deadened waves on unquivering oceans,
That many a year no vessel has furrowed,
That darken in metallic and twilit tints,
Desolately day upon day. . . .

Calm of divine pangs, withering in solitudes,
Calm of tottering crosses, blackened in the twilight,
In decayed and unpeopled regions, abounding
With chillness of horror.

JIRI KARASEK ZE LVOVIC

Calm of ancient ships, astray in oceans,
Which in the North have been frozen amid eternal ice,
Whose crews long have perished beneath the masts,
Tortured by hunger.

Calm that is death's, livid and palsied,
As the countryside at night in the greenish moonrays,
Calm of all those, who have fared, but to falter
In the midst of the journey. . . .

Conversations with Death (1904)

JANKO JESENSKÝ

(b. 1874) (Slovak)

Siberian Night

THE sultry hut is filled with a dense gloom :
Through the thick ice on the window facing the light
Gleams and tarries the Siberian night
Stubbornly with snow and sheen of the moon.

Behind the bare knoll morning is still asleep,
Still are her eyelids closed, still does her face
Nestle against her pillowed resting-place
So stainless and so pale upon yonder steep.

I crouch with my Chinese cloak about me spread
And wait for the steely gaze of morn to appear,
From which the night will hasten away in fear ; .

The moon pales in the sudden clutch of dread,
And each prisoner still lower droops his head,
While hope disheartened limps away from here.

(Berezovka, Feb. 4th, 1916)
From Captivity (1919)

STANISLAV KAREL NEUMANN

STANISLAV KAREL NEUMANN

(b. 1875)

Years Later I Still Lament for You . . .

YOUTHFUL and subtle of lure you were slain
By worthy fathers,
Weary of virtuous spouses,
And by their sons,
Taking their fill of the world.

In the white passage of the lazar-house
Your corpse vanished ;
None clamoured : " Murderers ! "
Amid their tranquil enjoyments.

Years later I still lament for you.
You had a lustrous eye and blue-black tresses,
And blood that in part was a heritage from barbarian
Huns.

Years later I still lament for you.
Not because it was here denied you
To share the hearth of some fat-paunched boor,
And bear him mirthful, thriving offspring,—
Rather would I see you abide in this haunt of the devil
And avenge yourself, direly avénge yourself,
Avenge yourself upon their children's children,
Avenge yourself with the venom of your embrace,
For you and for your sisters,
For us and for our brothers,
And for the whole kindred of Satan's disinherited children
 avenge yourself
Upon this shielded caste
Of God-fearing and favoured

— . .
Citizens.

Apostrophes Proud and Passionate (1896).

STANISLAV KAREL NEUMANN

Revolt

MY days are flying
Like the course of a random shot,
Unwitting of where it shall fall.
My days are flying
Like a bird, hounded by change of lot
Into gloom's dense, chilling pall.

O wild flight,
O'er my hair that waxes sparse and grey,
Where wilt thou settle, when will thou die ?
O wild flight,
How oft shall I hear thy truths that prey,
How oft the timid lie ?

O remember,
Thou who the hazard of change doth sow,
Who givest, now promises, now despair,
O remember,
That like an oak I desire to quit this woe,
Sap-filled, even though bare !

Thirty Chants from the Upheaval (1919)

October 28th, 1918

OCTOBER the twenty-eighth, nineteen hundred and
eighteen,
Having severed the talon which clutched me,
Talon of a bird which dubbed itself eagle, but was a
vulture,
I, the Czechoslovak nation, took my stand
Among the free nations.

STANISLAV KAREL NEUMANN

Flutter of banners and the sparkle of eyes,
The streets are filled with clouds in living guise,
And from them surged joy ;
I waxed every instant,
Braced myself and uplifted my head,
While before the clenched fist of mankind
Habsburg and Hohenzollern were retreating.

Yea, the dreams, the hopes, the beliefs,
That the best of my sons amid tempest and griefs
Cherished in their hearts,
Scattered throughout Europe,
Wearing foreign livery,
And also beneath banners of the legionaries,
Had become real,
And I set my name upon all my possessions,
Placing one foot upon Sumava
And the other upon Tatra,
Upon my realm and my freedom.

Then I gazed about me
With my head above the clouds and my heart on
high,
But my smile vanished and my pride ebbed away,
The moment's great austerity held me in its sway,
Hallowed thoughts of the world like mighty winds
Were wafted about my head.

And I vowed,
I, the Czechoslovak nation, alive and free,
Vowed unto mankind and the great spirits of the world
That a righteous nation I would be.

STANISLAV KAREL NEUMANN

That I would not cease to crush with the onslaught of
my wrath

All who thrust into duress,
All who are bringers of distress,
All who extort and oppress
As far as my arm can reach,

That by the dictates of my conscience I would not cease
to help

All whose utterance, whose deed, whose achievement
Is the fruit of an unfeigning heart;
All who upraise and set free,
All who defend freedom and justice,
All who destroy thralldom and outrage.
And I vowed that those of my sons I would disown
Who to-day for their yesterday's guilt refused to atone
And who would not join with me to vow
That all must be alike in freedom now.

" 1914-1918" (1927)

IVAN KRASKO

(b. 1876) (Slovak)

Solitude

OTHOU, God of the poor and the abased,
Accept with loving-kindness my mournful prayer.
Thou who art great, being God of the puny,
Oh, at Thy feet, behold Thy puniest one,
How with mute gaze he doth lament to Thee
Unbounded greatness of his evil plight.
Unworthy he cowers in the dust of earth below.
See, paltry and pitiful amid all living creatures :

IVAN KRASKO

That ne'er hath laid a dove upon Thine altar,
Nor salved with balm the wounds of the afflicted
And ne'er rang chimes of a festive Resurrexit,
O Thou, God of the poor and the debased.

Nox et Solitudo (1909)

Jehovah

CRUEL Jehovah ! Thou who hast no pity,
Whose vengeance houndeth many generations,
Who hast destroyed the seed in the dry desert
Tainted by savour of foreign wont:
I plead to Thee for Thine avenging hand,
Thy vengeance I call down on my own stock !
Let their mouths foam with long-continued wailing ;
Let unto task-masters be their greetings borne
By prayers wrung from their sickly, puny breasts ;
Let foreign fields be moistened with their sweat ;
Their backs lashed by the scourger, shall
Carry an irksome yoke throughout their lives ;
For ever let their craven hands
Implore for bread of their own toil ;
Their streams grow brackish to a searing gall,—
And let their loaves harden to granite blocks ;
Let their old men ne'er know what reverence is,
And let their offspring with a curse be laden ;
May'st thou drag love from out their women's hearts,
And in its place fill them with rancorous hatred ;
Let not the mothers bring forth poets among them
To cleanse their faces from the tears of blood ;
Let them perish deserted by the wayside,
And fetters be their music to the tomb ;
Let gibbets and no crosses deck their graveyards

IVAN KRASKO

And memory of them be ever shame :
If they will know not, that the hour is late,
That from a gloomy tower the tocsin rings——

Cruel Jehovah ! Who art pitiless,
I plead to Thee for thine avenging hand,
Thy vengeance I call down on my own stock !

Nox et Solitudo (i 909,

Grief

I AM hushed and faint-hearted to-day, as if I were
void of hope.

Of a sudden I have called to mind my distant home ;
Of a sudden I have called to mind grief of unquiet eyes.
Perhaps 'tis therefore I am hushed and as if void of hope.
But the sun soothingly sings its eternally youthful song
In orchard, on field, on mountains,

Along the wayside, too,

Where the young poplar, parched, defiant and bare,
Proclaims that now are ended all pangs of despair,
On fields where the stream skirts the willows in glittering
flight,

How nimble, how nimble and bright,—

Even as on the dark mountains of my home,

Where on the greensward my youth lies lifeless, clad in

White.

verse

(1912)

The Slave

I AM he whose ears have heard the slave-mother sing-
ing her strains;

Out of my soul this singing of hers never, never wanes.

With strange and stricken sorrow it sounded so forlorn

IVAN KRASKO

Across our plough-scarred landscape softly it was borne,
And seized upon the trembling spirit of a child.

I am he who beneath the lash of the task-master grew,
Beneath the lash that opens day by day unhealed wounds
anew,

That never, never the trace of their weals can disappear.
Still my bended back cannot brace itself in its fear,
But a spark hidden till now gleams in my lowered gaze...

I am he who waits for the sound of the tocsin's boom,
That the slave who wreaks not vengeance shall go to a
grievous doom.

Then shall I raise my back, and my face will be aglow.
By then shall I plant the trees, from which the gibbets
grow. . . .

O, mournful it was to hear the slave-mother singing her
Strains!

Verses (1912).

FRÁŇA ŠRÁMEK

(b. 1877)

The Faithful Lover

I BELIEVE I knew a man whose love was real.

He was gentle and proud, but not cautious enough;
and that is how I got to know of the whole occurrence.

It began one Sunday evening in a suburban tavern,
where the lower orders used to get tipsy. Six days of
labour and misery were left outside the door, and it was
for the seventh day to rejoice the heart. Yesterday was
consumed amid liquor, and a piano announced that
youth escapes, never to return.

And at one table sat a girl, who from dark, spirited eyes gave all men to drink, and there arose, as it were, almost a vapour from her, like the seething of springtide soil. She threw back her head and hot laughter dried upon her lips ; she laughed for no cause, and there were moments when she was embarrassed by so much blood which surged into her face.

And suddenly she had a feeling as if somebody had taken her head in his white narrow hands, and forced her to look into two tenderly smiling eyes.

It was Mar'an who was looking at her.

He was different from the other men ; he had a gentle face, and a delicate smile, and Lina felt in great embarrassment.

It always seemed to her as if the other men said with their eyes that she was pretty, and that they wanted to kiss her and . . . and hug and crush her in their arms ; she used to feel hot at these glances. But that was altogether quite easy to understand, and she was not angry with the men on that account; for really she did not know what else men could want of her. . . .

But these two eyes said something quite different.

For they also said that, but they said it as if in sorrow ; as if it pained them to have to say it.

But that, of course, she did not understand. And she was annoyed at not understanding it.

She bent over towards her married sister.

" Look . . . that fellow's eating me up with his eyes. . . ."

So that he should know she didn't care a rap for men with studious faces and solemn eyes. Yes, didn't even care a rap. Girls from the suburbs don't bother their heads with such nonsense. Nobody has pampered

FRANA SRAMEK

their sense of shame, and the mystery of women has been revealed to them amid coarse words and wanton, tickling laughter. And besides that, she, Lina, is a shrewd girl. She had learnt this and that from her companions where she worked. Every moment one of her companions would receive a present—a hat, earrings, something or other. . . . There was one who could even boast of a gold watch . . . and she isn't particularly pretty either, is Anda . . . some men are really most free-handed . . . and . . . and for such a trifle, which, after all, is by no means altogether unpleasant. . . . And then, too, Lina has such a thirst in her blood, and wants to enjoy things very, very much ; well, perhaps to-morrow or the day after, something pleasant would happen to her too. . . .

And she looked at Mafan, as if she wanted to tell him with her eyes : Yes, that's Lina, my good fellow !

But she could not manage it, and her eyes did not succeed in escaping, nor could her long lashes contrive to hide her great confusion ; it was as if Mafan were shaking red-hot coals on to her breast.

" I say, that's dreadful, dreadful. . . . "

And Mafan pressed his friend's arm tight. He was very pale and his eyes seemed submerged in painful depths.

His friend observed him and Lina with surprise.

" Do you know her ? "

" No. . . . "

" Well, then . . . what's dreadful ? "

Mafan's lips quivered as if his mouth were benumbed.

" Poor girl . . . she'll have her human feelings abased a thousand times. . . . "

His friend seemed not to understand, and wanted to ask more questions.

FRANA SRAMEK

But Mafan only waved his hand and paid.

Outside there was a wind-swept night, the flames in the gas-lamps were jerking like convulsive tongues in mute mouths, which cannot and dare not speak. The cold pierced to the marrow; one felt a desire to sigh like this wind. It was as though somewhere heavy showers of human tears had been falling. . . . And the pavement was wet with something like the sweat of a man lying in death-agony. . . .

His friend burst out laughing.

"What are you looking at, Mafan? The stars aren't shining. . . ."

And Mafan repeated mechanically :

"The stars aren't shining. . . ."

Suddenly he stopped and listened in the direction of the tavern from which they had come.

"Do you hear?"

"What?"

"Someone was calling for help."

"Calling? I didn't hear. Besides, that's the business of the police."

Maran seemed to be laboriously thinking about something.

"The police, the police. . . . If I were to go up to the first two policemen we meet, and say : 'There's someone in danger yonder . . . there's a woman being made the victim of a crime,' they'll take her out to be crucified, and she'll go with them singing, because they've made her drunk so that she should think she's going to meet with pleasures and delights."

His friend interrupted him with a dry laugh.

"Oh, I see! O, *du Schmerzenskind* . . . !"

He stood with legs apart, stretched out his open

FRANA SRAMEK

hand towards Mafan and said with cynical solemnity :

" Well, I'm game. . . . A word's enough. Speak, and I'll save her."

Mařan's whole face was filled with a kind of terror; his eyes grew rigid with an extraordinary dread.

Suddenly he turned away with an abrupt movement and departed without a word. His friend tried to catch him up. But Mafan began to run away.

.

A few days later there was much laughter among the girls.

" And he kissed your hand ? "

" Yes."

And Lina drew up her whole body in a theatrical manner.

" Yes, here. . . . And he said that, that . . ."

But she could not remember what it was he said; so she told them something else.

" He said he'd like to kiss me on a place where nobody had kissed me before. . . ."

" Hi, hi, hi !"

" Ha, ha, ha! . . ."

The whole premises reeked with laughter, like a cheap perfume.

" Just fancy, a place . . ."

" Well, after all, with Lina it could still be managed, I mean a place like that. But Anda . . . or Betyna, say, if a young man was to ask them for such a thing, they'd really be dreadfully puzzled. . . ."

" But if she was to think hard, Lina could tell them . . . what's happened to her innocence. . . ."

FRANA SRAMEK

Lina felt the blood rushing into her face; but she kept her control and curled her lip in an impudent blasé smile.

"Hm, she's not so babyish as . . . as . . . Betyna, for instance, to keep a list of all the men who're a bit forward . . . or to remember the numbers of the rooms in such and such a hotel, where . . . Yes, and let them bear it well in mind, Lina's too careful about those kind of things. . . ."

She said it quite steadily; there seemed hardly any doubt that she had had such highly coloured experiences.

But Betyna grew indignant.

"Just fancy, how soppy. . . . And that's what the fathead said to you. Come, let's hear. . . ."

"No, Lina won't tell. . . ."

"Look at that now, she won't tell. Well, I only hope she won't be taken down a peg or two before long."

But Lina said no more. Somehow she felt almost sad. Two eyes were looking at her, and these two eyes were full of sorrow. No, he mustn't look at her like that, it upsets her. Let him go to the other girls, to the educated, dressed-up creatures, if he wants to carry on as though he had toothache; perhaps they like that. She was fond of life, and didn't know why she should be sad. And, anyhow, let him laugh too. She'd tell him that in the evening. He must laugh or. . . . Yes, she wouldn't let herself be bored to tears. . . . What's he got to do with her soul? Why didn't he talk about her lips? Suppose he wanted to kiss her that evening. . . . Oh, she'd be glad to hold out her lips to him, and . . . and . . . if he wanted more? Well, yes . . . he'd have shining eyes, and she'd throw her arms round his neck.... If Betyna had an idea of how she had lied a moment

FRANA SRAMEK

ago, and of what an inexperienced girl she really was., .. Two eyes were looking at her, and she felt as if her heart were sweating a blood-like dew. . . . But those were not eyes like Mafan's. Two shameless, slimy eyes with a dark, muttering desire in them. . . .

And in the evening, when he waited for her, she told him about it.

—That he was always sad, and never said anything nice to her.

—Well, if that would please her. . . .

—Hm, she. . . .

For an instant or so she hesitated.

—She didn't like sad people.

—Indeed ? But she should believe him when he vowed to her by all that was dearest to him in the world, that he would so much like to be jolly, if only . . . if only she did not make him so sad.

—She ? Well, did you ever . . .

—Yes, she . . . Did she know that she was threatened by a great danger ?

—No, she certainly didn't.

—If he could stand with open arms in front of all the pitfalls to which she was blindly hurrying. . . .

—What ? Pitfalls ? No, she simply couldn't understand it. . . .

She looked round at all the men they met with, and she kindled her eyes at their glances. She offered herself to them all, as if he were not there.

He wanted to say something, but his tongue grew numb with anguish. His mouth was full of suffering and shame, like a lump of black bread soaked with tears.

It was not until they reached the house that he said to her:

FRANA SRAMEK

" Perhaps after all I don't love you much, or else I'd probably kill you. . . ."

It seemed to him as if it were not he who was speaking ; so strange was the sound of his voice.

Yes, perhaps he had not spoken at all, for her face was quite calm.

There was nobody in the street; his heart began to babble foolishly.

" Why don't you like me?"

" I do like you."

She said that without reflection or hesitation, with such horrible composure. So simply had she managed to settle " this business."

Mař an understood ; it was terrible.

Sometimes when he used to wait for her, and she was already coming towards him, he would have liked to run away.

He was frightened at something about which her eyes could not keep silent; yes, there was no doubt that the dreadful thing had already happened, and her eyes would be full of slippery laughter.

She came ; evening was in the streets, and the people were all somehow white beneath the gas-lamps ; even she was white, but with dark flames in her eyes and with a red thirst oh her lips.

" You've been so long coming to-day. . . ."

She laughed.

But this laughter of hers might have some meaning ; this thought beat on his mind like a whip, and the whole street together with Lina laughed in his face.

He was unhappy to the point of committing some folly.

FRANA SRAMEK

" Perhaps someone kept you back——"

"Maybe."

And again that laughter.

It burnt upon his tongue ; he had to speak.

" You were at the theatre the night before last ? "

" Yes ! "

" And after the theatre. . . ." He suddenly stopped speaking, and hastily began to turn up the collar of his overcoat.

A moment passed before he attempted to continue, but his mouth uttered only a kind of moan.

He laughed oddly and coughed for a moment.

"I've caught a cold, you know . . . and it makes talking difficult."

And again he coughed for a moment. Then he said in quite an unusual voice :

" You must have a lovely body. . . . I'd like to sleep with you."

He bent down to her, his face twitched, and he kissed her on the neck.

" That's the way to do it, eh ? Even I know a thing or two, ha, ha. . . . "

Her gait began to sway, there was something urchin-like in her, and her lips pouted as if for a soft whistling.

And Mafan clapped his hands, clung to Lina's arm, got into step with her and tried to walk just as swayingly.

" And it's a good thing. . . . It's sensible and everything else is silly. . . . What does it matter who kissed you the night before last ? Or last night ? I shan't ask and I'll kiss too. . . . And you'll like him and me as well, eh ? You're a sensible girl, Lina, a very sensible girl. Perhaps there'll be a third one to-morrow, and you'll like him too, ha, ha. . . . "

He again kissed her on the neck, and laughed oddly : then he said hoarsely :

" Will you come to see me on Sunday afternoon ? "

She did not even think it over, but nodded assent. She simply nodded assent. There was no need to think anything over; it was quite natural, and she nodded assent.

A kind of stammering sound stirred in his breast.

It seemed to him as if he ought to be glad, very glad ; but his heart was full of shame and humiliation.

.

I already knew Lina—Mařan had previously introduced me to her. My own view of myself is that I am not altogether exacting in my attitude towards what is known as feminine virtue ; that is my own view, and possibly it is right. There have been women who deceived me; I smile indulgently when I recall it. There are a number of women whom one can hardly expect to be faithful; I know from experience that with some of them it is quite impossible. And there are men who want a woman to be faithful to them ; then they should not go to women who cannot achieve it. And Lina ? It was awkward that Mafan should have fallen in love just with her.

And so it was a Sunday afternoon in March. A marvellous day that made the heart ring. The breeze was like a fluttering kiss, and the sky sloped down into the streets like a hanging blossom. The streets babbled, the warmth increased to intoxication. I stood before the house ready to spend the whole afternoon rambling about. There must have been a garden near by, and in the garden a blackbird was twittering. The street was

full of noise, but you could hear the blackbird. I listened to the blackbird, and the sun fondled me with veils of light; my heart tingled as if stroked by a woman's fluttering tresses.

And as I stood there, Lina came by. I greeted her; and where was she going ? To Mafan.

"Where?"

"To see Mr. Mafan/"

It was a fine spring day ; I felt happy and would have liked to press this girl's hand ; she said it so without embarrassment, with such full relish, that she was going to her lover ; such a thing as that is certainly stronger and lovelier than virtue.

From some upper window a small piece of paper was thrown out; it fluttered and wriggled about in front of our eyes, fell right between us, and we both clutched at it.

Our hands touched, and without knowing why, we both held each other's hands and laughed exuberantly, without reason, like little children ; she held the piece of paper in her hand and I had to force it open. Our fingers became entangled, the people looked round at us, and my heart bowed down to her half-open, wanton lips, my heart was full of springtide and full of some fervid entreaty.

At last I caught hold of the paper and that made me laugh all the more.

On the paper was written three times vertically in pencil: yes, yes, yes.

Yes, yes, yes ! A fervid affirmation to someone.

To whom ?

The sun was aiming all his rays at my breast, and these rays glowingly affirmed : yes, yes, yes !

And I did not know why, but without having any special intention in my mind, I said :

" Won't you come up with me ? "

It seemed as if she were just a little surprised; anyhow, her eyes expressed a kind of wonderment.

But my heart bowed down to her lips and breathed its fervid entreaty upon her face.

At last, yes, she would come up.

I led her up the stairs into my room, as if from the street outside I had gathered up the spring breeze and were carrying it home.

I could swear that I had no special intentions ; it just occurred to me at the moment to invite her in, to show her my room, to listen to her laughter in my room, and to make all the objects there more festive and cheerful by letting her springtide gaze wander over them.

I asked her to take off her hat, and she took off her hat.

I sat down opposite her, and half closed my eyes at the warm breeze which was wafted from her.

Many books were scattered about on the table, and that filled her with astonishment.

" What a lot of books. . . . And do you learn from all of them ? "

" Whatever made you think that ? Why, I'm a notorious idler. Besides, it seems to me that I know everything. "

I suppose I hardly looked like a man who knew everything, and she laughed.

Her laughter made my blood too thick and red, I suddenly did not know what to say, and my mouth was full of a dumb sweetness.

I did not know what I was saying, but I only heard her rather muffled voice.

FRANA SRAMEK

" Look how my hands are trembling ; they would like to pluck flowers "

And again her laughter. And my blood thick and red.

Outside the spring was eagerly affirming : yes, yes, yes i

" And my lips are trembling too, look ; they want to kiss your mouth. . . . "

And she offered scarcely any resistance. . . .

.

" Fil see you out. Where are you going now ? "

" Why, I told you . . . to see Mr. Mafan ? "

My head grew cold, something was hurting my forehead. My face must have looked stupid with astonishment.

" Why, I told you. . . . "

" Oh, yes, yes . . . I remember . . . I only. . . . But tell me, you're fond of Mafan ? "

" Well, that's . . . you know. . . . "

But she did not say what it was, she only shrugged her shoulders and left it at that. That's how it was. . . . Yes, I understood. . . .

The March sun was shining, but my heart was suddenly cold. Behind the bright and pleasant faces of people there seemed to lurk deceptive purposes.

I bought Lina a bunch of violets.

" In gratitude for the delightful visit . . . " I said, with an ugly laugh. I knew that I was unjust, but I gave an ugly laugh.

I reflected for a moment; my thoughts were so bitter.

" But I'd like to ask you a favour, Lina. . . . Of course, my kisses have left no traces, I'm not so romantic

as that; but, still, I'd rather you didn't go to Mafan to-day. I don't know how to put it . . . but judge for yourself. It's not far short of dishonesty; better fight shy of it. . . . You see, I know Mafan . . . after what's happened . . . well, to put it briefly, don't go to-day, anyhow. . . ."

She was utterly unable to understand it, but at last she agreed.

We parted, and I went to Mafan myself.

It was foolish, but I went as one who had an evil conscience.

His face grew horrified as I entered. He probably thought it was Lina.

"It's you?"

He did not even ask me to take a seat; he crouched down again in a corner of the settee, and lapsed into silence.

I started talking, only for the sake of saying something.

"The sun is shining, and you're moping at home. . . ."

He looked at me as if he did not understand and remained silent.

After a moment he asked :

"What's the time ? "

"About four. . . ."

"Four, you say ? "

He suddenly fixed his eyes upon me with a kind of violence and said in a parched voice :

"It's too late now. . . ."

My head again grew cold, and my forehead hurt me, but I managed to ask :

"Were you waiting for someone ? "

FRANA SRAMEK

"Was I waiting for someone?" he asks, "was I waiting for someone ! Kick me, kick me like a dog, if every vein in my face doesn't tell you and betray to you that I was waiting. . . ."

His whole face gleamed strangely.

" Oh, how I have waited! I kissed the threshold there, so that she should come in over my kisses. . . ."

His voice gave way ; he only whispered :

" You know, Lina was to have come. . . ."

He jumped up from the settee, stood in front of me, and laid his hands heavily upon my shoulders ; his face glowed with extraordinary enthusiasm.

" And she has not come. And you think I'm cursing her for not coming . . . you, you fool! She's spotless, that's why she hasn't come. She promised, and her promise was a punishment for my impudence. Jirko, I begged of her like a lackey : Come to me . . . to my room, ha, ha, come . . . and to think that I wasn't strangled for letting such words pass my evil lips. But she hasn't come. She has punished the lackey, with her pure, spotless radiant soul she had blinded his eyes. I'd gratefully sacrifice all my blood in return for that. . . ."

I quickly withdrew before his enthusiasm.

Yes, I remember, I really ought to go to So-and-So; how could I have forgotten it ?

And I went. Or rather I fled.

Sometimes, when we talk about love, I say : I think I knew a man whose love was real. But as I say it, I twist my lips oddly. . . .

• *Glory of Life* (1903)

KAREL TOMAN

KAREL TOMAN

(b. 1877)

The Sentimental Carousers

COMRADE thou of melancholy,
Thou, my vagrant spirit's friend,
Underneath what sky hereafter
Will our lives of beggary end ?

Our annals, silvery and drab,
Within what land, when will they wane ?
When will the music that we cherished
Be wafted in a last refrain ?

O, bygone love an echo rouses
In the heart's chords again. No more !
Hail to ourselves, to earth, to dreaming !
A requiem to the days of yore.

In golden wine the tyrant mood
Of memory we shall immerse.
And we shall sing, and shall forget
Our love, our fury and our curse.

Torso of Life (1901)

Old Autumn Allegory

LEAVES that the freakish craftsman's hammer
thinned
From gold, bronze, tarnished copper, he flung away
Into the grass, a gift for children, for each wind,
And dreamily watched their play.

KAREL TOMAN

In moonlit nights an old musician plies
Fiddle and flute by turns, for sheer delight;
Playing for lovers' ears he seizes sobbing cries
Of birds in southward flight.

And the compassionate poet, who could fuse
Betrayals', griefs', deceits' heart-crushing throes
To rhythmic dew and speech of crystal, comes to muse
On calm that death bestows.

The Sun-dial (1913)

The Sun-dial

A HOUSE in ruins. On the crannied walls
Moss gluttonously crawls
And lichens in a spongy rabble.

The yard is rank with nettle-thickets
And toad-flax. In the poisoned water-pit
Rats have a drinking-lair.
A sickly apple-tree, by lightning split,
Knows not, if it bloomed e'er.

When days are clear, the whistling finches
Invade the rubble. Beaming, sunlit days
Liven the dial's arc that fronts the place,
And freakishly and gaily on its face
Time's shadow dances
And to the sky recites in words of gloom :
Sine sole nihil sum.

For all is mask.

The Sun-dial (1913)

KAREL TOMAN

February

THOU who adorest peace and solitude
And amid depth of woods, and calm of snowclad
meadows
Hearkenest to the beat of life,
Dost thou not ever hear
Voice of the depths ?

Far carnivals of slaughter, blood and death are heard,
Earth's muteness is of woe.
But below
The heart-beat stirs, and from the gloom a hidden well
Thrusts itself lightwards.

And tunes young waters chant
Quicken thy heart, and daze thy thoughts with joy that
we
Though in despair, yet not alone in hope can be.

The Months (1919)

April

AJOYOUS springtide of rain
And God's first rainbow o'er the countryside !
The sower lays the seed-cloth down
And trustfully
Paces the soil where he has sown.

Though frosts may come, yet shall the sacred tilth
Be never marred.
For its one statute is to burgeon and to thrive,
To thrive though storm and sleet befall,
Defying all.

KAREL TOMAN

The worthy grandsires warm them by the chimney-side
And ancient wisdom, ancient ways they ponder o'er
And ancient weather-lore.

The Months (1919)-

VIKTOR DYK

(b. 1877)

It Rained the Livelong Day . . .

IT rained the livelong day, we did not leave the cell,
And there was much, was much the raindrops had to
tell.

The soft and soothing cadence of their speech we heard,
Wherein death was but sleep and danger but a word.
Till by the peaceful murmur soothed and lulled to rest,
We told ourselves that none against us had transgressed.
We told ourselves that concord can arise from wrong,
That he can reach his goal who gropes through darkness
long.

We told ourselves the sun would greet the coming day.
And then the rain was stilled. The last drop ebbed away.
Already night had come, and as a long refrain
We heard amid our dreams speedy of that goodly rain.

The Window (1921)

JAKUB DEML

(b. 1878)

Dirge

MY secret workshop night ward glimmered,
On the lone hills the tempest sighed ;
Of a sudden the furnace ceiling-high shimmered :
At my doorway someone cried.

JAKUB DEML

Enter, O Unknown, come nigh unto me here.
What is the grief thou bearest in this night of fear ?

Three days, three nights I have wandered thus ;
Now God be merciful unto us.

Wherefore this dread, wherefore these throes ?
Come, recount to me thy woes.

Nay, 'tis thine that now are nigh.
Their messenger, their voice am I.

Enough grim tidings hast thou told.
My handiwork is waxing cold.

What thine hand would fain have wrought
Now to haze and smoke is brought.

Speak ! My only friend has died ?
Naught but the midnight chime replied.

The fire was quenched. Stirless the pendulum stands.
What I had wrought fell from my hands.

Footprints (1919)

OTAKAR THEER

1880-1917

City

CITY—

With our young dreams we have set foot within
thee
Bewitched by the legend that hung in the gold of thy
turrets,

OTAKAR THEER

Half-foreboding thy beauty, thy marvellous life,
Whereof nurses told us tales, yonder afar, by the country-
side.

Thou hast shown us thine unmatched countenance, us
untempted

Hast thou taken unto thine embraces and lulled with a
smile.

What thou didst murmur to us on sluggish afternoons,
was :

Mighty deceit, that slumbered in thine unbounded gaze.
Then while the countryside awoke to glittering mornings,
Then while peasants sowed grain into the dusky soil,
Then while through firmaments surged a deluge of mighty
love,

Thou didst take from us all, that was ours,

Our simple hearts, full of dreams and beauty,

Our strength, our freedom, our faith, peaceful and
assuaging.

Expeditions to the Ego (1900)

Tempest

ROAR, springtime tempest ! Bellow, din,
Thy thousand hoofs' shall clatter !
Roar on in sorrow, headstrong grief,—
Thy woe is a goodly matter.

Spur on the clouds and trample the wood,
Canter over the river.

Dazingly every buffet of thine
In my every vein shall quiver.

As brothers we sink to watery depths
From heaven at our sorrow's lashing.

OTAKAR THEER

Destroying and rending, leap by leap,
Brothers akin we are crashing,—
And we know not whither and why.

Anguish and Hope (1912)

Water

SWEET and enticing
As women's souls,
Lace-foamed, O billow,
Thy surging rolls,
Bluster and dart,
Tangle my heart
In the swiftness and lure of thy singing.

Fierce in the mountains,
Soft as a sigh,
Drab shores of the city
Thou ripplest by.
Bear thou away
The mire and the clay
With the burden and plague of their clinging.

I kneel and thou givest
Baptism's dower ;
Grief now I master,
Strong with thy power.
Yonder I fare
To solitude's lair
To the land of my phantasy's bringing.

Anguish and Hope (1912)

OTAKAR THEER

Fire

O SACRED seething
In scarlet array.
Blossomed! Flame-breathing!
Unto my heart with fervid love-tinged utterance thrust
thy way.
O scars, O weals,
How blissful are they that thy passion deals,
And what delight
From morn unto eve to be kindled and tested
By thy hundred tongues, branded, mauled, wrested,—
Yet with utter defiance to prevail amid evil plight.
Amid thy sacred forge may I never tire,
Like thy flames, and in thy dreaming's buoyant wise
Flash forth ever afresh, O my soul and with crimson
wings press higher.
Out of each day shall a new redemption arise.
May at the last thine embrace, whither blood of the sun
doth shower,
Snatch me in flight, O thou from the endless endlessly
bursting power
Bear me and lay me to rest
Upon God's glowing breast.

Anguish and Hope (1912)

Spake My Heart . . .

SPAKE my heart unto my will:
Why rackest thou me, that I ne'er am still?
Why snappest my growth? And my leafage wrest?
Why marrest the song in each topmost nest?

OTAKAR THEER

I desire to clutch dizzily sweet breath of spring,
I desire unto summer my branches to fling,
I desire to be fragrant, to lure, rustle, flower,
I desire a sun-gold, a star-silver dower.

Spake my will unto my heart:
It betides thee well, pampered thing that thou art!
Yearlong from bliss to bliss didst thou stray ;
But for me, thou wouldst know nor sorrow nor sway.

Are we born for struggle, or born for dream ?
Are we water and vapour, or hill-top and gleam ?
I am mistress, thou'rt slave, hand am I, thing art thou,
At my bidding, as taper in tempest, to bow.

In Spite of All (1916)

Drifting as in Dream He Dwells

DRIFTING as in dream he dwells,
Who with God has linked his powers.
Through thy soul the span of hours
Bears its wizardry and spells.

Thou shalt fear nor dread nor dole
As thou tread'st earth's meadow-land ;
Thou art guided hand in hand
By God's wonder-working soul.

With this hand-clasp over thee,
What is death and throes he wields ?
Soul of God, through forests, fields,
Guide, protect, lead, foster me !

In Spite of All (1916)

FRANTISEK LANGER

FRANTIŠEK LANGER

(b. 1882)

Timely Death

ON the outskirts of Zizkov there stood a house which^{v v} was known as "The Hive/' The house had been built for poor families, and besides them it contained all sorts of sub-tenants : life's outcasts, itinerant musicians, pedlars, women who hawked wares from one tavern to another, artisans out of work. The house had neither morality nor sin. But it had a dizzily rapid vital *tempo*.

Girls grew into women there overnight, and boys became men with equal speed. Marriages aged swiftly, months were as years, and passions asurge at nightfall had ebbed away by the morning. And what by morning was cold and valueless, was at nightfall a thing to be fervently adored.

Brawls began, graduated by blows, indifference was avenged by contacts which drew blood, the shedding of blood was forgiven with kisses, kisses were requited by stormy embraces. Wild scenes of jealousy were enacted; when a man's footsteps aroused the terror of a crouching woman, scornful glances flung her imploringly upon her knees; and hard, masculine hands, already strangling the woman's throat on the dishevelled bed, evoked on her face a smile full of malice, testifying that she was aware of his mastery and his adoration. In one day people loved each other and were loved, they loved and were hated, they hated and were loved.

Such were the ups and downs of the house.

On the third floor lived Mr. Hajs, who at night used to play the guitar in taverns, and at home played it the

FRANTISEK LANGER

whole day, because he suffered from sleeplessness, so that a quiet strumming could be heard in the house, whenever it was not deadened by quarrels and shouting. Below on the second storey lived a family with Matydš, a workman from Rustonka, a good-looking fellow, but sluggish and taciturn, and then a mother with Kristinka, a beautiful and charming girl.

When Kristinka had grown into a young woman, she disappeared from the house one day, although she knew full well that Matyáš had her in mind. In the house they were used to such happenings, only Matydš felt sad about it.

Time went on, and then one day a carriage stopped in front of the house. From it Kristinka stepped forth in silk and furs, and with a rustling of skirts she went up the stairs to her mother. She welcomed her, dusted a chair and made her sit down. Then she called the woman from next door, with whom Matydš also arrived, and the inquisitive and gadabout house-porter's wife came as well. Mr. Hajs from the third floor somehow came to hear about the visitor, and he brought his guitar with him. Then Kristinka told them how on the very first day that she had left the house, an old gentleman had made her acquaintance and had taken her home with him. How he had installed her in a villa, and had given her everything she could think of, a maid, a house-keeper, a coachman, and a chef. How the chef did her cooking for her, oh, what cooking ! and now she intoned a song celebrating the beauty of food, the bliss of eating one's till; of pastry light as air, fragrant meat, snails and mussels baked to a golden tint, rose-coloured fish bathed in gravies, rolls as golden as ducats, and what cakes there were ! The old gentleman brought bananas

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and pineapples, and when she searched his pockets she was sure to find a box of chocolates too. She spoke with gusto and zest about the warmth arising from the plates, the scent proceeding from the slices of fruit, of the simple charm to be seen in the light yellow wicker baskets of cakes. Of the caressing warmth of ovens and grills, the snugness of a bright kitchen, of the fairy-land treasures of a pantry always replete. She told them about the displays of the dealers in delicacies, how enticing and inexhaustible they are, of the fruit stores, where the various fruits have such a smiling appearance, and have such an allurements in their smiles, that you must buy them and plunge your teeth into them, of the confectioners' shops which contain all the dainties in the world. And it all sounded like the account of a dream from an afternoon nap, full of satisfied appetite, relish and delicious savour. That, she said, was how she lived.

When she went away, she gave Matyáš a twenty-crown note to buy a souvenir of her, and not to think ill of her. She would come again, she said.

Matyáš said to himself: "I'll buy a revolver. I love her and I'll kill her. She's too happy. I can't bear it."

After some time she drove up again in a beautiful carriage, and went in to her mother. She wore a pale violet dress with a broad hat, also pale violet in colour, and from it a white plume fluttered. She came and sat among them all, Mr. Hajs was there with his guitar, Matyas also, with a revolver in his pocket. She drank bottled beer with them, and did not take her gloves off. She just sat at the head of the table, almost invisible beneath the broad edge of her hat, and talked. She told them that the old gentleman had died suddenly,

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unexpectedly, his heirs had shifted her. But one of them, a bank manager, a bald man with whiskers, had taken her to live with him. And now everything was different. There came the affluent plenty of a small villa, resembling a larder in which a child nibbles dainties. There arose a period of magnificence and pride. She was no longer a little pet animal kept for fattening, and causing pleasure to her owner when she ate well. Now she was a sort of little jewel, which has to be seen, admired and envied by all. The gentleman drove with her to the theatres and sat with her in private boxes, so situated that the people could easily look into them from all sides. He sat with her at the centre tables of big restaurants, and cut up her food. In the afternoon he drove with her in an open carriage through the Stromovka and took a delight in greeting all his acquaintances. In the evening he invited his friends, among whom were rich men, artists and army officers, and all of them paid court to her, used fair words to her, and envied him. Oh, she could feel among them the atmosphere of her beauty, in which she let them bask and languish. She knew her smiles which aroused joy on their faces, her insuperable side-long glances, the movements of her limbs, which drew the gaze of all towards them, the motion of her body, which distended all nostrils and clenched all lips in the room. She spoke and was captivated by her own beauty ; enraptured she half-closed and opened her languid grey eyes, in pride she linked her hands above her head, enticing and provocative, she swayed to and fro slightly. On that day Matyďs was totally unable to shoot her, she was like an innocently fawning kitten.

When she came the next time, she was dressed in the

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gray attire of an elegant lady, extremely dignified in her bearing and apparel. She sat down among her people and told them that she was no longer living with the banker, but that she had left him for a bandmaster. Oh, the life she led now ! She would never have thought it possible to live like that. What had her life been before, first abounding in milk and honey, then all noise and show ? Now she had no villa of her own, she had only one maid, and no coachman at all. But she lived enwrapped in her friend's kisses, her hands were covered with them from morning to evening, and they never even dried upon her lips. She ranged amid a warm haze of love, she waded in smiles, she bathed in contacts. At night her pillow had a warm smoothness, as if her lover's hands embraced her from all sides, the fragrant cambric of her linen caressed her like his unfailing lips. How beautiful it all was, how beautiful. Mr. Hajs accompanied her words with a slow serenade. She told them how her lover spoke to her, what words he sought, what kisses, how before going to bed, he sat down at the piano, and with her head on his shoulders, and pressing his lips into her hair, he played her lullabies which his fingers devised, and which made her eyelids droop, until, rocked by the music and the kisses into a half-sleep, she was carried into the midst of the white pillows. Then all who were listening to Kristinka's words, let their arms sink into their laps and closed their eyes. Mr. Hajs let his guitar slip from his clasp, and Matyáš released the hand which was toying with the revolver in his pocket.

The next time she came in high-heeled boots which made her small foot quite tiny, and holding an embroidered hand-bag, she sat down among her friends to tell them that she had left the bandmaster, who had

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become jealous and wanted to insist upon marriage. Now she had a lover, a married man, who paid for her cosy furnished room. But she was rarely at home, she avoided him so as to be able to spend her nights in dancing. She danced in ballrooms under white glittering lustres, where coloured lamps, red and green, shone from the palms, in the corners of the hall, from the curtains of the windows. She danced at fancy-dress balls, carnivals, and evening revels with sentimental pierrots and dominos who flirted with water-nymphs, she danced and wearied her partners, changing a powdered clown for a florid Falstaff, whom she then replaced by a brown Oriental with a false red beard. She danced with her head thrown back, her body bent sideways. The world twisted around, the whole earth twisted beneath her feet. She expressed the rhythm of the 'cello by the movements of her legs, the melancholy of the violin by the heaving of her shoulders, the trills of the clarinets by the flashing of her eyes and the glitter of her teeth, by her smiles. She danced till dawn, till she was breathlessly weary, she was mad with the dance, and all who looked at her were mad too. Even the memory of it made her close her eyes, enlarged from being slightly painted, and she smacked her lips for joy. Mr. Hajs played a tarantella on the guitar, Kristinka tapped on the floor with her toe and heel by turns, while Matydš, not feeling enough courage, crouched in a corner.

When next she returned to the house, she had tired eyes and a jaded face beneath its coating of rouge and powder. She now recounted other curious things. She was the mistress of a gambler. She travelled with him through the world in throbbing expresses, dozing with weariness on leather sofas, she ranged between north

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and south, race-courses and hunting-fields, watering places, mountain hotels. She sat with the man as he played roulette and helped him to rake in the piles of louis d'or. At other times she drank whisky with smart stock-brokers, to find out the quotations on Change for the next day; now and then she sat on the gamblers* laps as they played poker or faro and with her fingers she pointed out to her lover behind their backs the numbers of their cards. All the while she heard the gold coins ringing round her with the laughter of innocent maidens; on the green tables they glittered, fair to see and delightful to hear, magnificent as the loftiest symbols of enjoyment and ecstasy ; and the bank-notes rustled like wanton silk underwear, though submissive to the touch, yet emblematic of the inevitable, though buoyant as vapour, yet heavy as fate. And she greedily clenched her fingers, as if the heaps of yellow gold lay before her. Her hearers looked at the table to see how the coins were raked over, even Matyáš who on that day was deaf and blind. Mr. Hajs with his inseparable guitar imitated on two strings the chinking of gold pieces,

After a time Kristinka glided up the stairs of the house, bringing her mother two bottles of wine wrapped in green paper. Her dress was bright and gaudy, and swinging to and fro on a chair she hummed snatches of a ditty to herself. Now she had no regular lover, she said. But is there anyone who would not love her ? She was loved by all, around whom she walked from table to table,—for she was in a wine-shop, where could be heard the clink of glasses when healths were being drunk, the buzz of conversation amid the rattle of glasses, the sound of music above the murmur of voices, where the whole night, on the verge of tipsiness, people sang

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and drank for joy, indifference and sorrow, where they remembered, if things were merry, and if they were sad, then they would forget. Wine ! It slips coldly into the throat and pours hotly through the veins. It has a brilliant colour, a delicious fragrance, a rich taste. It has its own god, and brings people closer to him. And champagne, a blending of air, juice and fire ! When the glass stood before her, oh, how the wine blustered with unexpected seethings so that she drank it up straight-way ; and when it had vanished in her mouth, a hot fragrance was wafted in place of it. It banished the thoughts and conjured up the passions. And when she washed her hands in it, they were scented with it day and night. She sniffed at her hands and all the others sniffed at them too, because they smelt of wine and dazed the senses, so that Matyas did not summon up courage to take aim, because he was as if drunk with the delicate palms of her hands. Even Mr. Hajs accompanied Kristinka, who had continued to hum her ditty, so merrily and unrestrainedly on the guitar, as if he had drunk wine.

After that Kristinka stayed away for a long, long time, as if she had forgotten the house. And when nobody was really expecting her, she suddenly arrived. But she was very poorly dressed, and with only a handkerchief over her head, like a servant girl. She sat down quietly by the window, while her friends assembled. But she told them nothing, she sat silently with her hands in her lap. Her boots were down at heel, and they told of nightly tramping along the edges of pavements. The whiff of the hospital, wafted from her clothing, showed that she had been ill for a long time. And then her face and hands, oh, how wretched, how pale and haggard;

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she had scarcely any bosom, her throat was shrunken. Everything about her said: Gone are the years of beauty, the revelling delight in all that was luscious, comely, amorous, agile, reckless, intoxicating.

And her mother did not dust a chair for her, but only watched her gloomily from a corner.

When Matyas had taken all this in, and Kristinka did not utter a sound, he went up to her with the revolver in his hand, and shot her through the head.

All he said was :

" She was too happy, I could not bear it. I loved her and I killed her."

Then they sent for the police.

Dreamers and Murderers (1921)

OTAKAR FISCHER

(b. 1883)

From the Depths

I CANNOT acclaim you,
Ye hostile stars,
Under the tent of the sorrowing heavens
Which blaze in silvery array ;
Unto you, that amid the abyss of my spiri
Have hurled the torch of dreams,
Invisible I call,
I, whirling atom of dust.

Wherefore,
O wherefore after a day stifling and laden
With fugitive pondering
Did ye kindle in my senses
Outcry of yearning for the endless
And terror of my very self ?

OTAKAR FISCHER

I was as a thirsty acre
Which awaits in placid meekness
Moisture of coming days :
I lived, a man amid mortals,
Unaware that he moves in the universe
Towards unending change.
Now across the furrows of my acre
A fire is wafted, and my heart,
My mortal heart is enkindled,
Death am I now, and life and belief and rapture—

Now from unfathomable distances
God's shadow has fallen on me.

(1914)

Ave Anima

Elegy on the death of Otakar Theer

WHERE art thou, spirit ? Scattered ? Borne
away ?

Dust of the all ? Nearer thy sunshine now ?
Art thou the shapeless, lightless chasm's prey ?
Art in the gale ? In God's hand ? Sleepest thou ?

He sleeps. Farewell. His gaze is quenched. Lost, lost.
Sleep, dearest friend. Thy brow is cleansed of sweat;
Thy star quivers amid the piercing frost
Of morn and beats its wings. Sublimier yet

Than life is bliss of death, purchased with pain,
And sacred calm and splendour of decline.
Who shall e'er fathom thine unuttered bane,
Heroic spirit, thou ? O poet mine. . . .

The Burning Bush (1918)

PETR KRICKA

PETR KŘIČKA

(b. 1884)

Medynia Glogowska (Oct. 8th, 1914)

OVERHEAD whizzed the first, the second,—then
Denser became the fray.
With an uneasy jest the crouching men
Bade them a grim good-day.

The Fifth's howitzers came at a headlong rate.
Thy will, O Lord, be done.
Bestow upon their souls the strength of fate :
Mother, unhappy one,

Lo, I shall be as the flickering of a star
Above our woodland shining,
And as the years arrive and pass, afar
Waxing dim and declining.

My thoughts caress my father's letter, caress
Your hair, O distant maiden.
And with a grievous tide, and direful stress
Of love my heart is laden,

For those who suffer. In it surges up
The tortured heart's dull throes
And anguish, anguish of my nation's cup
That bitterly overflows.

Lukasek, Vavro, dauntless fellows all
Of sturdy peasant breed,
God shall decide. As we have lived, we'll fall,
Guiltless of evil deed.

PETR KRICKA

" Forward ! " At my command they run, they run,
Ranks thinning in the fight. . . .
Jesus, serene and humble-hearted one,
Have mercy on our plight.

The Hawthorn Spray (1916)

RICHARD WEINER

(b. 1884)

Foreboding of Death is Beauteous . . .

FOREBODING of death is beauteous as a throng
which is petrified,
And seared with terror, a very harvest of despair,
Which shatters its dehverance with chill impulse of
pride,
And spurns safety, turning away with haughty air.

Gates of escape have clanged and venge themselves in
vain
Upon the vanished prey at which—in pity's throes—
With wail of mockery clutches the former bane,
The tainted dregs and shame which lurk where fire
arose.

Amid the reconciled has risen a silent guide
From bed of asphodels which smiling maidens strewed,
And proffers hemlock luringly ; the goblets glide
From hand to hand amid the feast in twilight mood.

Foreboding of death is beauteous as a throng which is
petrified.

Many Nights (1928)

JAROSLAV DURYCH

JAROSLAV DURYCH

(b. 1886)

Ye Who Upon the Earth . . .

YE who upon the earth
Are yet to come ; unborn and sacred, unto whom
Life will give birth,
Save we have faith in you, we walk in gloom.

Scions of lowly kin
Or of the world's renowned that they may grieve,
Will ye redeem the sin,
When the star from the East ye shall perceive ?

Come, ye of dauntless powers,
Champions and heroes ye, in noble throngs.
Shame enough heavenward towers,
And yet more shame arises from our wrongs.

Pure is the blood in you,
Ours ne'er will cleanse the earth, though amply it be
shed :
Storm only can subdue
Earth where nor rose nor lily can be bred.

By gloom the stormy fray
Will be urged on. Though poor our faith, remember it.
O, blessed are they
Within whose wombs your beings shall be knit.

Mendicant Songs (1925)

MARTIN RAZUS

MARTIN RÁZUS

(b. 1888) (Slovak)

The Waterfall

WATERS, waters, ye
In headlong cascade swirling,
Over rocks hissing, whirling,
 Crystalline waters, ye,
Amid whom something calls, someone entices me
With tender embrace, with nimble signs,
If I but stand in the glen of the pines
On a massive boulder, rinsed in the spray,
O'er the seething depths,—unsullied are they,—
Eyes from them call me and promise delight,
Eyes that are comely and greenishly bright;
With such fire and bloom and strength do they teem,
That drunken with their magic I deem
It almost were bliss in the eddy to leap
To drink and be cleansed, soul and body to steep
Utterly,—and to shout forth from the brake :
These are the waters wherefrom ye shall take
To christen your children. With the torrent's unrest
O'er boulders, o'er rocks on their life's holy quest
Let them triumph.

 Ha, stay, who goes there ?
A single move would bring havoc. Beware.
'Tis here that Death lurks, here is Life yet to be

 Waters, waters ye
In headlong cascade swirling,
Over rocks hissing, whirling,
 Glorious waters are ye !

• *Ah, Beloved Earth* (1919)

JINDRICH HOREJSI

JINDŘICH HOŘEJŠÍ

(b. 1889)

Monologue of a Former Infantryman

FOREIGN lands had I never seen ;
Some scanty memories from school,—
No more than this to me they meant.
A city factory ; day by day
Changeless toil,—such was the way
The idyll of my life was spent*

Fate bestowed the first favour upon me
When war began.
Now beckoned the road's far span.
Perhaps 'twas no favour, but only scorn
Which, like my share of bread each morn
From my masters I had earned.
Now came the journeys for which I had yearned,
Through Serbia, Russia and Italy.

What I desired to learn, I learned.
This did I see :
Everywhere hands of toil have the self-same guise,
Man everywhere loves in the self-same wise,
And dies.
Everywhere day is followed by night.
We are men, we are men
In the world alone,
Our sole aid our own.

To-day I am home again. Voice of the distance
No more allures me. In peaceful dream
All is blended, joyous as day's white gleam.

JINDRICH HOREJSI

Yet somehow a warp in my joy I find.
—Perchance the last pangs of my ancient grief—
Ever that Russian I call to mind,
He whom I bayoneted through,—
His lips were red, his eyes were blue,
His face was chalky-white.

Music in the Square (1921)

KAREL ČAPEK

(b. 1890)

The Fathers

FROM early morning the square had shone like a hot stone plate beneath the cloudless sky. White gables with arbours, cactuses and geraniums blossoming in the windows, a rust-coloured puppy wriggling on the pavement. The gloomy frontages of the rich houses breathe chillness upon the flame-lit day; a prosperous dimness gazes from within through the large dark panes of the closed windows. In front of the apothecary's a St. Bernard is sleeping like a sphinx. This square is quiet, is always quiet; quiet when it rains, quiet in the noontide glare, quiet on Sundays, quiet on weekdays. Like a huge and steep-sided ship the church thrusts itself into the centre of the square. That was where the little girl used to walk when she was alive.

She had died, and never had the small town witnessed greater sorrow than the sorrow of her father had been. During the last days he had not stirred from her bedside, only when she was asleep did he stand at the window and gaze at the square. That was where he used to walk with her while she was alive, he used to lead her by the hand and talk to her; the apothecary's St. Bernard

always swept the ground with his heavy tail, and stood up so that she could stroke him. The old apothecary reached for a glass jar and gave her a handful of grey cough pastilles. The little girl then spat them out with repugnance, and her poor fingers remained smeared and sticky for a long time afterwards.

That was where he used to walk with her, down hill and as far as the river. She was afraid of certain houses, but she never said why; she was afraid of people and snappish dogs, wells with buckets, bridges, beggars and horses; she was afraid of the river and the engines. At every shudder of fear she clutched her father's hand, and he responded with a strong pressure of protection : Don't be afraid, I am here. That was where he used to go with her for a summer walk, rolling the pine-cones down the slope and forcing himself to be jocular; the child never asked any questions. Everybody knew them: he, the father, dignified, stout, round-shouldered and solicitous ; she, a badly-dressed girl of six, with fair hair and thin cheeks. The children shouted after her " Little skinny kid " ; then he turned red, felt unhappy, and went to complain to the parents. Such were their walks.

The St. Bernard stood up and looked around. She had been ill for three weeks and then had died. A few beggar-women are already standing before the house of sorrow ; those invited to the funeral assemblé, bake for a moment in the heat of the square, and then enter. The music is already waiting, and the ministrants with crosses and lanterns ; four workmen from the father's factory, in new black clothes, are carrying the bier, draped with a long cloth ; the little white-clad girls arrive half embarrassed and half pleased; the members of the choir are there with music under their arms, tall smiling

KAREL CAPEK

young ladies, light dresses and wreaths ; gradually the worthies of the town assemble in long black coats and silk skirts, ponderous top hats, dignified and solemn faces; the whole town has come because the father possesses property and enjoys esteem there. Last of all, the Rector and*two other priests with white cassocks as a sign of heavenly joy. Upstairs in the big drawing-room lies the little girl, a wreath in her blond hair and a broken taper in her wax-like hands.

The square is quiet, and the St. Bernard is lying down with his head lifted towards the hustled house. Then through the open window is borne the priest's loud voice : "*Sit nomen Domini.*," The beggar-women fall on their knees. "*Laudate, pueri Dominum : laudate nomen Domini*". The male choir chimes in : "*Sit nomen Domini benedictum*". The beggar-women in front of the house utter a screeching, muddled prayer, from which bit by bit the words of the paternoster emerge. "*Hie accipiet*," intones the Rector's powerful voice.' "*Kyrie eleison*" "*Christe eleison*" "*Kyrie eleison. Et ne nos inducas in tentationem.*" "*Sed libera nos a malo*," With upraised tail the St. Bernard scurries off home. "*Oremus.*" The house is quiet, and even the beggar-women have grown mute. Only the fountain gurgles in the middle of the square.

The little girl died. She was fragile and not even pretty; she was afraid of the broad square, she was afraid of the big dog and of the fountain, which seemed bottomless to her; she passed her life guided by her father's hand, she fell ill in his embrace, and now, therefore, praise ye the name of the Lord that she died at the paltry age of six in order to become an angel.

Across the fflame-lit square the black procession

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advances ; the ministrants with crosses and lanterns, the wailing music, the little girls with the wreath of rosemary and a broken taper on pillows, the priests with burning candles, and then the coffin itself, light for all its splendour, stiff, broad ribbons, wax wreaths and strips of crape, the bowed father, his face as if erased with grief, the mother, a pale little woman with a black veil, then the people, dark and frowning, with bald heads in the sun, with white pocket-handkerchiefs, a slow and whispering throng, and behind, like a separated and mumbling island, the beggar-women with their endless prayer.

Through the parched hollow road the procession passes to the Calvary of human sorrows. Behind a bare wall lies the new graveyard, white and dry, the sandy domain of the dead, from which nothing grows but white crosses, tin lilies and the gaunt tower of the graveyard chapel. Everything was stripped and bleached like a bone. A white and lifeless noontide. A white, torrid road, The tiny coffin moves up and draws the black crowd after it ; the tiny coffin, the tiny corpse in white garments and with a broken taper ; that was where she used to walk hand in hand with her father.

Poor fellow, he was so fond of her. He married late in life and was looking forward to his first child ; and then, you know, a new choirmaster arrived and turned his wife's head. The whole town knows about it. That's why the blond little girl was born to dark-haired parents ; she took after the organist, the very image of him, she was. It was as if she pointed with her finger to her real father.

The coffin, light as it was, seemed to have changed to lead. The bearers halt and set the bier on the ground.

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Yes, this was just as far as she used to walk with her father ; there they used to sit and look down at the high-road with the carts of the strolling players, the peasants' wagons and the carriages; from there they looked into the streets and guessed who was coming along that way.

The whole town knew who his wife was running after, only he was blind, he had his child, the blond-haired and pallid little girl, whom he fondled while his wife was running about and causing scenes of jealousy with every young lady whom her musician taught to thump the keys. At last he had to leave her for fear of losing all his pupils, on her account; then he gave everybody who asked for them, her letters to read, and everybody did ask for them.

The music again wails a disjointed march, and amid the pealing of bells the procession laboriously moves upward. The little woman with tightly clenched lips beneath the veil fumbles with the edge of her skirt ; she holds herself erect in order to evade all those glances, before she shut herself up at home again with her endless embroidering by the window, pale with loneliness and hatred.

Yes, he had gone from her then, and so she had been left with this child, which had become coldly repugnant to her, and with her husband, who had no thoughts but for this lifeless child which was not his. He clung to it with all his melancholy affection; and the little town did not even know whether to laugh or whether to pity him, when he took her out, absurdly dressed, pale and bewildered, away from the cold rooms of the house on the square. At that instant the bells gave a brief peal and stopped.

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The tiny coffin is beating at the gates of eternity. It rests on planks above the open grave in the midst of the large hushed throng ; in the dead silence only the choir rustles with the music, and the Rector slowly turns over the leaves of a little black book. In the crowd a child burst out crying. The gaunt shadow of the tower severs the torrid fallow-land of the dead. It is only a year since they started burying people there ; and perhaps this graveyard is too big, perhaps they will never fill it, perhaps it will never achieve complete growth, perhaps it will have to remain so empty and bare for ages. The crowd breathes heavily with unrest. What is the matter ? Why do they not begin ? The stillness is being prolonged tormentingly, grievously, oppressively.

" *Laudate Dominum de coelis, laudate eum in excelsis !* " " *Laudate eum omnes angeli eius,*" chimes the choir, " *laudate eum omnes virtutes eius.*" The assembly took a deep breath. " *Laudate eum sol et luna ; laudate eum stellae et lumen.*" ' *Laudate eum coeli coelorum.*" A slight breeze, as if aroused by the chorus of male voices, wafted relief into the pale faces ; a cloudlet of incense arose, the ribbons and wreath rustled, and from the grave came a chill whiff of clay. The father stared fixedly at the tiny coffin, bowed over as if he were about to fall ; the people stand on tiptoe, in order to get a better view ; now, now comes the leave-taking.

" *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison.*" The young priest swings the censer ; the slender chains rattle faintly, the smoke rises and quivers—" *Oremus.*" The broad, flaming sky is rigidly opened above the white graveyard, a moment of anguished eternity, only **the**

heart beats with the stress of a terrible, sublime and painful moment. "*Per omnia saecula saeculorum,*"¹¹ *Amen.*" Drops of holy water fall on to the coffin, the father with loud sobs sinks on his knees ; the coffin with a slow movement enters the grave, and the choir chimes in with the sweet, mournful, muffled anthem, " God has beckoned*"

The little woman in the veil listens as if nailed to the spot. Only too well does she know that rich, glossy, self-satisfied, smug voice. Once she listened to it elsewhere, and glowingly melted at its palpable touch. The whole township listens with bowed head: the choir-master himself is singing with the leader of the women's choir, Marie, the Venus of the town, a tall girl in full bloom. From the whole choir only these two voices can be heard. It is said that this Marie goes to him. The two voices fondle and embrace each other in the full sunshine ; the Rector himself listens with closed eyes; the little woman bursts into convulsive weeping, the blue cloudlet of incense soars heavenward, and softly, faintly, the finale rises above the grave. The Rector rouses himself as if from a dream, and bows to the ground. One, two, three clods of earth.

One, two, three; everybody presses forward to the open grave, where the father is kneeling on a knoll of clay and sobbing as if he would never stop. All have flung their three clods into the grave and would like to depart. They are only waiting for the father to stand up, so that they can shake hands with him. The priests fidget with their feet, they have to go back to the chapel; the gravedigger has blown his nose loudly, and begun to shovel the dry and torrid clay into the grave. The whole assembly maintains an embarrassed **and** dull silence.

KAREL CAPEK

Then a ripple of tickling mirth passes through the choir. The choirmaster is glad that he has brought the joke off, and his eyes sparkle. The pale Anežka has blushed, Matylda bites at her pocket-handkerchief, and Marie is bent by a suppressed outburst. The choirmaster has contentedly run a comb through his moustache and hair, leaned forward to Marie and whispered something to her. Marie has gulped with laughter and escaped. The whole assembly looks round, half smiling and half scandalised.

Suddenly the father gets up, trembles and tries to say something. "To you—to all of you—who showed my only—beloved daughter——" But he can say no more, he bursts out sobbing, and without shaking hands with anyone, he departs as if in a dream. A general feeling of awkwardness ensues. While the priests enter the chapel, the crowd breaks up and disperses. A few hastily scrawl three crosses on the tombs of their dead, others halt for a moment in front of some gravestone, and scarcely anybody waits till the end of the service ; only the choirmaster with Marie and other members of the women's choir amid noisy laughter go to the chancel of the graveyard chapel.

A few women in black are praying by the graves. They wipe their eyes and arrange the poor withered flowers.

From the open chapel floats the Rector's chant :
" *Benedicite omnia opera Domini Domino.*"

" *Benedicite angeli Domini Domino,*" chimes in the choirmaster.

With copious shovelfuls the gravedigger buries the child of the two fathers.

Tales of Distress (1921)

JOSEF HORA

JOSEF HORA

(b. 1891)

Labour

CITIZENS, ye whom we have never known,
For you, for you have we smithed and written and
sown.

Whither hast thou gone, O labour of our brains ?
Labour of our hands, thou coursest in whose veins ?

In the garb which we shaped, through the town the idler
parades.

In the footgear we wrought, through streams the hunts-
man wades.

Upon the bridges which across rivers we sent,
Trains thunder, dreams of self-slayers lament.

For embraces of others we have hewn the bed ;
We wove the soft shawl that o'er beauty's bosom is
spread.

Amid radiance of candelabra which our hands have
moulded

Dancers, two by two, the wings of their passions unfolded,

And in the red wine which from the grape we pressed,
Afar, some stranger pledges the health of his guest.

Throughout the world, like November's brooding, teem
Our stubborn woe, the gloom of irk and beauty's dream ;

JOSEF HORA

At our table unknown men find a seat,
Our blood is their drink and our bodies their meat,

While we from sunshine to sunshine in drudgery un-
ending

With eager teeth the spoil of life from the rock are
rending;

Sullen and unyielding it is, no pity it possesses,
And we are day-labourers whom Poverty into her
service presses.

And our hands are empty. Where has our toil found a
place?

The hard hearts of strangers it soothes with sisterly
grace.

Like pure mountain waters which from the well-head flow,
Bring balm to radiant cities of the blest in the valley

below

The Working Day. (1922)

RUDOLF MEDEK

(b. 1890)

1914

NEVER will the town of my birth forget this,
Nor durst it forget!
Never will my eyes forget this.

Bitter and mournful are the days of late September,
Summer's hapless decline trails heavy shadows along the
earth,

Sadness has its seat in your house,

RUDOLF MEDEK

But more bitter and more mournful was the evening
then,
When amid the mocking clamour of military music my
brothers in rank and file
Passed through the town.
Their tear-dimmed eyes uttered a curse upon all that
befell,
A smothered lament trembled upon their young lips,
Where you beheld dawn of despair and flash of vain
revolt,—
Austrian troops !

Never yet had you beheld this,
Old Hussite town,
Never yet had you heard,
You old houses,
You old square with the red cathedral,
A more mocking music.

But I, the child of our highways, witnessing this
With seething heart and maimed pride,—
I who never before in days of direst anguish
Had shed a single tear of distress,
Now departed into a gloomy and deserted street,
And wept.

O, if I could but take upon my shoulders
All the evil fate, all the wrath and the penalty,
The unbounded abasement of my nation.
But I behold : a cloud hovers above this land of ours,
Earth is plunging into a dreadful twilight,
The day wanes apace.

RUDOLF MEDEK

No day had brought so grievous a sorrow,
More despair than even the White Mountain,
More pangs than all the graveyards in our annals,
As did that day in late September.

When afterwards you were stowed into dingy wagons,
When with quavering voices you sang the Emperor's
hymn,
When in each "farewell" I heard the dark,
Curse-beset, fateful question "Wherefore?"
When you were moving off and the eyes of all within
view
Brimmed with silent tears,
Then suddenly amid the darkness of night it was as if
someone stood beside me,
Whom long I had known, but who long had been mute,
And softly said to me:
Fear not, O my son of little faith,
Only he dies who has believed not enough in life,
In life which is boundless, an unending and victorious
advance,
Unending and beautiful and righteous.

Lionheart (1919)

FRANTIŠEK KUBKA

(b. 1894)

Peking

I AM eternity, graven on walls four-square,
I am pagodas tapering into twilight air,
I am dragon and sun, plague and dust from desert-site,
Buddha amid the lotus, raven in gloom of night,

FRANTISEK KUBKA

I am a lake and lustre of porcelain,
I am a red gleam flowering o'er eastern domain,
Ashes of a myriad years smoulder in me,
And in my morrow, O world, lurks the end of thee.

The Star of the Kings (1925)

MILOŠ JIRKO

(b. 1900)

Victorious Retreat

I AND all the others,
Journeying here in an unclean cattle-truck,
We,
All belonging to the shattered host,
We are not retreating,
We are advancing.

I, student and poet, born in the year nineteen hundred,
And also a soldier,—of the heavy, heavy guns,—
The Bosnian who treats us to raki,
The workman from Vienna slums,
The Pole, with whom I talk in the goodly language,
Bringing to my lips the savour of sweet fruits,
The Ruthene student from Kolomea,
The Magyar who boasts of his pig-breeding,
The pale youth from Prague
And the farmer from Hana,
We,
We all,
We are not retreating,
We are advancing.

MILOS JIRKO

We who are escaping from the broken front,
We who are escaping from thraldom of dwellings in
decay,
We who are escaping from bursting armament works,
From the black captivity, as the grave's unknown prey,
All we simple folk,
With human hearts,
With human voices,
With human hands,
Alive,
We are not retreating,
We are advancing.

We are all the watch and ward of the great host,
The host of life's potencies.

We shall implant our banner upon fertile acres,
Victoriously it will exult above the din of factories,
Above palaces and strongholds,
Above abodes of goodness and mercy,

Joyous fluttering of bannerets in the festive morning !
Fleeting leap of the young wind !

Ships will sail forth under our flag ;—
Everywhere,
In valleys, on mountains,
Upon rock and glebe,
Amid tropics and ice,
Everywhere we shall implant our flag,
We,
We, who are advancing.

The Journey (1920)

JIRÍ WOLKER

JIRÍ WOLKER

1900-1924

The Pillar-Box

THE pillar-box at the street-corner is not a mere
Commonplace, paltry thing.
It is a blossom of blue,
And folk hold it very dear ;
Trusting it utterly, they
Throw letters into it on both sides,
One for the sad, the other for the gay.

The letters are white as pollen, and abide
Till trains, ships and messengers
Like bees and winds scatter them far and wide,—
Where there are hearts,
Crimson pistils,
•Which in rose-hued wrapping are stored.

•When to them the letters have soared,
Fruits begin to sprout there,
Some sweet and some bitter.

The Guest in the House (1921)

The Burial

A NEŽKA SKLÁDALOVA

At the age of sixty-nine—she was ailing for
many a day—
On Monday, September 15th, passed away.

JIRI WOLKER

And to-day is Wednesday.
Six candles are burning, and the organ's gloomy
sound
Escorts our grief along the path of the cross
around
The church, behind which are field and high-road, and
trees are growing there,
From the coffin to them we can ransom ourselves
Only with the plainest prayer :
Thy will be done.

Along the straggling pathway
The dark-clad mourners tread,
Here greatest pity is for the living who are weeping
for the dead,
Here the heavens are sundered in our gaze, and have
bedecked the dead with their pall,
O hearse, O gilded mound, you are too small, too
small,
O coffin, you are too empty.,
For she who is dead steps forth from your domain,
On the ribbons of the funeral wreaths she comes to life
again,
Fluttering on the white ribbons with the living
names
The whole world she can span :
Jiri, Karel, Jaroslav, Věra, Dagmar, Zora, Radovan :
Her grandchildren.

Around the poplars beyond the town
To the burial-place we pass on our way.
The corn in the garner already is placed,
And we garner it again to-day.

Jlftf WOLKER

Naught in this world is turned to waste,
Nor ever shall be so.
The garnered corn to bread doth grow.

When the funeral comes to the graveyard gates,
The eldest grandson meditates :

Three hundred anguished days your heart, O grandam,
bled,
When drop by drop the blood from your body was
shed;
Grant that I die not as you in a forlorn bedchamber,
for I
As a soldier with bayonet and rifle would die,
Wounded to the heart by a bursting shell.
The struggle's unrest
Is my quest
To gain the glory of this world.

Sweeten not, O priest, your sermon with talk of
paradise, angels and the blessed soul,
Heaven is a morsel of this earth with its everyday
folk;
Sing not, O choir, over the grave a canticle lack-lustre
with dole ;
Sing rather as gardeners
At the seed-time sing.
If I weep, I weep not for the dead. None there be.
If I suffer, it is grief for the living that suffers in me.
Only the coffin we bury,
Only the name we bury
Of hearts which lived righteously.

JIRI WOLKER

O graveyard, O graveyard,
O garden green,
On you the most precious seeds
Have ever been
Sown for life's sake.

The Grievous Hour (1922)

